



UNIVERSITY *of* **TASMANIA**

Putting Decentralisation Policy into Practice in Uganda: A Participatory Action Research Study of Local Government Empowerment for Local Economic Development

By

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Dedication

To those local leaders, men and women who want decentralisation to work for the betterment of leadership and the wellbeing of the community through continued learning.

Declaration of Originality

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Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University [Ethics Approval No: H17270]

Signature

Kizito Basalidde Lubuulwa

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CNDPF	Comprehensive National Development Planning Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDP	District Development Plan
DEC	District Executive Committee
DP	Development Partner
DPAC	District Public Accounts Committee
DPU	District Planning Unit
DSC	District Service Commission
DTPC	District Technical Planning Committee
HOD	Head of Department
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
LGPAC	Local Government Public Accounts Committee
MDAs	Ministries Department and Agencies
MOLG	Ministry of Local Government
NPA	National Planning Authority
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RDC	Resident District Commissioner

Abstract

Chronic political instability and erratic economic management in most African countries since the implementation of self-rule in the 1950s has produced a record of persistent economic decline. This general problem of stalled African development has been linked to poor governance, a key proposed solution being political, administrative and/or financial decentralisation to empower communities to foster local economic development (LED). This thesis investigates the effectiveness of the decentralised governance approach. Combining a qualitative social science approach with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the study analyses the experience of decentralisation in two Ugandan communities from the perspective of those directly affected by it. Through PAR, it aimed to empower local government officials to obtain better outcomes for their communities by adopting a cycle of planning, action and reflection on the structure and operation of decentralisation policies and procedures. The research methods employed also included literature review of decentralised governance in pre- and post-colonial Uganda and content analysis of governmental and non-governmental organisation documents, supported by interviews, council meetings, and workshops with local governmental officials, with observation of local government practices. The study found that decentralisation as currently practiced leads to the disempowerment of local leaders via a lack of accountability, transparency, participation, financial systems practices, money-politics and alleged corruption, and deferential cultural orientations. However, the thesis also demonstrates how, through PAR, these decentralisation challenges were significantly reduced through gradual and continued conscientisation of local government officials via collective, community learning. The significance of the study lies in its highlighting the large gap between theories of decentralised local governance and on-the-ground practices.

Chapter One:

General Introduction and Study background

1.1 Motivation

1.1.1 Embeddedness in my Communities

For 15 years, working with a rural private secondary school in Mukono district Kimenyedde sub-county, Uganda, I interacted closely with the poor communities. These communities struggled to earn a living, pay school fees, and meet other school requirements for their children's education through growing local food crops for sale. I was also involved in active politics at parish level, management of a public primary school, and growing of food/cash crops. In those roles and experiences, I had the opportunity to interact with poverty-stricken communities, the district, and sub-county health, agriculture and education workers, administrators, and local politicians. I witnessed the absence of effective local and central governments, and its dramatic impacts on standards of service delivery, development, and wellbeing of the communities. The experiences of working with the communities revealed to me how desperate they were and the need for local leaders to be better able to make the system work for community wellbeing. When I got an opportunity to do a PhD by research, I was motivated to do it in these areas and with the people I knew and who trusted me. It is for this reason I chose to use Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology as it would not only help me gather data for my thesis, but it would also, through conscientization, empower the community with whom I do this research.

1.1.2 Global Debates on Decentralisation and Unanswered Questions

Globally, debates over the impact of political institutions on societies, particularly those related to territorial sovereignty (unitary or federal systems) and forms of governance, remain unresolved. Economic globalization and decentralisation lie at the centre of policy reform agendas all over the world and raise interesting questions about how to manage their centrifugal and centripetal tendencies. At the same time, there is a challenge that the mechanisms behind a seemingly positive relationship between decentralisation and governance might be being offset to some extent by other mechanisms working in the opposite direction. All these debates happen when promoting economic growth is a big concern and a priority for all levels of government. Yet, despite numerous reforms, inquiries and initiatives intended to help clarify and improve the effectiveness of the role of government in economic development, this policy

