



Mtafiti Mwafrika (*African Researcher*)
Monograph Series
**African Research and Documentation
Centre**
Uganda Martyrs University

Number 5, 1999

Decentralization in Uganda: Theory and Practice

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The paper examines the rationale of decentralization in meeting two important issues in Uganda namely: Popular democracy and advancement of rural development. The implementation of the decentralization programme, which is given effect by the Local Government Act 1997 has widened political space at the level where different actors have been enabled to participate in the decision making of those activities that affect them. Not only has it widened political space, it has also made available financial resources that have made planning, resource allocation, programming and prioritization predictable and possible. However, there have been implementing costs, which at times may make Doubting Thomas's think that the programme has not achieved its objectives. These constraints should, however, be taken as part of the implementation process.

Introduction

The process of decentralization in Uganda traces back to the establishment of the Resistance Council System in 1986 on-wards. In October 1992, the President launched the decentralization programme. Since then, the policy of decentralization has been included in the new Ugandan Constitution, and in 1997, a Local Government Act was enacted. These two legal instruments have dramatically changed the central government framework within which its local governments operate. It is expected that districts, under decentralization, will have more power, resources, more responsibilities and more decision-making autonomy. Also, their performance will thus be increasingly important for growth, poverty eradication and long-term rural development prospects.

This paper examines how decentralization has been implemented to ensure participatory democracy and to advance rural development. In the discussion, we shall critique decentralization policy to find out to what extent it has realized its objectives and what remains to be done.

Decentralization: Administrative or Political?

The term decentralization is commonly used to describe various arrangements, and there is a dispute amongst scholars as to whether it should be used to mean deconcentration or devolution. Devolution refers to a form of political decentralization where a local government has an established local assembly with usually elected members. The local government to which power is transferred is given "a

corporate status, autonomy and functions”¹. Decision-making authority is given to autonomous local governments or special statutory bodies, with their own personnel whom they can appoint and dismiss. This is a system, which is characterized by a high level of local government autonomy. Deconcentration, on the other hand, refers to administrative decentralization where officials appointed by the centre are posted to the field (district or province, etc) to act as central government representatives. “These officials vary in the extent to which they freely exercise discretion in the performance of their duties”² In reality, decentralization may turn out to be more about the exercise of central control than the granting of autonomy to local institutions or administrators.

A form of decentralization which guarantees the participation of all citizens and consequently, owning their development process, should, among other things include:

- a. Transfer of real power to local units to reduce the workload on remote and under-resourced central officials.
- b. Bring political and administrative control over services to the point where they are actually delivered thus improving accountability and effectiveness and promoting people’s feeling of ownership of programmes and projects executed in the areas.
- c. Free local managers from central constraints and as a long-

¹ A. Nsibambi, "Decentralization in Uganda: Obstacles and Opportunities", in E. K. Makubuya etc. al. (eds.), *Uganda: Thirty Years of Independence*, Kampala: Makerere University Press, 1992, p. 166.

² M. Wallis, *Bureaucracy: Its Role in Third World Development*, London: Macmillan, 1998, p. 122.

term goal allow them to develop organizational structures tailored to local circumstances.

- d. Improve financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between the payment of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to their constituents.
- e. Improve the capacity of local authorities to plan, finance and manage the delivery of services to their constituents.³

Participatory Democracy and Development

Many definitions of democracy tend to be made to fit specific types of regimes/systems. As a result, the substance of what is described as democratic is dependent on the ideological bent of the user of the term. “Democracies” and “Democrats”, thus come in different colours, shapes and sizes. They include social democracy, Christian, liberal, popular/participatory, etc. One would assume that democracy is the anti-thesis of dictatorship. But in Marxist tradition the “dictatorship” of the “proletariat” is another form of “participatory democracy”⁴

Democracy, etymologically means “rule of the people”. The definition raises two questions, namely: What is “rule” and what is “people”? Rule is defined as “the exercise of power,

³ M. A. M Kisubi, “The Process of Decentralization” in P. Langseth and Justus Mugaju (eds.), *Towards an Effective Civil Service*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1996, pp. 88-89.

⁴ The views expressed here chiefly rely on Africa K. Gitonga, “The Meaning and Foundation of Democracy” in O. Walter, et al. (eds.), *Democratic Theory and Practice*, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1988, pp.4-22.

authority and influence in society". Thus it is the rulers, who exercise power, authority and influence, who largely determine the character and destiny of human societies. Any ideal democratic model proposes that the people should be rulers. The implication is that "the people should have their destiny, and that of their society, in their own hands"⁵. A. Gitonga handles the question of who are the "people" thus:

The only realistic and tenable conceptualization of the people would therefore have to be that which is both practically operationalized and empirically demonstrable or ascertainable. That is, the people as a plurality expresses by the majority principle.⁶

Democracy, thus becomes the rule of the people, by the people, and the later addition by Abraham Lincoln, "for the people." "For" the people refers to the government capacity to cater for the material, social and other interests of the people. The emphasis given to the "for" the people shows the fact that democracy and development are inseparably linked.

How do we come to know the people as the majority? In the tiny states of Greece, it was a simple affair: all male adults assembled and it was easy to establish where the majority of them stood on any issue. However, this direct mode of the people's participation is impracticable in the gigantic states of modern societies. In such societies the people select their representatives. The latter should be representative in the fullest sense of the word, that is, according to the three basic meanings of the term:

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 10.

a) First of all, it should constitute a "representative sample". It should represent a cross-section of the population in terms of such things as race, religion, sex, socio-economic classes, etc. In this sense, the proxy rulers will pass the test of goodness, fairness and justice because they will be "cut in the people's image".

b) Secondly, the group should be representative in the sense which would be best rendered, if we desegregate the term to "re-presenter". In this sense, the group should merely be a kind of "re-sayer", a spokesman (woman), a mouthpiece, an echo: the paper, conveyor, transmitter of messages that the people would like to send. In a word, the representatives would merely be "their masters' voices"!

c) Finally, the group should be representative in the sense of being an agent, that is, a fully mandated delegate authorized to act on behalf and in lieu of some other person-the people. To this extent, they would have authority to use their judgement to decide in matters of interest to, and, ideally, in the interests of, the people. They would have thus had a margin of discretion enabling them to interpret the messages (the will) of the people, to amplify or tone them down as necessary to initiate action.⁷ People must be free to choose their representatives if the latter are to be considered as representing them. The system through which they are chosen must be open where the candidates are allowed to organize themselves for the purpose of offering their services to the people. The system must allow as many parties, groupings and campaign styles as possible. Multi-party systems are therefore a better foundation of democracy than single party systems. It can be argued that no-

