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Decentralization and Gender Equity

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to

Inter-Regional Dialogue on Local Governance and Gender in Decentralizing and
Transitioning States

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Introduction

- Decentralization is a way to bring government closer to the people and increase participation of all groups
- Nexus between decentralization and gender equity:
 - Women can play a role in decentralization
 - Decentralization will have an impact on women

Outline of Presentation

- Decentralization
 - What is decentralization?
 - Why has decentralization occurred?
 - What are the benefits?
 - What are the costs?
 - International comparisons
- Gender equity and decentralization
 - What is the role of women in decentralization?
 - What is the impact of decentralization women?
 - What are the barriers to participation by women?
 - What is the experience in other countries?

DECENTRALIZATION

What is Decentralization?

- Decentralization is the assignment of fiscal, political, and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of government – states or provinces, cities, districts

What is Decentralization?

- Deconcentration – dispersion of responsibilities within a central government to regional branch offices or local administrative units
- Delegation – local governments act as agents for central government, performing certain functions on its behalf
- Devolution – local governments have the authority to decide on what is done and to implement decisions

Fiscal Decentralization

- Expenditure assignment – who does what?
- Revenue assignment – who levies taxes?
- Vertical imbalance – how do you resolve imbalance between revenues and expenditures?
- Horizontal imbalance – how do you adjust for differences in needs and capacities of sub-national governments?

Why Has Decentralization Occurred?

- Increased democratization (e.g. Latin America)
- Transition from command to market economy (e.g. Eastern Europe)
- Need to improve local service delivery to large populations in centralized countries (e.g. East Asia)
- Challenge of ethnic and regional diversity (e.g. South Asia)
- Failure of central governments to provide effective public services

Benefits of Decentralization

- Efficiency from moving government closer to the people; services reflect local preferences
- Greater accountability
- Increased responsiveness on the part of local governments who are responsible to the people who elected them
- Improved service delivery
- Increased local participation

Benefits of Decentralization

- Greater revenue mobilization by broadening the tax base
 - Intergovernmental transfers could be reduced
 - Local governments, with knowledge of the local economy, can identify tax base more easily (track property ownership and land based transactions, issue licenses)

Benefits of Decentralization

- Nation building
 - When citizens participate in their own governance, in a decentralized system, may achieve greater level of national stability
 - Especially important where there is an ethnic or religious mix of population that creates divides

Costs of Decentralization

- Potential for macroeconomic instability if sub-central revenues decline or borrowing is excessive
- Equalization potential is greater under revenue centralization
- Concerns about lack of local administrative capacity

Costs of Decentralization

- Concerns about lack of locally responsive and responsible officials with sufficient discretionary financial control
- Potential for corruption may be greater, but no solid evidence

Conditions for Successful Decentralization

- Local decision process needs to be democratic - - costs and benefits of decisions are transparent and all those affected have opportunity to influence decisions
- Costs of local decisions must be borne fully by those who make the decisions -- those charged with providing local services and infrastructure must be accountable to those who pay for them (the taxpayers) and to those who benefit from them (the users)

International Comparisons

- Measures of decentralization:
 - Spending decentralization – ratio of sub-central spending to general government spending
 - Revenue decentralization – ratio of sub-central own revenue to general government revenue
 - Tax revenue decentralization – ratio of sub-central tax revenue to general government tax revenue
 - Tax autonomy – ratio of taxes over which sub-central government have some base or rate-setting autonomy to general government tax revenue