field continues to evade broad common stakeholder agreement, both within and beyond the public sector. This lack of consensus over how decentralised governance should be serves as a barrier to achieving economic growth objectives and broader socioeconomic outcomes and are related to many other decentralisation-related questions. These include: Why do politicians decentralise in the first place? What is the role of business and civil society in promoting local economic development (LED)? Is LED best promoted by centralised or decentralised governance arrangements or by appropriate and effective balance between them? How can decentralisation lead to improved development outcomes? Will decentralisation promote clientelism or broad-based development? How can this policy be made politically feasible? Will decentralisation strengthen or weaken developing states? These questions and more have resulted in a large literature on the effects of these reforms. However, what is generally accepted is that multilevel institutions create new opportunities for local actors, improve the quality of public policy, and reduce administrative costs by increasing the proximity between government and citizens as well as governmental understanding of citizen (Emorut, 2006; Flore, 2004; Helling et al., 2005; Jeffery, 2007; Jurado & León, 2020; Lago-Penas et al., 2011; Pugalis & Tan, 2017).

Recent research has focussed on decentralisation's effect on some policy variables. In many cases insufficient attention has been given to the experience of those on the receiving end: those in the lower ranks of government working as policy implementors and/or supervisors. There is therefore little knowledge or agreement concerning the precise functions that lower local government leaders should perform in this complex policy space. This study aims to reunite academic studies of decentralisation with grassroots local government politicians and bureaucrats, who are very important in its implementation, via the use of PAR. Also, the study aims to synthesise lower-level policy implementers' detailed knowledge (i.e., the insight of actual grassroot policy practices) with academics' conceptual clarity and analytical rigour. This study is therefore structured to facilitate this integration. It contributes to knowledge by seeking to improve our existing understanding of the diverse roles and engagement of local councils in the leadership, organisation, promotion, and delivery of LED in the twenty-first century.

The thesis examines the general issue of LED via the social technology of decentralisation. This is done by investigating and challenging the effectiveness of decentralisation and power redistribution efforts for LED in Africa, more specifically, Uganda. Given the various claims made about decentralisation and LED, it is important to investigate how this form of governance works in practice and what reforms are required to ensure it delivers on its promise.

Because decentralisation policy is of special importance to the African continent, the case of decentralisation in Uganda has been selected as a country that has explicitly employed this strategy to deliver LED. Furthermore, and in keeping with an important theme of the decentralisation agenda—empowerment—the investigation employs the PAR approach in the pursuit of collaborative and practical solutions to social problems. The approach brings together action and reflection, theory, and practice in collaboration with individuals and their communities. Employing the case of Uganda, this thesis reveals more about how decentralisation and LED have played out in practice. It also provides an evidence base for policy recommendations for Uganda and the wider region and contributes to realising more effective devolved forms of representative democracy in Africa.

1.1.3 Rationale for Decentralisation and Local Economic Development

The rationale for decentralisation and LED can be intuited from their meaning. It is generally accepted that, unlike in a centralised state where the power and the authority are concentrated in the hands of the central government that takes decisions and perform most functions, in a decentralised state, power and responsibilities are dispersed and distributed across regional areas. The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation,¹ adopted in June 2014, defines decentralisation as the transfer of power, responsibilities, capacities, and resources from national to subnational entities of government. It aims to empower and strengthen the ability of subnational entities to both foster people's participation and deliver quality services. Decentralisation's power/authority can be political, administrative, or fiscal and is carried out, in part, through local government structures (Chigwata & Ziswa, 2018; De Oliveira, 2002; Fisher, 2000; Saito, 2012; Yu, 2013). Today, decentralisation by devolution is a constitutional principle applying to the government systems in many developing countries, including Uganda. The application of this decentralisation system is guided by the United Nations International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Strengthening of Local Authorities.²

LED, on the other hand, is a process through which local governments, the private sector, and communities form partnerships to mobilize, manage and invest resources effectively into economic ventures to stimulate development and growth of a locality. It is a participatory process where local stakeholders are encouraged and facilitated to shape and share the future

¹ This is a charter adopted by the African Union (AU) that seeks to promote decentralisation as a vehicle for improving the livelihood of people on the African continent.

