

Debunking the local government malaise under the decentralization policy in Uganda: an analytical treatise

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ABSTRACT

Several years have passed since Uganda approved decentralization both as a tool of good governance and as a policy of poverty reduction however many regions and districts in the country, including the city authorities, continue to stagger in poverty and development melancholy. Studies conducted at the local/district level show that high levels of poorness and underdevelopment remain. This development paradox is the subject of this article. A review of the current literature and interviews with stakeholders in local government institutions in Uganda, unveil that conflicts, limited resources and continued fragmentation of districts by politicians have been impediments to progress. Hindrances also included the socio-economic and the political. It also portrays gerrymandering and a decrepit state of affairs. This study suggests the sovereignty of local governments, expansion of resource bases through robust methods such as taxation and the institutionalization of public sector reform programs to ensure a sustainable base for social services delivery

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Introduction and Background

The policy of decentralization in Uganda was launched in a presidential policy statement on 2 October 1992 but the quest for democratic decentralization and good governance was started in 1986 when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power¹. The 1995 constitution Article 2, clause (a) provides for devolution of powers, elected government officials, rule of law and protection of human rights².

The Local Government Act came into force in 1997 to pave the way for full implementation of the provisions of the Constitution and operationalization of decentralization³. It was promoted by academics such as Phillip Mawhood and Brian Smith, and by policy implementers, legislators and researchers, as a better government policy paradigm compared to others such as unitarism or federalism⁴.

Decentralization was advocated by politicians as a remedy and palliative to Africa's governance crisis. The IMF and World Bank persuaded many African states to adopt this policy paradigm arguing that it would redeem them from adverse poverty and various forms for poor administration. Indeed, many African countries such as Uganda adopted it themselves with limited influence from external actors.

According to Smith, decentralization can be defined in territorial terms involving delegation of power to lower level in a territorial hierarchy⁵.

He states that decentralization is about the transfer of authority on a geographical basis, whether by de-concentration (ie delegation) of administrative authority to field units of the same department level of government, or by political devolution of authority to local government units or special statutory bodies. There are various types of decentralization: de-concentration, devolution or delegation⁶. The policy of decentralization is simply delegation of decision-making power or re-organization of local government services into local offices that serve small areas and increase the involvement of local citizens.

Local Governments receive intergovernmental transfers from central government in the form of unconditional, conditional and equalization grants. These transfers account for the bulk of local revenue, around 90% in recent years. The success of decentralization also depends on the capacity of districts and urban government/municipalities to raise their own revenue use it efficiently for provision of services.

However, the generation of local revenue is limited, with local government largely depending on central government financial transfers⁷. A national graduated tax operation for many years in Uganda was abolished in 2006, which meant that the local and governments had limited financial resources to fund public services such as education or health⁸. The local service tax that replaced it does not meet targets and is shouldered only by those engaged in commodity exchange. The majority of citizens are peasant subsistence farmers. The reliance by local government on central government creates a lack of financial autonomy that affects the implementation of development plans and consequently limits service delivery, especially since most of the funds are diverted before they reach their final destination.

The origins of decentralization and local governance in Uganda.

Before the country's independence in 1962 the colonial government practice decentralization traits. Decentralization in Uganda during colonialism involved a system of local government centred on the Kingdom of Buganda. Other areas were administered by hierarchical chiefs of highly decentralized non-kingdom areas, for example in the north east and south west. The first attempt by the British colonial regime to set up local administration was in 1919 when Native Authority Ordinance was passed, providing powers and responsibilities to the chiefs to collect taxes, preside over native courts and enforce law and order. The native councils were neither representative nor democratic. In non-kingdom areas such as Karamoja, Lango, Acholi, Bugisu and Kigezi, the chiefs owed their creation, appointment and allegiance to the district commissioner who in turn, was responsible to the colonial governor. In 1955, the District Council Ordinance was passed to provide for elected councils and it endowed them with the responsibility for primary education, maintenance of road, administration of police, etc.

Golooba-Mutebi explains that, in 1962, when Britain relinquished its control, Uganda was bequeathed fairly autonomous local administrations based largely on two sub-national systems -federal/semi-federal in kingdom areas, and district councils in non-kingdom areas⁹. The 1962 constitution granted significant powers to local authorities over their own composition such as land administration and service provision. In addition, local authorities were given powers to raise autonomous revenues through graduated poll tax, property tax, market dues, rent, fees, licenses and loans. The centre also agreed to give grants to local authorities.