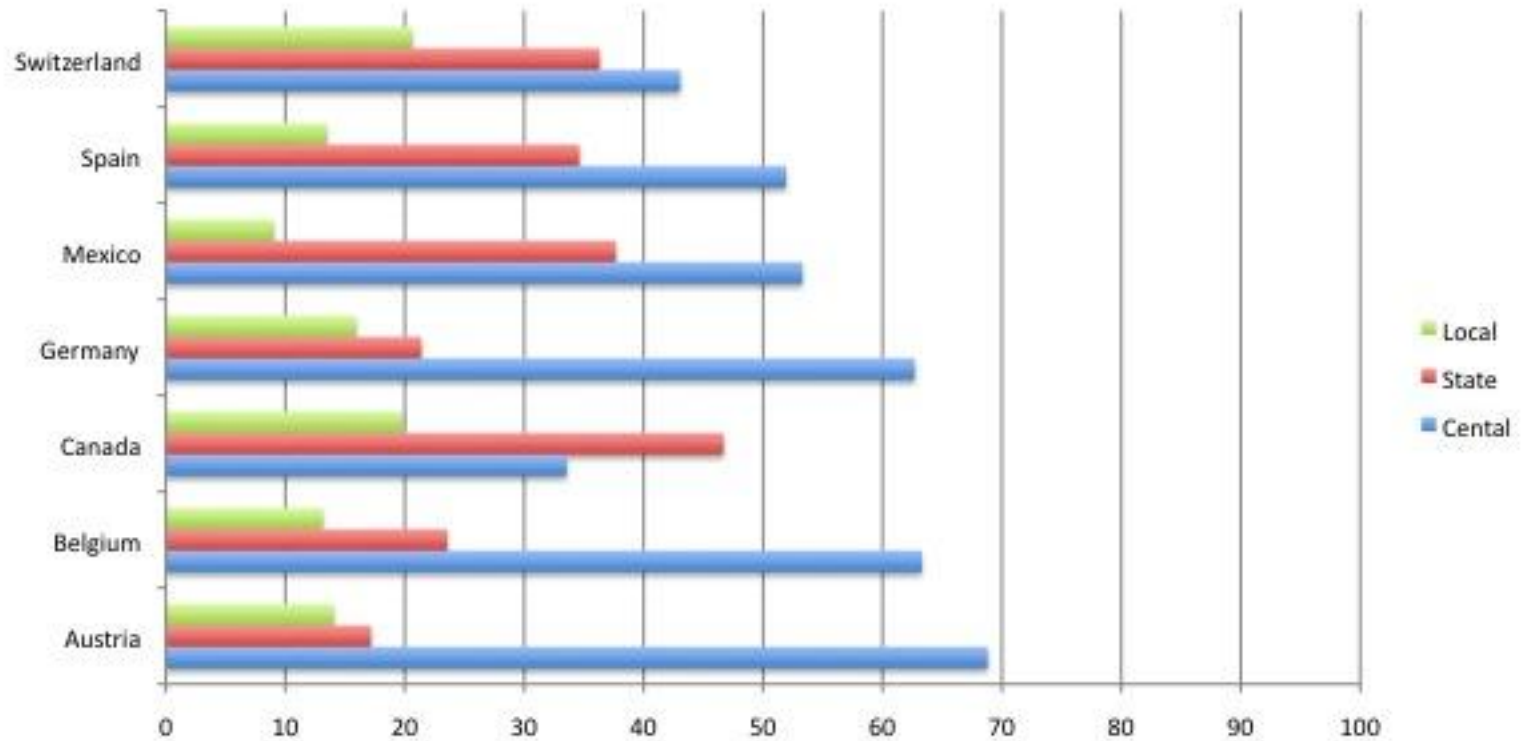
International Comparisons

- Degree of decentralization varies widely among countries
- Spending has decentralized more than revenues over last 20 years
- Result is increasing vertical imbalance and growing intergovernmental transfers