² These were guidelines to serve as a catalyst for policy and institutional reform at the national level to further enable and empower local authorities to improve governance.

of their territory. This is achieved by enabling them to join in the design and implementation of government and development strategies. LED initiatives are expected to facilitate household diversification of economic activities as the principal way to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty and vulnerability. Furthermore, LED policy entails a process or development model that activates a tri-partite partnership between local government, the private sector, and the community. These are joined together to collectively engage in the identification, mobilization, and management of resources at the local level. LED initiatives have several broad aims including stimulating a sense of community, promoting self-help, contributing to the generation of self-employment, and creating public and community services via community empowerment (Ahikire, 2004; Canzanelli, 2001; Helmsing, 2003; Lago-Penas et al., 2011; Mensah et al., 2013; Narayan-Parker, 2002; Pike et al., 2015; Pugalis & Tan, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most developing countries, especially in Africa, have low levels of income and large sections of the population are unable to buy the necessities of life; that is food, clothing, and shelter. Low incomes also lead to poor health and limited education and consumption levels. Uganda's poverty eradication programs through decentralisation were established to create a development framework for economic growth and transformation while ensuring good governance and security. However, research on decentralisation of power and responsibilities to local government around the world has produced conflicting results. In some areas, the literature shows that, since its inception as an empowering policy, decentralisation has grappled with the problem of empowering local government actors: politically, fiscally, and administratively. At the same time, we know remarkably little about the effects of these newly established systems on promoting empowerment of local governments and people and enabling them to participate in local economic development at the local, village, level. In addition, academic research on decentralisation in Africa has focused on service delivery, especially in the fields of health and education, whereas research on LED as a pillar of decentralisation has been done mainly by the governments themselves. Therefore, there are surprisingly few independent analyses of the effectiveness of decentralisation as a driving force for LED and on the degree to which the community voice is represented in policy. Finally, available research on decentralisation has not employed PAR as a methodological paradigm to pursue collaborative and practical solutions although there is evidence to indicate that empowered communities can significantly advance a collective LED agenda (Kipiriri et al., 2003).

Specifically, regarding Uganda, it is also noted that the Government's evaluations of decentralisation recommended further in-depth study of the policy to improve its on-the-ground performance. This research is further driven by anecdotal evidence that administrators' commitment to this policy of empowering the local community regarding sustainable local economic development is inadequate, resulting in increased poverty levels and social injustices in Uganda and many developing African countries.

1.2.1 Research Objective

The overall objective of this thesis is to critically analyse how decentralisation policy is theorised and implemented in poor African countries. This is addressed by answering the following research questions:

1. How has the formal policy of decentralisation in Uganda been implemented in practice?
2. To what extent do Uganda's decentralisation policy and practice achieve its intended goals?
3. What reforms are required to decentralisation policy and practice to ensure it promotes greater empowerment of local government and communities to participate in LED?
4. How can communities realise decentralisation's empowerment potential and actively engage in bottom-up planning for LED?

1.2.3 Research Argument

This thesis argues that the actual transfer of government functions and responsibility accompanied by the requisite resources can qualify as a feasible decentralisation strategy if, and only if, community organisations can become effective partners in the development process. A decentralisation strategy should therefore be accompanied by an actual devolution of political powers to the lowest level of local government. In this context, the thesis argues that an empowered local government leadership is a means to achieve good services delivery and programmes for LED. It also argues that an empowered local government is based on local government councils' ability to invest in decision-making power and authority, including having access to information and resources. Also, it is critical for local governments to have a range of choices, exercise their voice, believe in individual and group efficacy and be capable of mobilizing like-minded others for common goals. Even more important, local governments need to collectively enhance their influence on and control over the decisions that affect their interests and the people they represent. Community development is about building active and

sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect, which is best done by changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in decisions on the issues that affect their lives.