⁶Geoffrey Tukahebwa, 'Local government structures: mechanisms for good governance,' in Apollo Nsibambi, *Decentralization and civil society in Uganda: the quest for good governance*, (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1998), 17.

⁹Prime Minister's Office, 'Regional administration and local government: the status of implementation of decentralization by devolution on mainland Tanzania and the way forward', Paper presented by the permanent secretary, PMO-RALG, during the National Convention on Public Sector Reforms, Ubungo Plaza, Dar Es Salaam, 2008, 14.

The majority of members of the kingdom councils and district councils were directly elected by the people and the period of independence from 1962 to 1966 witnessed a growing number of local governments. However, the central government became anxious about the increasing autonomy of local governments and started curtailing the powers of the councils on the pretext that they were breeding political opposition to the establishment. They did this by giving most of the responsibilities to central ministries. The monarchies and the federal systems were subsequently abolished, and the 1962 constitution was abrogated and replaced by an interim constitution until the 1967 'pigeon-hole' constitution¹⁰. This put strain on the central government/local government system and culminated in the promulgation of the 1967 Local Administrations Act, which recentralized powers, service delivery functions and revenue collection.

Local governments became not only instruments of the central government and political party control, but also sources of patronage and personal enrichment. This system continued until 1986, when the regime changed and the new President Museveni unveiled a ten-point programme on which the country was to be governed that paved way for a local government system. This article focuses on this paradigm shift. It looks at the period between 1993 and 2013, and a total of eight districts (two in each region).

The Wave across Africa and Beyond

Hutchinson explains that, in Mexico, decentralization was adopted in the 1990s as a way of strengthening operational efficiency and the management of health services, and linking planning of health services more closely to overall national planning¹. In Papua New Guinea, decentralization was adopted in 1985 as a method of creating regional autonomy with a view to increasing appropriate responses to local needs and quicker decision-making. In Tanzania, decentralization in the early 1990s aimed at increasing participation of the people in planning and improving coordination between the relevant agencies, reducing duplication of services and making more effective use of the available resources. In South Africa, decentralization was employed as a means of readdressing past inequities created by the apartheid regime.

Uganda took on decentralization as a way of promoting people's participation in the democratic process of the country. It was also seen as a tool to achieve national consensus among different groups, given the past political instability and tribal animosities². The central government opted to create districts as the highest level of local government in an attempt to satisfy regional and tribal demands for political power.

The Policy in Content and Application

Theoretically, there has been a growing focus on the importance of decentralization, participation and empowerment (DPE) in various aspects of development strategies and the reasons for this seem intuitive enough, but a coherent theoretical framework that explains why these factors are so important to development strategies is lacking. Falleti's sequential theory of decentralization argues that good institutional design of decentralization policies is highly dependent on when those policies take place within the sequence of reforms. Political and fiscal decentralization policies that take place early in the sequence tend to increase the power of local government actors, whereas early administrative decentralization reforms tend to negatively affect their power. In Uganda, sequencing was not considered as all the three reforms were lumped together and delivered at once. This ultimately bred conflict and decentralized corruption from the centre to the local.

⁷Richard Crook and James Manor, *Democracy and decentralisation in South West Asia and West Africa, participation, accountability and performance*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 292.

⁸Shabbir Cheema and Dennis Rondinelli, *Decentralizing governance: emerging concepts and practices*, (London, Sage Publications, 2007), 30

Falleti's second argument is that there is a set of preferences of national and subnational actors with regard to types of decentralization. National politicians and executives prefer administrative decentralization to fiscal decentralization, which in turn is preferred to political decentralization. However, in the case of Uganda, the majority of national politicians prefer fiscal decentralization because they view their new positions as employment and 'opportunity to eat'.

Falleti's third argument is that the origin or the state context in which the decentralization process takes place and the timing of each reform is crucial. In Uganda, this is not relevant because the policy was delivered piecemeal. In Latin America where Falleti conducted his research in 2005, in the context of the oligarchic states, decentralization policies sought to consolidate or balance power among regional elites while in the context of the developmental states, decentralization policies sought to strengthen certain regions to make them more adequate for private investment³.