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

party systems are the best.⁸

The Role of Civil Society in building a Democracy

In many states, these aspects of democracy are state given, and, therefore, there should be ways through which the state is checked, to keep on the truck of democracy. The most common is through a viable civil society. Diamond has ably studied the importance of civil society to democracy, when he argues:

Civil society provides an especially strong foundation for democracy when it generates opportunities for participation and influence at all levels of governance, not least the local level. For it is at the local level that the historically marginalised are most likely to be able to effect public policy and to develop a sense of inefficacy as well as actual political skills. The democratisation of local governments thus goes hand in hand with developments of civil society as an important condition for the deepening of democracy and the 'transition from clienteles to citizenship' in Latin America, as well as everywhere in the developing and post-communist worlds.⁹

Civil society refers to various patterns of political participation outside formal state structures. The emergence of civil society, however, does not guarantee democracy, but it is unlikely that a viable democracy can survive without a civil society. D. Woods has argued that it is within civil society that public opinion is formed and that it is through independent

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ L. Diamond, "Re-thinking Civil Society: Towards Democratic Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, no. 3, 1994, pp. 8-9.

associations that individuals can have some influence on government decision-making.¹⁰ Despite the fact that civil society in Africa is still threatened by particularism of ethnicity and atomistic actions, and of course, this is not a preserve of Africa alone, its recent push for democratisation in Africa is acknowledged. Not only has it pushed for 'political' democracy, but for 'economic' democracy as well.¹¹

The Link between Democracy and Development

Having clarified the term democracy and our consequent conclusion that democratic government should be 'for the people', it is important that we examine the true meaning of development as well as its deeper significance for the state and civil society in the world today. Development is not to be confused with economic growth, that is the increase in per capita output of goods and services in a nation's economy. Development refers to a rise in the standard of living of the population in a way that most people cannot only satisfy their economic and social needs more or less adequately, but also enjoy life more fully. This is the true meaning of development as the realisation of human personality through progressive elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality.¹² Development, thus, implies the

¹⁰ D. Woods, "Civil Society in Europe and Africa: Limiting State Power through a Public Sphere", *Journal of African Studies Review*, Vol. 35, no. 2, 1992, p. 24.

¹¹ *idem.*

¹² D. Seers, "The Meaning of Development", in N. T. Uphoff and W. F. Ichman (eds.), *The Political Economy of Development*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, pp. 123-129.

re-distribution of a country's wealth to meet the objective. In its fullest sense, it is not synonymous with economic growth, although growth is its condition. It also means more than satisfying basic needs, even though this is the first step in the right direction.¹³ Nzongola-Ntalaja argues that the deeper significance of this meaning of development for the state and civil society is that it is above all a political issue. It involves choice and political will. The key question with respect to political will and development choice or strategy involves the interests at stake in the development process. Whose interests are to be sacrificed to ensure growth and re-distribution? Which social groups are going to bear the major costs of development and which groups stand to reap the major benefits?¹⁴ Since in Africa the majority of the population reside in the rural areas the kind of development we should pursue should have the rural focus. Whereas the majority of the people in the rural areas are engaged in agricultural production it should be clear that rural development is not synonymous with agricultural development.¹⁵

Rural development involves the development of agriculture and related activities; and the modernisation and establishment of small-scale rural industries, rural water and health systems, an autonomous rural government, rural road network, rural education, and an environment friendly system,

¹³ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Africa: Essays in Contemporary Politics*, London: Zed Books Ltd., 1987, p. 78.

¹⁴ idem.

¹⁵ See Kisamba Mugerwa, "A Case for an Integrated Rural Development Policy and a Rural development Authority", in A. H. Syed (ed.), *Integrated Rural Development in Uganda*, Kampala: African Foundation for Development, 1991, pp. 31-32 for the argument.

and rural credit facility network. This view of rural development emphasizes the change in the structure of opportunities that rural people can avail themselves of, thereby improving their standard of living. This includes a transformation of socio-economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in rural areas.

The emphasis in rural development is laid on integrated community participation. This involves including people who benefit from rural development programs. The most important aspect of this participation is the role of women. The latter is not a separate group: they are an essential part of the community and are complementary to the men-folk. Men without women can do nothing: women without men are equally useless. Understanding how women fit into a community and interact with men is an essential part of rural development work. The concept of community participation calls for people-centred development which emphasises, the need for strengthening institutional and social capacity for greater social control, accountability and self-reliance, high priority placed on democratisation, the mobilisation of local people to manage their own affairs and resources, though, the government may have a guiding role. The benefit of such type of participation is a more efficient and productive development that is sustainable, independent, equitable, accountable, and rich in local initiatives that strengthen the socio-economic base of the rural people.

Decentralisation in Uganda

After the launching of decentralisation in October 1992, 13 pilot districts became decentralised. Their performance led to the enactment of the Decentralisation

Statute of 1993. To harmonise the provisions of the Constitution of 1995 with decentralisation, the Local Governments Act was passed in 1997. The Local Government Act of 1997 gave effect to the implementation of decentralisation. The emphasis of the Act is to devolve powers to the district and the lower levels of local governments and the democratisation of decision-making.

Under the Act the district and the sub-county have been made local governments that are body corporate, capable of suing and being sued. They are no longer required to forward their budgets to the minister for approval. The councils, themselves, have complete responsibility for their budgets. The centre no longer approves bye-laws of these local governments. Except, if such bye-laws are not consistent with the constitution or any other law made by the legislature. The minister responsible for local governments has no powers to terminate the mandate of a councillor. The revocation of a mandate of a councillor is constitutionally vested in the electorate who can initiate the removal of any councillor through petitioning the Electoral Commission.

Neither does the minister have powers to dissolve councils-until their statutory term of office expires. This can only happen when it is clear that a council is unable to exercise its duties. When such a situation arises, the President, with the approval of two thirds of all members of parliament, assumes the executive powers of any district. But the following conditions must first be met:

- a. Where the district council so requests and it is in the public interest to do so.
- b. Where a state of emergency has been declared in that district or in Uganda in general, and

- c. Where it has become extremely difficult, or impossible, for a district government to function.

These administrative changes are supposed to enhance local autonomy and bring decision-making at the place where people affected want it, including the decisions in district human-power development.

A word on human-power development is desirable. Every district establishes its own District Service Commission to appoint, promote, discipline, and remove any officer serving the district. However, they are supposed to follow Public Service guidelines when recruiting persons qualified in specialised disciplines. They may even co-opt persons qualified in such disciplines on the commission. If the commission aggrieves a district officer, he/she has the right to appeal to the Public Service, and the latter's decision is final.