1.2.4 Theoretical exposition and conceptual framework

Local government systems exercise local autonomy and decision-making, which can be seen as essential for ensuring that resources better match the diversity of local needs. This is because of the potential of local government to enhance participation and disperse political power to the community, enabling effective political choices and ensuring proper resource utilisation. Local governments thus constitute a visible local bureaucracy, controlled by councillors working closely with technical officials and who are involved in the affairs of their locality. If local government politicians are empowered to carry out their stipulated roles, they can positively influence other actors like citizens and technocrats to improve service delivery (Ssonko, 2013). In short, the thesis builds on theories of local government that views them as desirable levels of governance due to their capacity to foster increased political participation and empower local representatives to the benefit of the local communities (Boyne, 1998; King & Stoker, 1996; Sharpe, 1970).

1.2.5 The structure of this thesis.

This thesis has eight chapters including this first, introductory, chapter. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the literature on local governments, decentralisation, empowerment, and local economic development, with a focus on developing country contexts. Chapter Three presents the structures of decentralisation and the related programmes in Uganda. Chapter Four presents the research methodology and research design including methods and techniques used in the study. Chapter Five presents data on the policy practice in Najja Sub-county, Buikwe district. This is followed by Chapter Six, which presents data on the policy practice in Kimenyedde Sub-county, Mukono District. Chapter Seven presents the discussion of how the formal system is being operationalised in practice in the two case studies areas and the empowerment journey of PAR. Chapter eight gives the evaluation, recommendations, and conclusion of the thesis.

Chapter Two:

Decentralisation, Local Government and Development; Theoretical Perspective and the International Experiences

2.1 Introduction

The topic of this study falls within the realm of decentralisation practices in local government systems to empowering communities for local economic development. The overall aim of this literature review, therefore, is to investigate how decentralisation policy is theorised and implemented. This chapter provides an overview of local government and decentralisation and the experience of a few selected countries and the way in which their communities have been empowered to take more control over their situation. The chapter is divided into two sections; Section one outlines theories that explain decentralisation as a driving policy for empowerment of local government leaders and their communities. Section two gives a brief account of how decentralisation has worked in United Kingdom and a few selected African countries. In general, this chapter sets up the next chapter's detailed literature review focusing on Uganda's situation.

2.2 Decentralisation and Empowerment: Theoretical Perspectives

Theoretically, local governments aid political participation and ensure efficient service delivery in comparison to centralised government (King & Stoker, 1996). This is because local governments increase autonomy and create a multi-purpose institution that provides a wide range of services (Brindley and Rydin (1996). More than that, local governments allow individuals to voice their needs, and to learn the art of practical politics, and respond to the rising demand for public services by offering a more responsive and planned service delivery (Kapiriri et al., 2003). Local government, therefore, enhances participation and disperses political power to communities to enable political choice and ensure proper resource utilisation by matching what is available with the diversity of local needs. The involvement of citizens in development planning and implementation enables the formulation of realistic plans that are in line with local circumstances and conditions (Brindley & Rydin, 1996; King & Stoker, 1996). For that reason, one of the theories behind local government and decentralisation in the developing world is that they are very necessary to accelerate the pace and spread of the benefits of growth. As such, local government can help to better integrate diverse regions in heterogeneous, multiethnic countries, and use scarce resources more efficiently to promote

development in poverty stricken or economically lagging areas (Hamid, 2011). As a result, there has been an increasing recognition that achieving national development goals can only happen when the goals are translated into actions at the sub-national levels and by the active involvement of local actors. In that respect, one of the perceived advantages of decentralisation is that it facilitates good governance by providing empowering mechanisms to the local population and their leaders to demand for transparency, participation, accountability and local organisation capacity as indicated in the table below (Brindley & Rydin, 1996; Edoun, 2012; King & Stoker, 1996).