Decentralization is based on three inter-linked aspects: political and legislative empowerment of the people, fiscal devolution and control of the administrative machinery by local councils. In Uganda's case, while introducing the decentralized system of governance, the political and administrative aspects moved faster than the fiscal decentralization. This meant that decentralized services were not matched with adequate financial resources for local governments to deliver services effectively. As a consequence, the local governments depended heavily on subventions from central government in the form of conditional grants rather than depending on local sources of funds. Decentralization reflects not only on a structural process, identifying and empowering subnational structures, but also a political and administrative process involving people determining their own destiny through self-governance and administration. It does this while addressing problems and issues at the subsidiary level.

Mawhood argues that the problems in county councils are structural in nature, that most of them have very weak resource bases and that where resources can be earmarked there will always be a problem of realization. He further asserts that there is lack of development in the rural areas and weak collection machinery⁴. This is true in the case of Uganda where one can find a district with barely enough revenue to offset its critical operations like project supervision or evaluation. Tukahebwa notes that not all the structures of district councils in Uganda are functioning under the law. These realities cast a dark cloud on decentralization policy itself because they create lack of faith in the internal operating systems of departments such as audit that may breed financial impropriety⁴.

The Policy and its Practice.

Essentially, decentralization is about bringing government closer to the people. Indeed, the concern of most governments is to deliver services to their people. The motive behind decentralization is that decisions about resource allocation and service delivery can be more responsive to local needs, usually because local people are directly involved in decision making or indirectly influence those decisions. This is entirely in line with governments, including Uganda, putting people at the centre of development, and is the intention of the constitution. Decentralized governments should be more flexible, responsive and efficient⁴.

Normatively, the policy is classified in four broad terms: de-concentration - sometimes referred to as 'field administration' or 'administrative decentralization'; delegation; devolution and federalism.

Federalism stands out as a unique form of decentralization although others argue that it is a distinct form of governance; federalism is a distinct form of government in both theory and practice. Crook and Manor explain that democratic decentralization has been and continues to be advocated as an important component of policy packages to improve governance in developing countries⁴.

There are several conceptions of deconcentration; for example, the handing over of some administrative authority or responsibility to lower levels within central government ministries and agencies and shifting of workload from centrally located officials to staff or offices outside the national capital⁴. All these definitions suggest that deconcentration involves the redistribution of administrative responsibilities within the central government by giving some discretion to field agents to plan the implementation of programmes and projects, or to adjust central directives to local conditions, within guidelines set by the central ministry or agency headquarters. There are two broad types of de-concentration—prefectorial and functional systems. In the integrated prefectorial system, a representative of the centre (or prefect), located in the regions, supervises local governments and other field officers of the centre. Prefects embody the authority of all ministries as well as the government generally and are the main channel of communication between technical field officials and the capital.

In the un-integrated prefectorial system, the prefect is only one of several channels of communication with the centre. Hence, the prefect is not superior and does not coordinate other field officers. Prefects only supervise local governments. Examples of this system include the current Italian prefect and the district officer in Nigeria.

Delegation is the transfer of decision-making and management authority for specific functions to organizations that are not under the direct control of central government ministries⁴. It involves the transfer of managerial responsibility for specifically defined functions to organizations outside the regular bureaucratic structure. Under delegation, a sovereign authority transfers to an agent specified functions and duties that the agent has broad discretion to execute. In developing countries, delegation of responsibilities is to public corporations, regional development agencies, special function authorities' semi-autonomous project implementation units and a variety of parastatal organizations. However, delegation does not cover the transfer of functions to the private sector or voluntary bodies because such transfers are usually referred to as 'privatization' or 'de-bureaucratization' yet privatization is not a form of decentralization because its relevant agencies are no longer part of the government territorial hierarchy.

Devolution is the exercise of political authority by lay, primarily elected institutions, within areas defined by community characteristics through the legal conferment of powers formally constituted local authorities to discharge specified or residual functions. It is a participative form of decentralization which provides for meaningful participation by the local people in the decision making process. Therefore, devolution is separateness, or diversity of structures within a political system.

Scholars such as Tukahebwa urge that federalism is another form of decentralization that is assumed to be an institutional response to societal divisions and diversities, with the 'federal' nature of the society at least roughly reflected in the forms of its constitutional and political arrangements. However others,

⁴Ibid, 387.

