



CONCLUSION

If responsiveness is associated with the act of listening, which then informs action, responsibility can be related to the act of reasoning and making sound decisions, based on available information. In local governance, you can't have the one without the other. A popular response may not be wise, whereas taking one's responsibility too far, without due regard for changing conditions and the partiality of available information, is likely to be experienced as a rigid and insensitive.

THIS PUBLICATION HAS shown that the pursuit for responsible and responsive local governance is still continuing. The introductory paper outlines how this would manifest in municipalities:

'...a responsible and responsive government institution reports regularly and openly on its activities and financial matters to relevant stakeholders, including local communities and residents. It implements programmes and conducts itself according to the guiding policy framework, in a manner that is efficient, effective and responsive to emerging challenges. It has an effective two-way communication system, which is designed to communicate not only to communities, but also with communities through established communication channels and feedback mechanisms. It has regular and institutionalised processes of engagement and deliberation that include all stakeholders, and guide and influence decision-making, programme initiation, implementation and monitoring. Its mandate is directed by an accountable leadership and executed by a dedicated cadre of professionals who use their expertise and skills in the interest of the public good.'

Undoubtedly, there is a need to adopt more inclusive and meaningful citizen engagement tools and practices to help bring about the required transformation to community-centred development. Improved communication systems, financial accountability tools and community-based monitoring are useful examples in this respect. But as some of the contributions have shown, such tools and practices need to be adequately resourced and expertly facilitated. Unless serious attention is given to the institutional capability required to deepen (and sustain!) democratic engagement towards deliberative processes and outcomes, the shift towards responsible and responsive local governance will be nominal.

Public leadership is particularly critical, as it is the foundation of good governance. This is where the organisational and personal dimensions of responsibility and responsiveness are enacted and made visible. Thus, significant emphasis is placed on value-driven leadership, where the public interest guides decision-making and resource allocations and where integrity, transparency and accountability are put into practice. This then affirms that values and principles are at the heart of the governance system, which in turn informs not only what systems and practices are established, but also how potentially progressive systems and practices are interpreted, resourced and pursued. By firmly recommitting itself to values such as accountability, consistency, fairness,

integrity, respect, efficiency, effectiveness and compassion – and recognising dissent as a democratic value –, local government can set itself on the right path towards responsible and responsive local governance. Adopting a public service ethos is not limited to those in formal leadership positions; rather, it should drive the actions and behaviour of all those working for the state, regardless of seniority. Adopting such an ethos will act as a powerful antidote to the compliance mentality that is so pervasive in local government. It is only by living out this ethos that public trust in local government can grow.

As we approach the 2016 municipal elections, this is a particularly opportune time for all stakeholders to reflect on what responsible and responsive local governance looks like and how to effect it. While the publication has focused largely on the role of municipalities, other stakeholders in public, private and civil society sectors also have important roles to play. In particular, civil society organisations can bring valuable skills, relationships, networks and resources to bear that can help bridge the divide that so often characterises the relationship between a municipality and local communities. Ultimately, the collective consciousness of all partners in development (including citizens) needs to be tuned in towards bringing about responsive and responsible local governance.