The local governments have been enabled to perform their functions by decentralising the finances. Sub-counties are entitled to retain 65% of the tax revenue they collect on behalf of the government for local development, in accordance with local formulated policies (community participation). In every district a tender board is established which must conform to the standards established by the Central Tender Board for procurement of goods, services, and works. It acts only on the request by the Local Council seeking these goods, services, and works. It is required to give a quarterly summary of all tenders awarded, a copy of which is supplied to all relevant councils in a district, the Minister of Local Government, the Inspector General of Government (IGG), and the Central Tender Board.

Every male person of, or above the apparent age of eighteen years, and any female person of, or above eighteen years engaged in any gainful employment or business pays

graduated tax. It is important that we note the gender assumptions here. It is assumed that females who are not in gainful employment or business cannot afford to pay tax while their male counterparts can. The tax is paid after the assessment done by a Tax Assessment Committee. A taxpayer who feels that the tax he/she is to pay is too high, is allowed to appeal to a Tax Assessment Appeals Tribunal.

The regional imbalances and poverty are resolved by requiring Central Government to provide equalisation grants to districts, which are lagging behind the national average standard.

The district executive council is responsible for implementing decisions and its members are in full time service. The chairperson of the district council (LC V) is the overall co-ordinator of district programs and directs any business of the council, and is answerable to it. The council elects a speaker and deputy speaker from among its members.

The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the chief of the administrative arm of the district responsible to council. The CAO is also the district accounting officer, co-ordinator of various departments, and chief monitor of the implementation of district projects. However, there is still a difficulty of making a distinction between the co-ordination role of LC 5 chairperson and the monitoring role of CAO.

Participatory Democracy and Development in Uganda

The Local Council system: An Instrument of Participatory Democracy

The local council system starts at village level, known as LC I. All adult people of a village, that is the electors, form a local council from which they elect a committee of nine, to run local affairs of the village on the day to day basis. Each member of the committee has a specified field of duty. This type of democracy goes beyond the Greek one in a sense that all people are included, i.e., women, youth and disabled.

According to the Act all local district leaders and councillors (LC III, LC V chairpersons, and councillors to LC III and LC V) are popularly elected. The selection of these leaders is transparent and fair. For the chairperson, the secret ballot is used, and for the councillors the electors line behind the candidate or candidate's agent and/or portrait. The citizen's participation is therefore enhanced to an extent that they not only participate in election of their officials but also have the power to question the performance of their leaders and even to recall them, through passing votes of no confidence.

One of the aspects of practical democracy is the operation mechanism through which the representatives are elected. This mechanism of electing representatives should be as direct as possible. There should be no intermediaries, go-between/middle people between the people and the representatives. "The people should choose their own representative-not to choose the choices!"¹⁶ After LC I, LC II and IV, are elected by the electoral colleges of the Executive Committee members of LC I in the parish at the LC II level and Executive Committee members of LC III in the county at LC IV level. This shows that LC II and LC IV councils' councillors are not elected by the popular vote except by the "choices". The Commission of Inquiry into the Local

¹⁶ A.Gitonga, op. cit., pp. 20-12.

Government System handled this issue when it recommended the system of direct elections for all LCs.¹⁷ The Commission had argued:

Continuous accountability means being accountable to the electorate not only at election time; but also between elections.... The system of elections obtaining at present is a system of direct elections only at RC I (read LC I); thereafter, elections are indirect, with elected representatives at one level forming the electorate to choose who would occupy offices at the next higher level, and so on. We believe this system will water down democracy the further up the ladder we go, the more the electorate will shrink in proportion to the population of the area. The smaller the electorate, the greater the chances of intrigue and corruption; and therefore of the crystallisation of unprincipled special interests over the long term. We believe that the interests of a consistent democracy demands that the electorate always remain popular, and this can only be guaranteed by direct elections at all levels.¹⁸

The system for electing representatives should be as wide open as possible. The people should be given a wide choice of possible candidates, and should have the greatest freedom of choice in selecting from amongst them. And it is in this connection that the secret ballot becomes a technical device of the greatest importance, as a foundation of a democratic

¹⁷ Uganda Government, Report of the Inquiry into the Local Government System, Entebbe: Government Printer, 1987, p. 32.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

process. It ensures that at the moment of deciding, the citizen makes his/her choice-free from manipulation or undue influence of whatever kind.¹⁹ Therefore, the method of electing councillors in the current system is not by secret ballot. It is lining behind the candidates or their agents, which opens the voting process to pressure.²⁰ Furthermore, the electorate must be given freedom to listen to alternative views of the candidates. In the present system, a candidate's meeting is organised, but they are not allowed to campaign outside this formal arrangement. Whereas this formal arrangement offers every candidate a platform to raise his/her views, it is limited in scope and time because you follow the standard of the organisers. On the issue of banning campaigns outside the candidates' meeting, the Commission of Inquiry into the Local Government System had argued:

While it is true that campaigns have in the past been turned into occasion of 'bribing' the electorate, dividing them in the process, this is not a sufficient reason to move away from any type of campaign in principle. In the absence of a campaign, a community is only aware of the character and integrity of the candidate, not his/her political views, i.e., how she/he identifies vital community issues and the possible methods of solving these. Also, the absence of campaigns does not eliminate the need for the candidates to broaden their electoral appeal. It only

¹⁹ A. Gitonga, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁰ See, for example, A. J. Regan, "Decentralisation Policy: Reshaping State and Civil Society", in H. B. Hansen and M. Twaddle (eds.), Developing Uganda, London: James Curry, 1998, p. 194.

drives this exercise behind closed quarters; open campaign is thus replaced by hidden lobbying. We believe that, depending on how it is conducted, a campaign may turn out to be an exercise in the manipulation and therefore disintegration of the electorate, or it may have the potential of becoming part of a process of education and organization of the same community. In the former case, the electorate is assumed passive, the candidate active; the result is a process of advertisement for the candidate, not education of the electorate. On the other hand, in an environment of continuous discussion of community and national issue, an open campaign understood as an open discussion of issues and alternatives open to the community should in fact cap the process of education-and thereby organisation-of community, instead of undermining it.²¹

Decentralisation and Development

Since 1987, Uganda's economic performance has been quite good. The economy grew at a rate of 6.5% a year between 1987/8 and 1996/7. Per capita GDP grew at 3.4% a year during the same period. The hyper-inflation of the 1970s and early 1980s was halted and reduced from 250% a year in 1986/7 to less than 6% a year by June 1996. Are these figures reflected in the life of the rural people who constitute the majority of the population? In other words, what has been happening to the inequality problem?