¹⁹Muhammad Habib, 'The Ethiopian federal system: the formative stage', report from FriedrichEbert-Stiftung, Addis Ababa, 5. Available online: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/aethiopen/07945.pdf> [accessed 22 October 2014]

such as Habib, contend that ‘federalism is a device for organizing two or more levels of government that assume different sets of responsibilities and manage the affairs of a country’. Theoretically, all societies can be placed on a continuum running it, from wholly integrated and undivided to wholly divided and diversified. The major social divisions, which in turn define the ‘federal-ness’ of a particular society, are ethnic, national and linguistic, with religious, economic, geographical and historical divisions playing a supportive role. Federalism is an institutional mechanism through which the balance between the forces for unity, (centralization) and diversity (decentralization) may be institutionalized. In Uganda, some tribes like the Baganda advocate for this type of system, which they term as ‘federo’.

It is imperative to note that in the case of administrative decentralization, field administrators have limited power because they are part of an organizational structure and hierarchy with spheres of competence formally defined by superior officials at the headquarters. Decentralization can therefore be increased by expanding the range of decisionmaking areas (the official jurisdiction) or by increasing the level of autonomy within a decision area. Related to this is Kitembo’s argument that ‘all employees of local governments are delinked from central line ministries. A line ministry has no powers to direct local government staff even on technical matters without addressing the head of service in the district (Chief Administrative Officer)⁶.’ Such a move is a positive gesture in management of local affairs and definitely a tribute to decentralization.

The above narrative is a detailed description of the foundations that describe a decentralized or federated state entity as opposed to a unitary composite. There are also different federal systems ranging from one country to another. Some countries federate as a way of satisfying ethnic differences in what is termed as ethnic federalism for example that of Ethiopia. Resource differences and imbalances, and historical reasons in given jurisdictions, are other factors for federalism such as in Nigeria.

From the Centre to the Periphery: Back to the Centre.

Evidently, there is a difference between the initial intention of decentralization and local realities. Over the years, the recruitment of top civil servants such as chief administrative officers and town clerks—initially the preserve of local governments—has been shifted back to the Ministry of Public Service because of the inability of district service commissions to handle such an exercise⁷. Many of them lack competences and are at times biased along tribal lines. There is little capacity at local level to perform such a function as the recruitment of top personnel.

Of late there have been several presidential proclamations and ‘purported’ local demands for the creation of new districts in the country, increasing the number from 60 to 112, but there is little evidence to suggest that this move has benefited citizens. The Mamdan Commission advised against creating new districts arguing that they would increase unproductive costs of administration, both in terms of creating an administrative infrastructure and payment of personnel⁸.

Some local governments were created out of ethnic sentiments—not sharing the same language (Tororo) with neighbours, for example—without due consideration of its ability to galvanize the requisite resources, employ qualified local government personnel, or deliver services. Awortwi notes that the 1997 Local Government Act was amended to abolish district tender boards so that the central government could influence contract awards. Indeed the central government has gradually increased the proportion of conditional grants to wipe

out local government's financial discretion⁹. Awortwi further argues that there are doubts whether the gains made are sustainable yet the same Act was also amended to introduce issues like the regional tier above local governments. Regional tier is a government system that was adopted in Uganda to unite districts in the same area under one non-political administrative entity. Such moves greatly discredit the entire essence of local government.

An annual assessment by the Ministry of Local Government as per the 1997 Local Government Act indicates that the new districts are performing poorly on nearly all fronts. In 2007, the old districts scored 81.5 per cent and many newly created ones were well below 45.5%¹⁰. The survey further notes that the majority of local councils are facing logistical and administrative challenges. In addition, in Uganda decentralization policy has suffered immense constraints because central government has relinquished some responsibilities to local governments without releasing the necessary funds for them to meet those responsibilities. One of the interviewees in this study noted that intergovernmental relations occur in a consultative, manipulative environment of politics and administrative dichotomy¹¹. The funds from the centre come as the only resource for both development and recurrent expenditure needs. This eventually leads to personnel turnover, general apathy, project collapse, poor service delivery and poverty.

The lack of awareness of citizens coupled with the incompetence of the local administrative staff and local politicians are other factors that have continued to undermine the performance of the local government system in Uganda. Reforms, which seek to devolve authority and resources to the people through their democratically elected institutions, i.e. local governments, cannot succeed unless all stakeholders, and more so the general public, internalize the objectives, benefits¹² and the responsibilities of reform policies¹².

The assumption that decentralization promotes people's participation in the way they are governed is premised on the thinking that they understand their roles in the decentralized system. This is an illusion because illiteracy levels are still high and several districts have been created all over the country without conducting civic education to empower the masses for meaningful participation. The effect of this rather sporadic, radical approach to decentralization, which entails a total shift in the manner in which governance is conducted, has led to a lack of consistency and compliance with the requirements under the decentralization legal framework¹³.