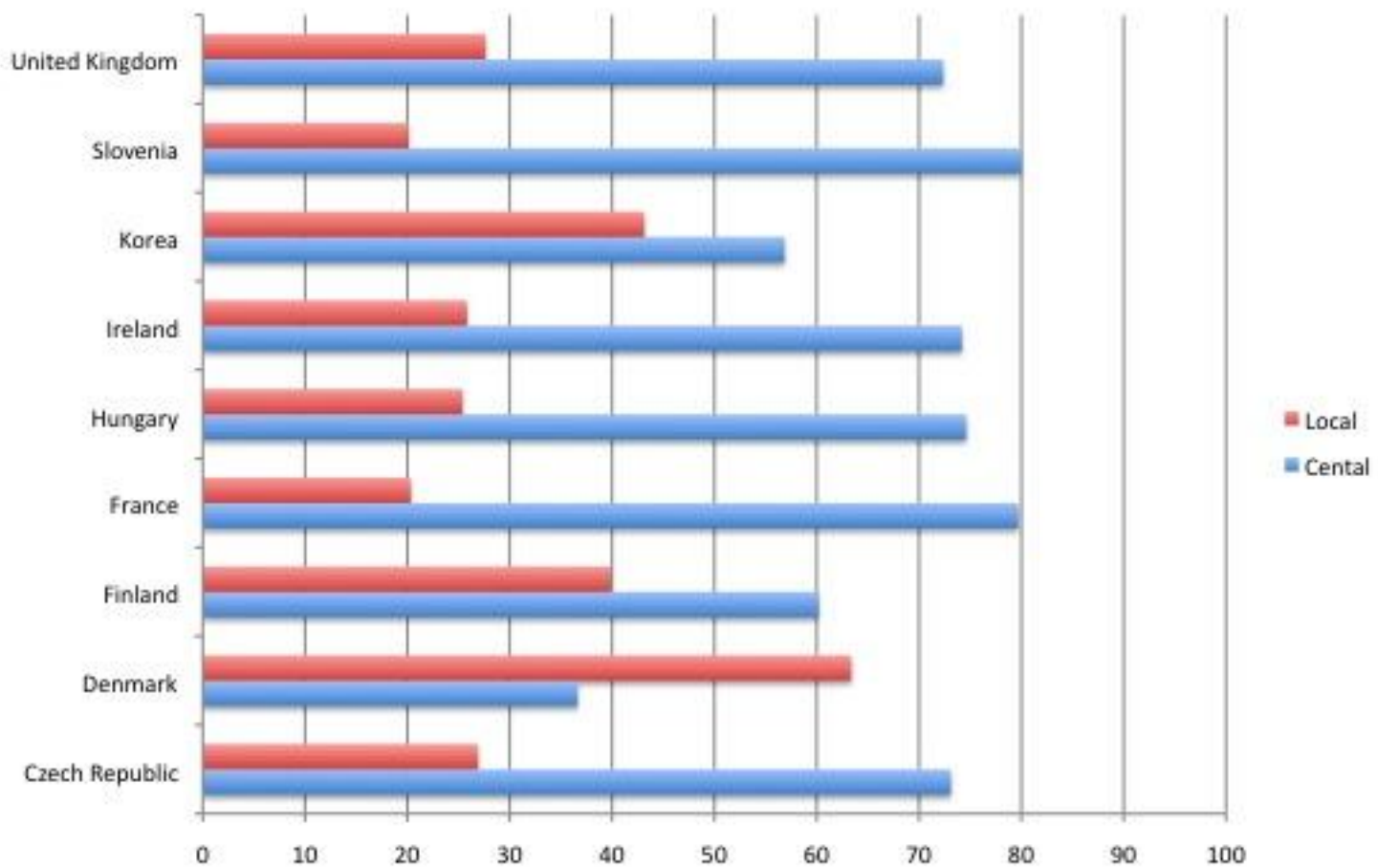
International Comparisons

- OECD countries – sub-central share of total expenditures averaged around 31% in 2011; values ranged from 12% to 66%
- OECD countries – average sub-central share of total revenues averaged around 15% ranging from 8% to 55%
- Tax autonomy is around 11% of all tax revenue and some sub-central governments have none