Rural areas in Uganda comprise over 88% of the total population. And over 90% of the population are living in absolute

²¹ Uganda Government, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

poverty.²² The study carried out by Poverty Alleviation Program and the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAPSCA) identified six groups, which are suffering from absolute poverty. These are:

- a. Disadvantaged peasants, including the land less and pastoralists with inadequate livestock,
- b. People who are too handicapped to work by reason of physical or mental disabilities or by reason of old or tender age,
- c. One-parent families, particularly, those headed by females, such as divorcees, widows and unmarried mothers,
- d. Children in need of care and protection, including orphans and displaced children,
- e. People living in remote areas who lack access to services and profitable markets, who live in insecure areas, and those frequently affected by natural disasters like earthquakes and droughts,
- f. The retrenched people, civil servants with low salaries, and urban slum dwellers.²³

The 1997 Local Government Act decentralised the following services and activities to the district: social rehabilitation, labour matters, probation and welfare, street children and orphans, women in development, community development, youth affairs, cultural affairs and district

²² V. Jamal, "Changes in Poverty Patterns in Uganda", in H. B. Hansen and M. Twaddle, op. cit., p. 81.

²³ Cited in A. Nsibambi, "Making democratic Decentralisation an Instrument of Poverty Eradication: Uganda's Challenge", UNDP development Forum, 1997, pp. 4-5 (unpublished).

information services. These services and activities, if well performed by the districts, will cater for the above named six groups which suffer from absolute poverty. Later, we shall show how the decentralisation programme has addressed the problems of the absolute poor or not.

Modernising Agriculture

The Local Government Act is very explicit about what the districts can do to improve their agriculture. They should be involved in crop, animal and fisheries husbandry extension services, entomological services and vermin control, and cooperative development. Despite these activities, it is remarkable that over the recent years, agricultural productivity and production in Uganda has been declining. Problems associated with the decline in agricultural production, are:

- i. Farm inputs such as sustaining pesticides and fertilizers, tractors, boat engines (fishers) are beyond the farmers' reach,
- ii. Land use policy that put big chunks of land into the hands of absentee landlords,
- ii. Transport and communicating channels which bring about transport problems of farmer's produce. Secondly, this hinders the interaction of the local people, except on sad occasions like burials. Newspapers do not circulate in rural areas,
- iv. Agriculture extension service which is ill equipped and poorly funded,
- v. Doing agriculture is business yet the prices of agricultural products are low
- vi. Poor farmer co-operative movement that is infested with corrupt people, for example, Banyankore Kweterana, in Mbarara District,

vii. Poor leadership qualities inherent in the local government system.

In order to solve these problems, government decided to modernise agriculture. It is hoped that this program will eliminate poverty because farmers are poor due to: (a) low yield per acre because of backward technology in form of inferior seeds and poor farming techniques, (b) low-price crops produced on small-scale because of land fragmentation, (c) use of rudimentary tools, for example, a hand hoe, instead of say ox-plough, and (d) leaving food security to free market forces when society is not yet sensitised to benefit from the market and is still addicted to commandist colonial strategy of bye-law food security crops and caning to make people grow cash crops.

Low yields are to be handled by increasing productivity through the use of high yielding seeds or planting or stocking material. National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) avails the seeds for multiplication to gazetted institutions and individual farmers. Stockists close to farmers are gazetted to sell improved varieties. The gazetting is done in collaboration with the farmer's organisations and District Authorities. Training of farmers to improve on their farming techniques is done through, the appointment of agricultural, veterinary and fisheries officers at the sub-county to conduct extension, and demonstrations at the farm level.

Crops and animals which are grown on a small scale but give high yields to the farmer have been identified and they include clonal coffee, macadamia, spices, oil palm, citrus, rabbits and vanilla. The country is sub-divided into production zones for these crops or enterprises to initially enable the building of capacity in their production, marketing and processing.

Technologies of the type of oxen or donkeys are to be introduced. The private sector is encouraged to invest in the

tractorisatation program, because of proven inefficiency of government owned machinery units. These programs are supported by the existing credit facilities, which need further polishing, in order to support the farmer.

The leadership of all districts has been mobilised and sensitised on the issue of food security. Bye-laws have been reactivated to ensure that there is food security right from household to the national level.

The program of modernising agriculture in Uganda is an ambitious one. Its success will be measured by:

- a. Access to land is secured for all and is equitable for all. The 1995 Constitution vests land in the people of Uganda. Secondly, peasants on small-holdings owned by big landlords recently scored success when a Land Act was passed which gave them security of occupancy. They can now apply for and get certificates, without any fear of being forced off the land by landlords. This also means that the poor have now the means to engage in increased production while at the same time contributing to national food security.
- b. Every product, which can be a source of food, is sought out and developed, even crops of gathering.
- c. Imports of inputs is reduced and limited to what is strictly necessary, given the very limited resources of the Ugandan economy, and the impact of their cost on peasant resources. This has to be done through industrialisation, which is at the service of agricultural development.
- d. A union of rural co-operatives, which would have as its basic cell the whole village community in a co-operative, is established. The membership should not be forced but voluntary. Co-operatives should be spontaneously generated, though; the extension officer who can play a catalytic role. The co-

operative's responsibility is to collect and market the products of the whole village community. It should control the credit system. The profits of the co-operatives should go to the loan fund to help the members in difficulties-lack of machinery, herdsmen and women needing watering troughs, etc. The co-operative is under the village assembly to check the management and transmit directives to meet the needs of the community.

- e. The high level of corruption among some highly paid individuals is curbed. There is certainly a reason to investigate fortunes, especially large fortunes to retrieve illicitly acquired gains for the benefit of the nation, and the people.²⁴

The Case of Universal Primary Education (UPE)

In the field of education, the government has taken the responsibility of four children per family, who study completely free, while the rest will pay residual cost of tuition. In both cases, the children continue getting uniform, exercise books, and lunch from parents. This kind of program is called Universal Primary Education (UPE). Its success depends on the sacrifices made by many parties. In a study conducted by consultants from the Economic Policy Research Centre, Makerere University, and Management Systems and Economics of Kampala entitled: "Tracking Public expenditure on Health Care and Primary Education", it came up with interesting results. That up to 64% of the Central Government contribution to primary schools in Uganda is retained by Districts and education officers to meet their own expenses. Only 36% of the funds actually reach the schools. In the words of the report: "The concern is now to

²⁴ For a detailed account of the views we are raising see, for example, M. L Gakou, The Crisis in African Agriculture, London: Zed Books, 1987.

minimise rampant leakage and diversions of funds and other financial abuses within the districts". The problem is attributed to:

- i. Lack of a consistent policy on usage of governmental contributions and payments by parents to schools, in districts especially after decentralisation,
- ii. Untrained teachers,
- iii. Weak inspection functions where some schools are not visited at all,
- iv. Poor accounts management, ignorance of accounting procedures by inspectors of schools,
- v. Lack of a filing system in the district education offices

The report further states: "Significant amounts were retained by Districts and District Education Officers (DEOs) to meet other expenses. Some retention was for (DEOs) personal expenses. Some of it was lent to other departments. Funds were also used for other expenses such as entertaining government officials".²⁵ The research further indicates that there is a deficit of 6,816 classrooms, equivalent to 973 Primary Schools for full Primary Education, while the ratio of temporary classrooms to the total number of classrooms in Uganda's Primary schools is 58%.