There is a challenge of corruption in local governments that cannot rely solely on upward accountability to the centre. It also requires building local accountability. Whereas periodic elections would be a mechanism for holding local decision makers accountable, they are often a crude mechanism for local accountability. In a developing country like Uganda, they are often dominated by personalities and by ethnic loyalties, with little information about policy alternatives and little access to information about the real performance of those in power¹⁴.

In Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, studies found that decentralization led to enhanced transparency and reduced incidences of corruption, but it was noted that decentralization reduces grand theft but increases petty corruption in the short run. This is what others call 'decentralized corruption'¹⁵.

⁹William Kisebo, *Handbook on Decentralisation in Uganda*, (Makerere University Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2006), 59.

¹⁰Interview with the former District Chairperson of Wakiso District Eng. Ian Kyeyune at Wakiso District Headquarters, 12 June 2014.

¹¹Elliott Green, 'District creation and decentralization in Uganda', *Crisis States Research Centre*, London, 2008, 4.

¹²Nicholas Awortwi, 'Government development trajectories in Ghana and Uganda: an unbreakable path? A comparative study of decentralization.' *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 2011, 368.

¹³Government of Uganda, *The Local Government Act 1997, 'Report on District Performance Surveys'*, Ministry of Local Government, Kampala, 2007

Ali Mazrui highlighted the situation in Ghana where, at one time, clinics were without drugs, and nurses were without bandages, and in Uganda there are classrooms without desks and teachers without salaries, largely due to corruption and policy decay¹⁶. This seems to be a global dilemma in the implementation of this policy. Crook and Manor observe that ‘decentralization in Karnataka (India) yielded paradoxical results. The number of people involved in corrupt acts increased significantly. But the overall amount of money stolen almost certainly decreased—at least modestly¹⁷.

There may be tax resistance, which can take violent forms; tax collectors avoid certain villages due to the high personal risks involved in tax collection, and other villages are only visited by collectors accompanied by the local militia. Cases of tax revolts have happened in places like Kilimanjaro Region and the Coastal Region in Tanzania¹⁸. In Uganda, the situation has been similar; in Kampala City Council Authority and some urban municipalities around the country, tax collectors have had running battles with market vendors. Makara observes that there are ‘persistent problems in revenue sharing between the central government and local authorities; there has been no systematic attempt to match assigned functions to local authorities with requisite financing¹⁹. That is why some local governments have budget deficits whereas others have spillovers. There are related issues such as the failure of local governments to absorb funds released to them by the centre in a financial season, poor time management and absenteeism of staff, shortage of critical staff, poor working conditions and environment, delays in submitting statutory reports and information to the centre, corruption and poor/negative attitude towards public service²⁰. All of which are rendering the policy inefficient and ineffective.

Uganda also still faces challenges related to deepening and institutionalizing decentralization including technical capacity deficiencies in local governments and tensions among key stakeholders competing to maximize their role, or ‘over administration’. A report on fiscal decentralization in Uganda, which was released on 9 December 2000, established that ‘Anecdotal evidence is that Un Conditional Grant (UCG) is financing less productive staff and activities in many districts because of mingling it with local revenues. Councillors could access UCG transfers to support their emoluments and expenses²¹. This is another abuse of resources.

Closely related is the absence of capacity building, mentoring and community participation. Whereas decentralization brings with it a significant increase in levels of responsibility, both in policymaking and implementation, it does not necessitate sustainable capacity building at the relevant levels of government. For example, Mukono district in Uganda had glaring capacity gaps among the staff and political leadership in areas of budgeting, planning and gender mainstreaming and the politicians who had trained and grasped the issues in various areas were not reelected at the end of their terms²².

Extinguished Hopes behind a Distinguished.

Strategy Under the Uganda Local Government Act, citizens have the right to participate in annual budget conferences at each level of local government²³, but in many cases this is little more than a formality because

¹⁶Interview with Patrick K Mutabwire, acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Uganda, 18 November 2013.

¹⁷Ngwilizi Hassan MP, ‘Decentralization in Tanzania’, paper submitted by the Minister of State, President’s Office (Regional Administration and Local Government) to the UNCDF Conference on Decentralization and Local Governance in Africa, Cape Town, 26-30 March 2001.

