

# Public Sector Barometer

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## **KEY ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN AFRICA**

### **Case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The African continent cries for true leaders who can change the patterns of how things have been done and put the continent on the path of development. How can a true leadership emerge since the continent is faced with so many crises on every hand? Africa is tested by all sorts of challenges ranging from political instability, wars, rebellions, corruption and poverty which have a negative effect on the performance of leaders. One good example concerns the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which has been in a continuous state of crisis in the strategic area of the provision of basic social services to its citizens. It has been characterised by the structural need for a strategy, vision and programme of action to change socio-political and economic relations characterised by the accumulation of wealth and privileges by its rulers in the face of massive socio-economic problems faced by Congolese people. The successive rulers have not been committed to the resolution of these problems through the provision of basic social services. In DRC, the state administration has retreated from much of the public domain; the state survives as an administrative framework whose role in providing public services has been redefined rather than evaporated.

What are then the key drivers for the promotion of a developmental state in a country such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo? The developmental regimes in Africa should strive to address a set of unresolved issues concerning the likely instruments, sustainability and origins of developmental regimes in Africa, and consider the changes in the global environment that would be more supportive of such regimes. On 28 November 2011, the DRC held its second democratic elections in more than four decades. After a presidential election which was declared unreliable by the Carter Centre, European Union, the Congolese Catholic Church, some major civil society organisations as well as an alerted Diaspora, which voiced its opinion from Canada to Australia, even protested violently in Belgium, DRC began 2012 with the controversy surrounding the elections. In spite of the pressure, Kinshasa's regime has not conceded anything. Instead it acknowledged some irregularities and Etienne Tshisekedi, the historic opposition leader, who held second position with 32%, is confined to his residence where he even proclaimed himself the winner of the elections. This implies that the 2011 presidential and legislative elections brought pre- and post-election tensions that have divided internal and external players in DRC's public affairs. This situation is not new in the African context, because many countries that have held elections have manifested

this problem. Nevertheless, elections are of great significance as they give legitimacy to the rulers; but elections should not be considered as an end in themselves. Rather elections should pave a way for peace, stability and development. The electoral process should inspire a renewed effort to militate the integration of different stakeholders and forming a government of national unity which will mobilise the country towards the path of stability and development. What happens often is that elections are used by African leaders as means to hold onto power even when governments have not been able to implement a single policy towards enhancing the living conditions of citizens. The responsibility that rested upon the winners of the 2011 elections, be it at the presidential or the legislative, was to operate differently as they did previously because the Congolese people deserves to have a civilised state which is ruled according to basic principles of good governance.