The pupils who registered for UPE were 2 million above the estimated number. There is need for training 40,000 teachers, but due to budgetary constraints, the Ministry is considering the increase of the teacher-pupil ratio, having classes in shift, giving existing teachers a heavier workload with better payment and overtime.

Funds meant for UPE are sent to the districts as part of

²⁵ See Education Vision, 20 February 1997.

the conditional grant. The conditional grant is the money paid to the government and Local Governments, and it is expended for the purpose it was made and in accordance with the conditions agreed upon. The district sends these funds to the School Management Committees, whose membership comprises the foundation body of the schools, teachers, parents, local Authorities of the area in which the school is located, and representatives of the education department in the districts. All the money collected from the parents of non-UPE pupils is kept by schools and managed by School Management Committees.

There have been cases of district or urban councils diverting UPE funds. Over 15 million shillings in Mbale Municipality was diverted to cover transport costs and subsistence allowance for the top council officials' trip abroad. Over 6 million shillings in Soroti district was diverted to meet transport costs and subsistence allowance for 57 athletes and five officials who participated in the National Schools' Sports Festival. Another 30 million shillings in Tororo District for UPE was diverted to pay a bill of stationary. Such moneys were diverted without the knowledge of education officers and school management committees. Other funds are not disbursed because head-teachers have not opened school bank accounts and delay the submission of returns from schools. Despite these problems, UPE program has continued to attract pupils, and these problems should be taken as a cost of implementing it.

Health Care Delivery during Decentralisation

Contrary to the past, district hospitals and health facilities below the district are the responsibility of Local Governments save for referral and teaching hospitals. This has been made so as to make the implementation of community health services a district level responsibility. In fact, many of the employees are currently on the District Local Government's pay roll. These

District hospitals report to the CAO for purposes of personnel management and making budgets. Decentralisation of such type is useful because some public health problems are restricted geographically, for example, village-level sanitation or water supply. It is probably efficient for decisions of such nature to be made and financed locally, but with technical support from the Central Government Ministry, as different communities have different tastes and requirements with respect to these goods. For other health activities whose benefits extend to the community boundaries, for example, immunisation or vector control, it is the responsibility of the Central Government to ensure that adequate efforts are made in adjacent localities, so that efforts in one locality are not rendered useless by inaction in adjoining locality.

It is hoped that Local Governments will learn from NGO facilities about how to increase productivity in the health sector. They should reverse the trend of overspending on staff, drugs, and food, and also consider maintenance, and equipment supplies. Research findings indicate that whereas the Government and NGOs own large and well distributed health care systems they are treated by consumers as two among a variety of sources of curative services, and medical supplies. For example, over half the women who give birth are attended to by traditional birth attendants, and over half population use some form of care other than modern providers when they are ill.

Whereas government still spends on curative health costs, through decentralisation of health services, it is encouraging the Local Governments to be involved in these services, but emulate the behaviour of private firms in charging for them; for example, NGO facilities have a long history of charging fees for their services. Since 1992, government hospitals and health centres with the approval of their management committees have been charging fees. In many studies it has been found out that the user fees are used for supplies such as fuel and soap, repairs to

buildings, and equipment, transport and staff allowances.

In another study, conducted to assess the impact of decentralisation on rural health services in South-west Uganda, it was found out that decentralisation has resulted in the transfer of real power from the Ministry of Health to the district health offices and lower health sector levels. This reduced the workload on remote and under-resourced central officials. The local health managers have been freed from the central government constraints and are now able to develop their own organizational structures tailored to local needs and circumstances. Furthermore, it has facilitated both district and sub-county control over health services to the point where they are delivered. By improving accountability and effectiveness, and promoting people's feeling of 'ownership' of programmes and projects executed in their respective localities, decentralisation has enhanced the capacity of local communities to be in charge of most aspects of their lives including rural health service delivery.²⁶

In the health sector, people have been asked to share the costs of health service provision. They now do this willingly because they receive the drugs and services for which they are paying. In several cases, the study tells us that, people have even gone out of their way, with their limited resources, to contribute say to the construction of a maternity unit since they know their own lives will be saved from travelling long distances to do deliveries.²⁷

²⁶ A. A. M. Kisubi, "The Impact of Decentralisation on Rural Health Services", in M. Kisubi and J. Mugaju (eds.), Rural Health Providers in Southwest Uganda, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999, pp. 35-62.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 45.

Meeting Basic Needs in Uganda

The author conducted a study, using Master of Arts students at Uganda Martyrs University, on how basic needs are being met in Uganda. A study of this nature was conducted because, at the moment all the districts in Uganda, are decentralised. Therefore, if the basic needs are being met by the people, it shows that the districts are serious with the activities and services that the Central Government devolved to them. However, it should be noted that there may be other factors that are responsible for the improvement (lack of it) in the basic needs situation in the districts. The discussion should be taken just as a pointer to what decentralisation may be capable of. The study revealed that food in many areas in Uganda is sufficiently enough, except that there is low intake of animal proteins, and there are losses due to poor methods of post-harvest programs. There is great need to invest in preservation and storage facilities in the country. It is said that real production of food has demand in towns, where it can be sold. Secondly, many people in the country meet the need of clothing by buying second hand clothes, which are usually bought in markets that operate on specific days of the week. In areas like Kotido and Moroto, people buy sheets of cloth, which they wrap around themselves. This is the case of adapting the type of clothing to the environment of the people. Thirdly, it is agreed that people use western medicine side by side with African medicine for their health problems. However, there is still a problem of associating malnourished children and those people suffering from AIDS with witchcraft. On the whole, it is said that government and private (mission) health centres are providing services to the people. It was noted that in some places, those people who support the return of multiparty system have turned down immunisation programs. Fourthly, people are appreciating UPE program, though; there are others who have not sent their children to school. In most cases, there are those

people who are opposed to the current government's political system of the movement. When it comes to tertiary education, it was found that it has become expensive, when in the actual fact it should be the one to produce the human power needs of the country. Fifthly, on housing some people still build traditional huts and others put up semi-permanent and permanent houses. It was noted that some people rent shelter. Sixthly, the question of security is well handled by the communities, who are backed by the Local Defence Units (LD.), the Police, Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF), and Internal Security Organisation (ISO) operatives. However, it was said that in some places, those who join the LDUs are the riffraff of society: people have a belief that those who enter the forces are thieves. Others, it was said, use witchcraft as a means of defence. People fear for the consequences if their insecure actions are done on those who are believed to practice witchcraft.