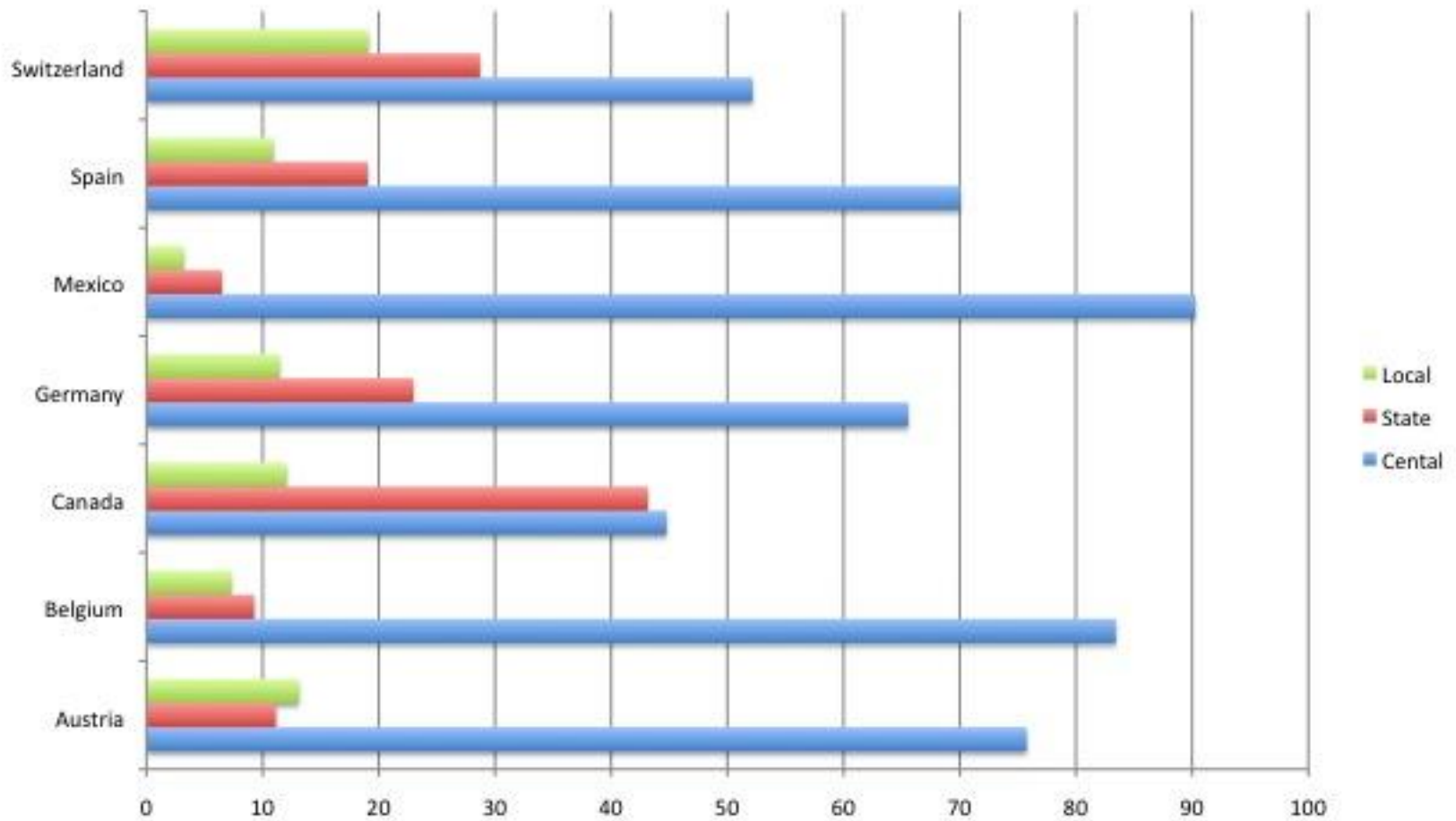
Consolidated Expenditures (2010)