¹⁸H Ojambo, ‘Decentralization in Africa: a critical review of Uganda’s experience’, *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, 15:2 (2012), 569-70.

¹⁹Nick Devas, ‘The Challenges of Decentralization’, International Development Department, School of Public Policy University of Birmingham, England, 2005.

²⁰Anwar Shah, Theresa Thompson and Heng-fu Zou, ‘The impact of decentralization on service delivery, corruption, fiscal management and growth in developing and emerging market economies: a synthesis of empirical evidence’, CESifo DICE Report 1/2004, 41.

²¹Ali Mazrui, ‘Garden of Eden in decay’, film documentary, Triple Heritage, 1986.

²²Crook and Manor, (1998), 61.

participation is limited to a few special interest groups. In some cases there has been no opportunity for civil society groups to engage with local government²⁴. The majority of citizens are uninformed on what takes place in local government which is evidenced by the statement of one interviewee when asked whether they interact with their leaders: 'We don't know what they do; they always pass here in big vehicles'²⁵. Plans by government to introduce weekly meetings 'Bimeeza' where citizens would be informed of current projects and involved in the decisions did not take off due to claims that there were not sufficient funds to implement it. Kisakye reminds us that the Local Government Statute had provided for a participative role for the people in planning and decision making²⁶. Another paradox is that civil servants believe decentralization has brought better control over resources and are supportive of it, but on the other hand service receivers are not admitting that things have improved in recent years. Such a perception gap is a critical challenge that needs to be addressed.

Hope for the Future, Remedies and Reforms There ought to be political and economic reforms to demand effective decentralization in which the involvement of the people—directly or through their democratically elected representatives—is given paramount importance. Research by Ahikire revealed that while representation of women in the political sphere is guaranteed, this does not apply to the political arena among civil servants. Here a huge disparity exists with men dominating most positions of authority, such as heads of department, while women are concentrated in the lower echelons of district staff and cleaners²⁷. Gender mainstreaming should be a core interest in a modern decentralized setting, but Ahikire also observes that whilst individual women may be able to break gender discriminative and oppressive barriers, group interests cannot easily be represented because of the competitive nature of the women quota system. The nature of electoral politics is such that an individual candidate is at the mercy of voters²⁸.

The civil/public sector reform aims to achieve a smaller, affordable, well paid, efficient and effectively performing public service, and to create a civil service with a professional and managerial culture, promoting democratic ideals, efficiency and delivery of sustainable social services with the people themselves being actually involved in the whole process. The new vision envisages central government focusing on national issues and programs, and the creation of an environment that is conducive to the operation of a market economy conducted in tandem with the principles of equity and efficiency.

Local government reform should be in response to public concern over the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of a given jurisdiction. It should have the overall objective of improving the quality of and access to public services provided through or facilitated by local government authorities to hasten development at the local level.

'Full blast' de-concentration is not good for fragile economies like Uganda. Local councillors and inexperienced bureaucrats may end up making grave administrative mistakes that impede governance and indeed the policy itself and hence there is need for 'small doses' of power. This is justified by Mawhood who

²³Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, 'Fiscal decentralization in Tanzania: for better or for worse? Working paper 2001:10, Chr. Michelsen Institute Development Studies and Human Rights, Bergen, Norway, 28.

²⁴Sabiiti Makara, 'Resource Sharing for Local Government Emancipation', in Apollo Nsibambi, *Decentralisation and civil society in Uganda: the quest for good governance*, (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1998), 49.

²⁵Hon. Adolf Mwesige, Minister of Local Government, 'Opening remarks' made during the Quarterly Meeting Of Chief Administrative Officers and Town Clerks of Municipal Councils, Silver Springs Hotel, Kampala 7-8 May 2013, 3.

²⁶Government of Uganda and donor sub-group on decentralization, 'Fiscal decentralisation in Uganda: the way forward' (2000), 39. Available online: <http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/128804/GoU%202001%20Uganda.pdf> [accessed 10 November 2014].

²⁷Katono Wasswa, 'Local government audits and accounts: shortfalls and overflows', in D Assimwe and N Musisi (eds.), *Decentralization and transformation of governance in Uganda*, (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007), 20.

²⁸Government of Uganda, (2007).

²⁹Devas, (2005).

points out that local authorities left to govern themselves will be less competent, corrupt, will abuse their powers and fail to collect revenues due to the public purse²⁹.