The findings, on the average, show that basic needs are being met in the country. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet education at tertiary level, at a time when we need skilled human power for a fast growing economy. Much needs to be done to sensitise the people about the negative consequences of witchcraft and the importance of genuine government programs, notwithstanding the political differences within the population.

Contribution of Decentralisation to Participatory Democracy and Development

The decentralisation program has enhanced political accountability because it allows community participation. Experience at the local level is showing that competition for political office has, in many cases, opened doors to responsible,

more transparent, more accountable and more innovative leadership.²⁸ The local district leaders and councillors at various levels have been popularly elected. The citizens' participation has been enhanced to the extent that they can now question the performance of their leaders and even recall them. However, as we have already seen with respect to the use of UPE funds, and we shall see later, there are cases where the citizens are not yet empowered sufficiently to demand accountability on the activities taking place within these local governments.²⁹

Decentralisation has, like other government policies since 1986, provided the opportunity for Ugandan women to establish new identities and a basis for unity for collective action, having patriarchy, and more specifically men as the enemy. On the other hand, these policies continually challenge the concept of women's shared oppression and exploitation, as it differentiates Ugandan women into social groups and classes that are, in reality, antagonistic and, therefore, difficult to organise for collective action. The social groups and classes we are talking about are those women who have joined politics (a third of the membership of the local council and Secretaries for Women on the Executive Committee are female).

Studies so far conducted in the area of local councils

²⁸ M. A. M. Kisubi, "Capacity-Building with Results-Oriented and Integrity in Mind: The Experience of Uganda", in A. Ruzindana et al. (eds.), Fighting corruption in Uganda: The Process of Building a National Integrity System, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998, p. 98.

²⁹ See R. Munyonyo, "Entrepreneurship and Poverty Eradication: A Case of Uganda", a paper presented to UMU International Conference on Eradicating Poverty in the World: A Moral Obligation, 7-11th September 1998.

have indicated that people are satisfied with their performance. Apollo Nsibambi gave four achievements of the Local Councils. The first achievement is that they fostered community feeling by having the members of the same locality coming together to deliberate on issues affecting their locality. Secondly, the Local Councils became critical sources of information. It is easier to get accurate information from local councils than from chiefs with regard to the number of residents. In the past, chiefs hid the names of graduated tax payers in order to retain the money. When the Local Councils became watchdogs of chiefs, their corruption reduces. Thirdly, Local Councils have enhanced security consciousness. Fourthly, Local Councils have in many respects become mediators of social conflict.³⁰ Expedite Ddungu carried out a study which proved that the functions of local councils as spelt out by the NRM Ten-Point Program were indeed carried out. He writes:

They (RCs) scrutinised and recruited people, boys and girls to join NRA. They staged roadblocks day and night together with local militia. They advised people on when and where to hide, when to appear, where to put roadblocks, etc. They issued documents in case one wanted to move a reasonable distance within the war zone. They informed on enemy positions and liaised with NRA. Other activities included holding meetings for arbitration on people with suspected loyalties to government soldiers. On

³⁰ A. Nsibambi, "Resistance Councils and Committees: A Case of Makerere" in H. B. Hansen and M. Twaddle (eds.), Changing Uganda: The Dilemma of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change, London: James Curry Ltd., 1991 pp. 286-289.

top of this they would mobilise food and water procurement for people and soldiers.³¹

J. Kisakye takes over from Ddungu and writes about the functions of local councils having been carried out bringing about fundamental changes in the local government. He observes:

The RC (LC) system brought a meaningful widening of popular participation. It gave local communities an unprecedented freedom to manage their own affairs without outside interference, albeit within the overall framework of NRM policies. People got the right to choose their village committees freely and to vote them out of office if they misused their powers. In addition to the 1988 Resistance Councils Committee Statute, people can create and enforce bye-laws, settle cases and customary land disputes, without resorting to formal courts of law.³²

The observation of Kisakye shows that LCs contributed to the elementary separation of powers. They narrowed the powers of a chief to only administrative powers. The chiefship institution was dismantled, stripped the chief of legislative, judicial and

³¹ E. Ddungu, "Popular Forms and Questions on Democracy: The Case of Resistance Councils in Uganda", Kampala: CBR Publications, 1989, p. 14.

³² J. Kisakye, "Political Background to Decentralisation" in S. Villadsen and F. Lubaga (eds.), Democratic Decentralisation in Uganda: A New Approach to Local Governance, Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1996, pp. 44-45.

executive powers. The second contribution was to institute the principle that administrative and executive officials must be accountable to popular organs, in this case a meeting of peasants, called a local council.³³

There are now substantial financial resources at every Local Government that makes planning based on predictable resources possible. The acting CAO of Kasese District, Edga Mbahamiza says:

Decentralisation has emerged as one of the most popular policies ever enacted by a government. It has enhanced popular participation and responsiveness. The most popular being the retention of some percentage of moneys collected in revenues to the lower councils and decentralised recruitment into public service.³⁴
(Emphasis mine)

The financial decentralisation has helped a lot in the development of decentralised districts. Kasese LC V chairperson, Bamussedde Bwambale commented about his district's situation thus:

We have managed to take advantage of the resources in the area to develop it. We are collecting over a billion shillings in taxes; money which has helped us to set up schools, open up roads mainly in the mountains where the majority of the people stay.³⁵

³³ Mamdani Mahmood, Critical Reflections on the NRM, Kampala: Monitor Publications Ltd., 1996, p. 116.

³⁴ The New Vision, 2 February, 1998, p. 20.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21.