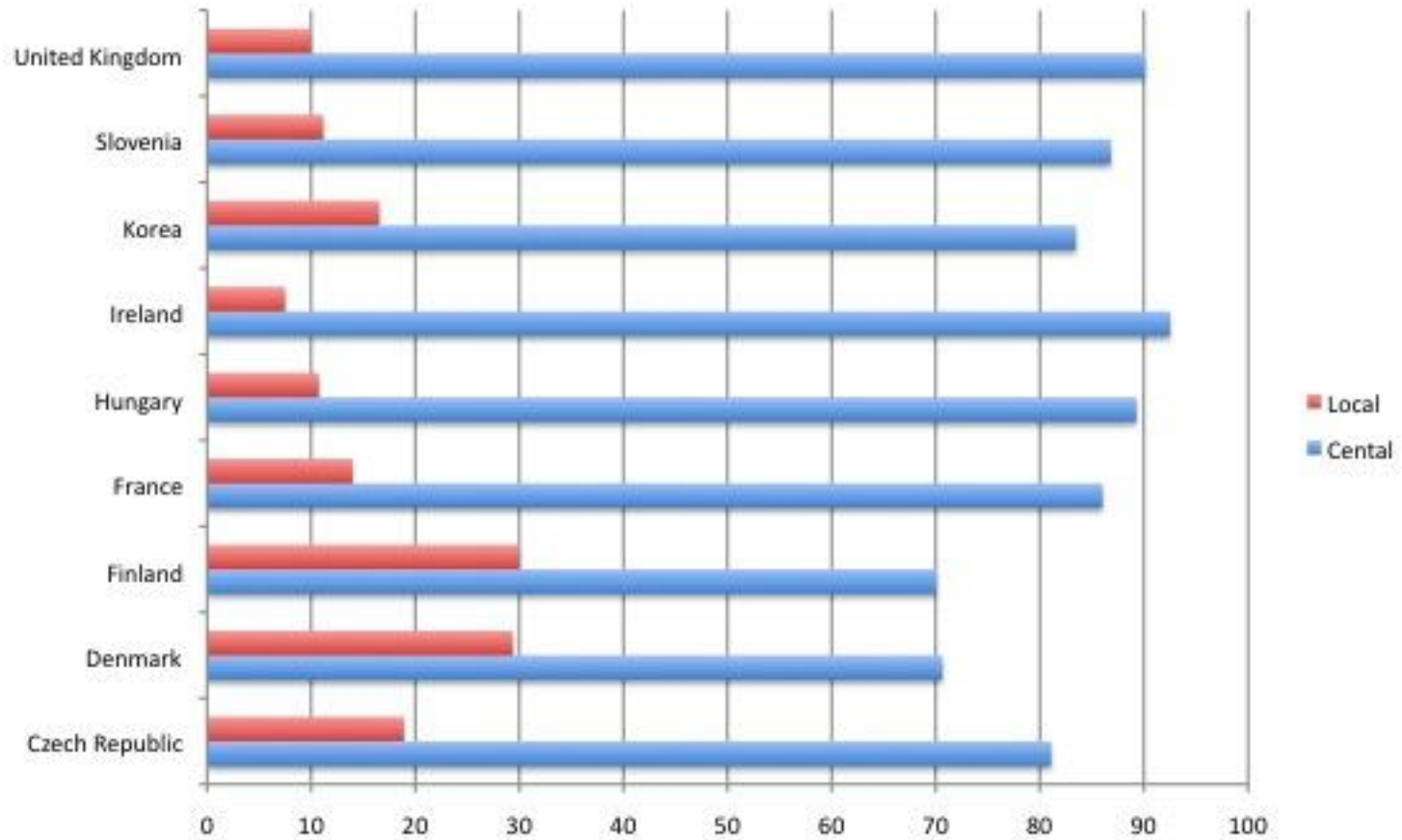
Consolidated Expenditures (2010)



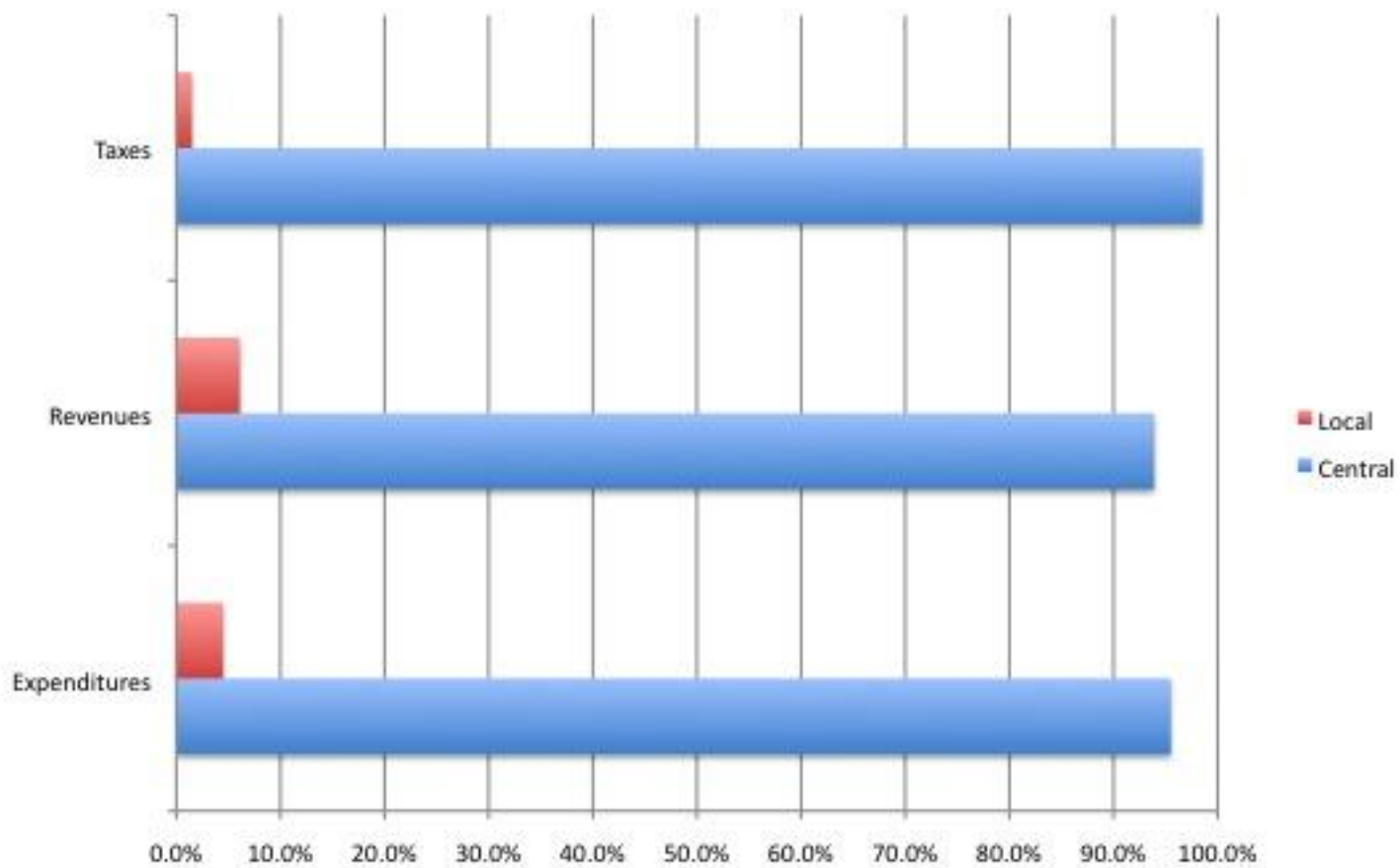
Consolidated Government Revenue (2010)