Each local government authority should have roles and functions that correspond to the demands for its services by local people, and the socioeconomic conditions prevailing in the area. The structure of each local government will reflect the nature of its roles and functions. Those with natural resources like minerals and national parks should be encouraged to finance most of their own programs with those revenues if the central ministries are willing to relinquish their grip over the proceeds from these national treasures.

Local government authorities have not been transparent and accountable to the people, and continued interference from central government has been justified by this fact. This has included monitoring accountability by local government authorities, a financial and performance audit, provision of adequate resources (human and financial) to enable the local government authorities to deliver services. Activities ought to be monitored to ensure that funds are utilized as envisaged in the budgets passed by local councils³⁰, and there is need for compliance assessment tools for public procurement and disposal in local governments³¹.

Local government reform programs should aim at improving the quality of services and access to public goods that are provided by local government authorities. The programme needs to have components that aim to contribute to the achievement of the overall goal such as good governance, restructuring, human resource development, and institutional and legal framework, monitoring and evaluation plus program management.

There is need for complementarity between local government reform and sector reform in implementing the Local Government Act, national minimum standards of services that have been set to guide the policy. Districts and all municipalities are bound by the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), the Public Finance and Accountability Act and Regulations of 2003, The Local Governments Act, 1997 CAP 243, The Local Governments Financial and Accountability Regulations, among other provisions³², and these must be the guiding instruments.

Strict accountability should be fostered in the management of public affairs and the use of resources should bear in mind the responsibilities of the Inspector General of Government (IGG), which include the elimination of corruption, abuse of office and impunity. There is need to supervise the enforcement of the Leadership Code, ensure arrest, cause prosecution in respect of cases involving corruption and abuse of authority or public office³³. This may scare off would be offenders.

Lastly, there is the need to strengthen human resources capacity by insisting on the right educational qualifications for the right engagements and to avoid scenarios like those of Moyo District Service Commission (DSC) that attempted to employ a Veterinary Doctor as the district director of health services because he was the only applicant who hailed from there. Establishing model districts and encouraging competition through awarding trophies, peer reviewing and studying experiences is imperative. Indeed,

²⁹Interview with Mzee Rwanone, resident of Rambura Village, Nyakaabande sub county, Kisoro District, 13 April 2013.

³¹J Kisaky, 'Political background to decentralization', in S. Villadsen and F. Lubanga, *Democratic decentralization in Uganda: a new approach to local governance*, (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1996), 45.

³²Josephine Ahikire, *Localised or localising democracy: gender and the politics of decentralisation in contemporary Uganda*, (Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2007), 54.

³³Josephine Ahikire, 'Decentralisation and the promise of democratic participation in contemporary Uganda: examining the gender terrain of the local council (LC) elections', working paper no.90/2004, Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, 2004, 45.

³⁴Mawhood, (1993), 260.

there is need to revamp model centres/districts for learning purposes. Not only equip the health centres with equipment and drugs but also with health workers³⁵.

Conclusion

Its proponents urged that the policy of decentralization would be a panacea to the poverty syndrome that had dogged many states in Africa, but in the outcome the policy has experienced a high turnover of district personnel, low morale and apathy among staff³⁶. It is also often claimed that decentralization is effective in reduction of poverty due to inherent opportunities for higher popular participation and increased efficiency in public service delivery³⁷, but poverty remains high in many implementing nations.

Lambright contends that Uganda's policy of decentralization is among the most advanced on the continent, and has earned high scores on the indices of political, administrative and fiscal decentralization, *prima facie*, but there has not been much change for local citizens³⁸. Despite this, decentralization has not been a similar failure to the Ujaama model villages of the socialist Tanzania or other policy paradigms that have stood as white elephants in the recent past³⁹. But there is the need to review and redirect critical implementation policy pillars and strategies that hold the programme in its entirety. Inclusion of stakeholders such as politicians, academics, policy implementers and locals is critical at the planning stage to form consensus and acceptability of the policy.

³⁵Villadsen and Lubanga, Democratic decentralization in Uganda: a new approach to local governance, 131

³⁶Milton Tumutegyeize, 'Compliance of local governments with the public procurement and disposal system', Directorate of Training and Capacity Building, PPDA, Silver Springs Hotel, Kampala, 2013.

³⁷Patrick Mutabwire, 'Keynote address by the acting permanent secretary., 2013.

³⁸Sylvester Kiseembo, Frequently asked questions on decentralisation in Uganda, (Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2006), 2.

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