Bushenyi District Administration (BDA) has renovated 4 county headquarters and 9 sub-county offices. The town Council is building a 45-office block. They have built the new houses for their senior staff. It has constructed 16 roads covering 388.5 Kms using funds from NGOs. 1543.8 Kms of roads have been constructed without external support. Bushenyi, now, has 428 primary schools compared to 419 in 1989. It boasts of 38 secondary schools. Judging by these figures Bushenyi seems to be a true success story of decentralisation.³⁶ Many other districts have followed Bushenyi example, by putting up office blocks, grading their feeder roads, repairing and building health units, constructing schools, and training personnel. These achievements have been made possible by political decisions in the respective districts to find money locally to undertake these projects.

Constraints to Decentralisation

In the study entitled: "The Application and Significance of Decentralisation in Uganda: A study of Mbarara District Local Administration 1986-1996,"³⁷ it was found that out of 14 sub-counties studied, the majority of the sub-counties had basic physical facilities, but most of these facilities were in poor physical state. It was also found out that 12 sub-counties (80%) did not separate latrine posts for men and women workers. Most of the sub-counties (78%) had office equipment; which

³⁶ See The New Vision, 2 March 1998, p. 24 for Bushenyi District profile.

³⁷ R. Munyonyo, "The Application and Significance of Decentralization in Uganda: A Case study of Mbarara District Local Administration 1986-1996", M.A. Thesis, Nkozi 1997.

emphasised the role of tax collection (typewriters and calculators). This shows that sub-counties have few items meant for transforming the sub-county into a Rural Development Agency- the new role it is supposed to play because of Decentralisation Program. These items should include staff houses and offices for the decentralised staff, community resource centres, libraries and playing fields. Using sub-county observation technique it was found out that the general hygiene, staff houses, the number of offices for departments, and conditions of the prison house of a majority of sub-counties were wanting. In most of the sub-counties, (92.3%), the sub-county chiefs were absent and many of them (65.4%) reported to the sub-county after 8:00 AM on those days that they had worked. Consequently, a majority of the sub-counties (95.8%) did not open on time. Using Participatory Learning and Analysis (PLA) method, the tax payers also indicated that the sub-county workers are late for duty or in some cases they do not report at all, and so, they are not always attended to. They singled out the period during tax collection months i.e., in the first quarter of the year, when the sub-county staff attends regularly.

The sub-county workers identified characteristics, which describe their work environment. They include work strain, work overload, professional dissatisfaction, and welfare. Work strain describes an environment, which is stress dominated due to the autocratic leadership style of the sub-county chiefs. Professional dissatisfaction defines workers perceived failure to do what they are trained to do due to lack of resources. Work overload involved workers' feeling of having too much work due to the staff ceiling proposed by the Public Service through retrenchment programs. The highest ranked problem was poor administration composed of an indifferent, sectarian and incompetent leadership. Workers are using three strategies to cope up with this bleak environment, namely: apathy, helplessness, and pretence. Apathy

summarises traits like neglecting work, deliberately ignoring clients who come for a service, and also absenting oneself. Helplessness describes activities that indicate that workers are unable to develop effective strategies to deal with the environment. Pretence depicts workers' unwillingness or ability to work under low morale conditions. When these strategies were correlated with a Rural Development Index Test, it was found out that where a worker reports a relatively high quality of personal life (such as having lunch allowance, adequate accommodation or transport to the sub-county provided, etc.) the sub-county scores highly on the test. A negative correlation existed between work strain and helplessness and measures of rural development.

Further, the study investigated taxpayers and local councillors' decentralisation experience at the sub-county. This experience was characterised by denial to participation. This situation refers to local councillors and workers' behaviour as getting angry when questions are asked and punishing workers for no good reasons. Further still, different taxes imposed, higher councils imposing their decisions on lower ones, local councillors only come to demand their allowances, local councillors dictatorial in their constituencies, sub-county chiefs become angry when people ask questions, etc. When this factor was correlated with the Rural Development Index, the test scored was negative.

Standards of bookkeeping are poor in most districts. For example, in Kabarole, at Rwimi Sub-county, the books had not been kept for two years, and yet at Kibiito, Bukuuku, and Karambi, the Main Cash Book, tax register and copy books had been badly written that they can not be reconciled.

Many district councils put in place various committees for example, Finance, Works, General Purpose, Health, Education and Production. But meetings of various committees are irregular. Many districts have failed to put in place a Local Public

Accounts Committee to check the excesses. Coupled with poorly facilitated audit departments, monitoring of expenditure is still a major problem. Instead, in many of the districts, the Finance Committee is the most powerful. It is powerful because it handles financial resources. The Finance Committee by passes other sector committees contrary to the law thereby dwarfing other committees, which are held at ransom. To make other committees non-operational undermines the democratic principles embodied in decentralisation. In some districts, the finance committee has been accused of usurping the functions of other sector committees.

There are reports that many district tender boards often act under political pressure. Apart from allocating markets to the councillors, some top district officials take a majority of tenders. The tender board calls for tenders in excess of what the district officials ask for. It makes awards on the basis of prices alone while numbers; quantities or qualities, brand or model do not come into the picture. Such omissions are serious financial and management irregularities and may be a cause of massive outstanding bills of some councils. The tender board should not give an award without an appropriate official of administration specifically asking for the goods or services in writing, addressed to the tender board secretary stating numbers, quantity and quality.

Counties allege marginalisation in job appointments and development projects at the district level. Still at the national level many people regard decentralisation as "Ethnic National Building" which creates intolerance against the non-indigenous district residents. This is a serious problem that undermines the credibility of district service commissions. It indicates that they have failed to uphold the merit principle, which is vital in public administration. With such prejudice against 'strangers' on the increase, the country undermines its own progress and

civilisation.

The working relations between the political leadership and the public servants in the decentralised districts is identified as a problem on one hand, and political interference from high authorities and among councillors in the affairs of the local governments, on the other. The public servants fear to discuss the errors committed by the politicians saying that the latter have been powerful to be criticised. Interference of leading politicians in district programs is identified by many as a factor, which contributes to the stagnation of district programs. Cases are often quoted that during elections, politicians go around encouraging taxpayers not to pay taxes because they want votes. Consequently, the districts collect taxes far below their projections. Wrangles among councillors are rampant in many councils. The nature of the wrangles hinges around allocation of resources, and projects, poor resource utilisation, political affiliation, allocation of plots, cliquish, and policy matters. Alongside the wrangles there are complaints of graft; fake claims are made, allowances or tenders are awarded for supply of 'air'.³⁸

Many districts delay confirmation of their employees. The percentage of female employees in most cases is very low because women's emancipation is still very low. In many districts, there are a number of vacant posts. The training of personnel is often neglected. A Departmental Head once observed:

We are in a cocoon. Training used to be handled by the

³⁸ "Air-supply" is a term used in Uganda to refer to that situation when one or a firm is paid for the supply of goods and services, when in actual fact these goods and services have not been supplied.

centre. To date most of the money is retained at lower councils where training is not seen as a priority. Labour mobility is also not there because we are fixed in the districts.³⁹

Districts do not have sufficient financial resources to run decentralised services because the tax-base is narrow. Their income is obtained through conditional and unconditional grants from the central government. This confirms the conclusion of a study which found out that the resource acquisition roles including, making sub-county budgets, building sub-county buildings as well as repairing sub-county roads, are singled out as the roles the Central Government should continue playing even when it has decentralised them.⁴⁰

Tax tribunals are not operational. They are necessary and taxpayers should be informed of their existence and sensitised on how to appeal in cases of over-assessment. This solves the problem of riots over graduated tax. Due to illiteracy and lack of civic competence of the peasants, who fear to appeal, but approach individual councillors to complain about taxation, brings about role conflict between administrators who enforce tax collection and councillors who formulate the policies. Local Councillors' involvement in the activities, which are meant for chiefs, is making local councils unpopular. The LC executives collect taxes in the company of Local Defence Forces (LDFs), who are armed with guns. The use of LDFs have turned LCs into

³⁹ *The New Vision*, 23 February 1998, p. 18.

⁴⁰ R. Munyonyo, *The Application and Significance of Democratic Decentralisation in Uganda: The Study of Local Government Staff Work Environment and Tax Payers' Decentralisation Experience as Determinants for Rural Development* 1986-1996, Nkozi: UMU Press (forthcoming).

institutions of local dictatorship, filled with superficial and potentially dangerous power which is gradually alienating the people from the once popular LC system. In addition, we have Ggomborora Security Officers (GSOs), who are under District Security Officers (DISO). They are equipped with motorcycles, guns, fuel and allowances from LC III funds. These are complicating security arrangements at the local level, which curtails democracy and increases the chances of abusing human rights.

The problem of accountability is very high with 65% of the money retained at LC III level. There is evidence that chairpersons of LC II connive with the executives of LC III and allocate the money, leaving some at the sub-county. The LC II chairpersons, together with their executives share what was meant for the parishes.

Citizen participation at LC I level appears to end during elections. For LC II and I level, the 1997 Act is quiet about the frequency of council meetings. It is clear that decentralisation has not really enhanced citizen participation in decision-making at basic levels. Even when citizens are not banned from attending LC III, IV and V councils, except when they meet as committees, the councils are remote and the citizens feel disinterested in what is going on in these councils. This is because the council executives do not mobilise. The citizens' lack of civic competence, and poverty impedes participation, and, most importantly decentralisation has been a top-down approach, though not authoritarian, participation is largely seen as a government obligation rather than people-driven process.

Civil organisations at the local level are few. Those, which are currently in the rural areas, are mainly for survival strategies and cannot influence government policies. The international NGOs lack local membership. Indigenous ones are

preserved for the elite. Thus, civil society, at the local level is not yet developed where it is urgently needed.

However, these constraints raised do not present a case for abandoning decentralisation, but a platform to refine it.

Decentralisation as a Tool for Participatory Democracy and Development

The way we defined decentralisation, participatory democracy, and development, and the opportunities and constraints pointed out suggest that decentralisation can be made effective as a tool for participatory democracy and development. We make these recommendations.

The timely intervention of the Ministry of Local Governments in the affairs of those districts which are not following decentralisation guidelines should be encouraged.

The training programs being implemented for the various stakeholders by the Decentralisation Secretariat should be continuously up-dated, using data collected from the field.

Training for moral competence should be fostered. Technical competence in accounting without moral training produces officers who are skilled at falsifying accounts for their own gains.

There should be more frequent inspections of books from independent auditing institutions such as the Auditor general and private firms appointed by the latter.

All the audited books and reports of Commissions of Inquiry, should be published for scrutiny.

The Decentralisation Secretariat should design training

modules regarding time management, and human resource management to enable stakeholders in the decentralisation process to be time conscious and to use democratic leadership style for better decentralisation outcomes.

Awareness programs should be conducted about the provisions of the constitution and of the Local Government Statute concerning the rights and the duties of leaders.

The District Service Commissions should be trained in recruitment exercises so that they are able to hire adequately trained human power at all levels. The argument that there is generally a shortage of trained human power does not hold given the fact that we are having many graduates unemployed. The recruitment exercise should be just free from nepotism and tribalism, and qualification oriented.

The districts should create within the administration departments a desk for the inspectorate that will look into the area of time management with regard to sub-counties. Secondly, the inspectorate should train sub-county chiefs in different styles of management so that they are able to handle the sub-county workers democratically.

The sub-counties should be encouraged to use part of the total revenue collected to improve the quality of their physical facilities. First, they need to build staff houses plus offices. Second, they need to equip these offices with adequate furniture and the required office equipment. Third, they need to build an infrastructure that is gender sensitive, i.e., latrine posts for women and playing fields for women. Fourthly, the standard of the playing fields in these sub-counties needs improvement. Fifthly, the prison house must be well built for the health of inmates.

Central Government's continued assistance is

recommended even when it has decentralised many of the functions and services so that the districts are first given time to recover from many decades of over centralisation to which they were subjected.

More resources should be allocated to primary health care (PHC). This program easily tackles the problems of child mortality, incidence of preventable diseases, maternal mortality, declining availability of foods, life expectancy, AIDS epidemic, and tropical disease vectors: malaria, schistosomiasis, and river blindness.

The Central Government and Local Governments should adapt policies, which encourage agricultural productivity and food security. They need to give more resources to the agricultural sector so that it addresses the issues of appropriate technology, for example, animal traction and improved seeds. Secondly, the agricultural extension worker needs to be well facilitated and should be supervised by the local authorities. Thirdly, improving storage facilities, processing and marketing food locally is a necessity. Lastly, agricultural production will be achieved if you applied a learning process approach to the farmers. In this appraisal, the farmers and agricultural extension workers share knowledge and resources. Leadership and teamwork are the key elements. This is what is called participatory agricultural production.

Government is currently implementing Universal Primary Education (UPE). The local authorities, in addition to being represented on the school management committees, should be empowered to handle the head teachers who divert UPE funds. The districts should put aside a certain amount of fund, which will cater for the most disadvantaged when they finish primary school level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, the point can only be repeated that the question of democratic participation, which is indissolubly linked to development, must be at the centre of both discussion and in the implementation of decentralisation in Uganda. Failure to address the questions of democratic participation and development may well mean that the policy of decentralisation could be called off.

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