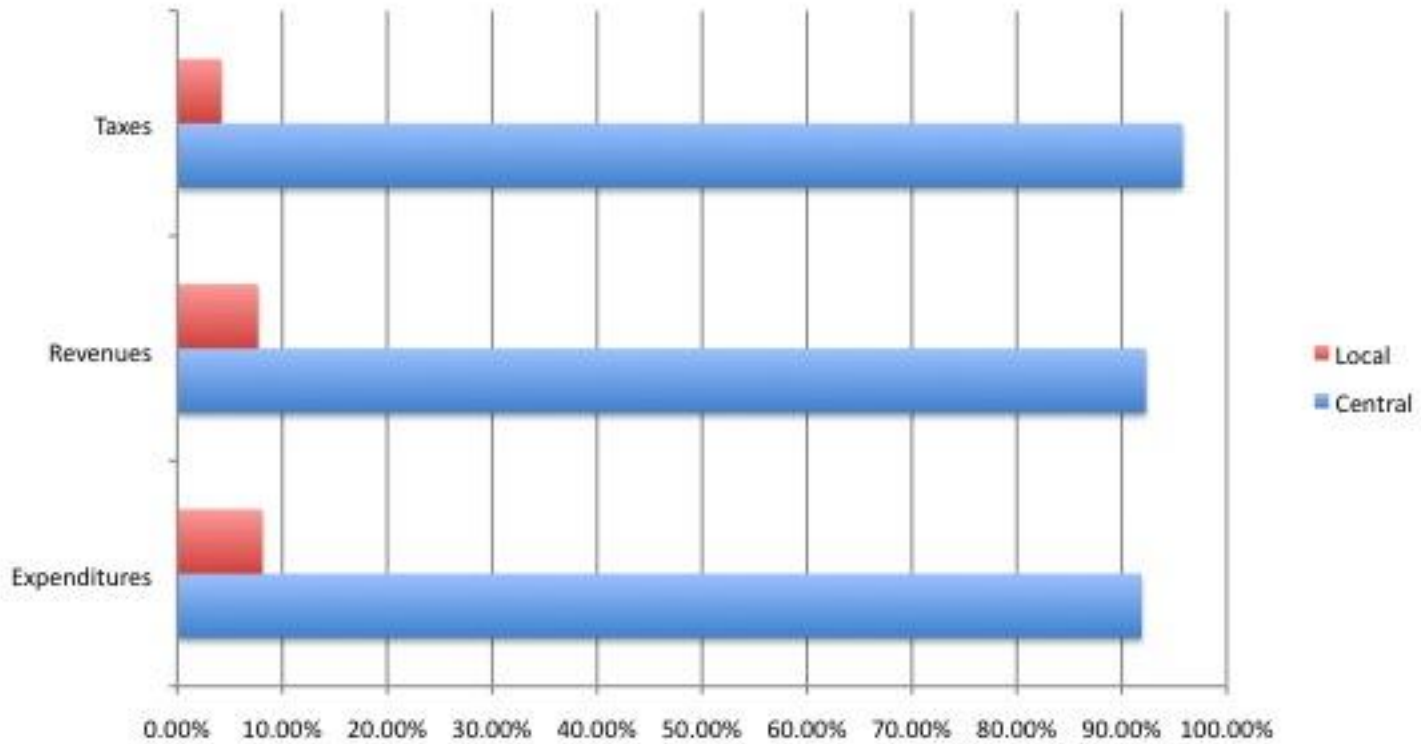
Consolidated Government Revenue (2010)



Tunisia (2011)



Jordan (2009)



GENDER EQUITY AND DECENTRALIZATION

What is the Role of Women in Decentralization?

- Different priorities
 - Work on strategies to attain “women-friendly” policies
 - Support spending on women’s priorities (e.g. access to water, health care, housing)
 - Gender budgeting to ensure spending on services to women is maintained (e.g. South Africa, Uganda)

What is the Role of Women in Decentralization?

- Different approaches
 - More likely to include women and incorporate citizen input
 - More likely to emphasize communication
 - More likely to perceive themselves as “facilitators”
 - Place a higher value on compromise

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Women?

- Benefit from service delivery improvements that government in close proximity can provide (e.g. health, primary schools, low-cost water and sanitation services)
- Benefit from increased accountability at local level
- Decentralization provides more “access points” for local participation

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Women?

- Women have greater affinity for “politics where we live” and engaging in policy issues that affect them and their families (e.g. schools)
- Political parties have been reluctant to run female candidates; local politics is often non-partisan

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Women?

- Local elections generally have lower campaign costs; smaller financial hurdles for women
- Less arduous time and travel commitments
- Gain valuable experience; increase chances of being elected at the state or federal level
- Create higher community profile and name recognition
- Lower levels of competition; increase odds of being elected

What are the Barriers to Participation?

- Women hold a disproportionate share of household and family responsibility
- On average, women have lower incomes and less financial freedom than men
- Socialized to view politics as an unsuitable vocation for women
- Need for parental or marital approval

What are the Barriers to Participation?

- Low levels of education and technical skills
- Violence against women who challenge traditional roles
- Belief they are unqualified
- Absence of female models and mentors
- Logistical challenges (transportation, safety, child care)
- Adversarial nature of politics

Experience in Other Countries

- 1990 UN report introduced the concept of “getting to 30%” and identified it as a governance priority going forward
- 30% is considered to be a “critical mass” point at which women are able to make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making

Experience in Other Countries: India

- Amended constitution in 1992 to guarantee women 30% of the seats in local administrations
- Certain number of seats reserved for all-female competition
- More than 1 million women on municipal councils in 1994
- Problems – location of reserved constituencies rotates after each election

Experience in Other Countries: Uganda

- Since 1997, reserves 30% of local council seats for all-female competition
- Added seats; not a portion of existing seats
- Constituency size for women much larger than other constituencies
- Elections for female candidates held two weeks after general election
- Discourages women from running in general elections

Experience in Other Countries: France

- Passed the Parité Law in 2000
- Requires half of the candidates in all municipal, senate and legislature elections to be women
- Number of women elected to council increased from 25.7% to 47.5%

Experience in Other Countries: Brazil

- Participatory municipal budgeting
- Neighbourhood associations given direct say in how local funds are spent
- From 1989 to 1996, proportion of households in Porto Alegre served by piped water and the municipal sewerage system increased

Experience in Other Countries: Canada

- No structural measures to address gender imbalance at the local level
- Toronto runs a mentorship program to encourage women to get involved in local politics
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities runs a mentorship program across the country

Final Comments

- Decentralization has taken different forms in different countries at different times
- Case studies of the role of women in decentralization and the impact of decentralization on women reflect different institutional, political, and economic contexts