Transparency	Participation	Accountability	Local organisation/capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information • Open hearings • Public expenditure tracking surveys • Citizen report cards • Civic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory budgeting • Quotas for women and minorities • Joint planning • Law on participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen review boards • Local councils • Elections • Litigations • Referendums • Watch dogs • NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs/NGOs • Social capital formations

TABLE 2.1: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT MECHANISM 1

Adapted from (Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2006; D. Rayan, 2002; Narayan-Parker, 2002)

The figure shows the elements under transparency, participation accountability and local capacity which enhance community empowerment.

It is important to distinguish between different decentralisation contexts. In one situation, there is just a relocation of administrative functions away from a central location that does not necessarily involving changing the locus of decision-making or devolving power: this is termed *decentralisation by de-concentration*. In other contexts, there is a continued divestment of functions by central government and the creation of new units of governance outside the control of central authority. There is also representation of the concept of the separateness of structures within the political system as a whole. This is termed *decentralisation by devolution* (Fisher, 2000; Rondinelli, 1981). It is therefore quite possible to claim decentralisation by devolution of government functions without devolving the power for making meaningful decisions to the planning and implementation process at grassroots level. This scenario is said to be common in most developing nations that have embraced decentralisation by devolution as an empowering policy (Fisher, 1999; Massoi & Norman, 2009).

This study is also aware that government can no longer take the form of purely sovereign rule and must be performed through various forms of metagovernance,³ that is, the regulation of self-regulation. The consequence is a transformation of the role that politicians play in the governance of society that might pose risks to representative democracy. An increase in the number of public and private actors has a substantial effect on the way society is governed (Sørensen, 2006). For example, the ability of politicians to control the decision-making process reportedly has been declining, as is the level of publicity in the decision-making process. This is a result of the high degree of fragmentation and increased informality of governmental processes. Therefore, if politicians are to remain effective, citizens must be able to control the decision-making process by means of elected politicians and a high level of publicity in the governing process (Sørensen, 2006). Also, citizens must have the same formal access to influence channels as they must also possess the necessary participatory skills (i.e., resources, competencies, trust in the system and self-confidence). Furthermore, they must be able to make use of the formal channels as means to obtain influence on the decisions that affect them. Empowerment of the local politicians and communities must therefore happen as a matter of necessity.

For empowerment to happen, however, participation must be effective in a way that it can enforce transparency, accountability and changes in behaviour within the relevant government bureaucracies, and ensure the ongoing inclusion of the poor and the underprivileged in decision making (Narayan-Parker, 2002). Empowerment will then allow local people to be the watchdogs for the system and ensure that officials deliver quality goods and services. It is also perceived as a means of improving the efficiency and responsiveness of the public sector (Andrews & Schroeder, 2003). The objectives of decentralisation, therefore, can be formally stated as including the following: transferring real power to local governments; bringing political and administrative and fiscal control over services; freeing local managers from central constraints; improving financial accountability and responsibility; improving the capacities of councils to plan, finance and manage delivery of services; and enhancing local economic development (Andrews & Schroeder, 2003; Ekpo, 2008; Mutabwire et al., 2014; Rondinelli, 1981).

³ A way of enhancing coordinated governance in a fragmented political system based on a high degree of autonomy for plurality of self-governing networks and institutions. Sørensen, E. (2006). Metagovernance: The changing role of politicians in processes of democratic governance. *The American review of public administration*, 36(1), 98-114. .

The application of “empowerment” in this study derives from community-based research and interventions. Rappaport (1981) says that empowerment is a construct that links individual strength and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995, p. 569) state that “Empowerment theory, research and intervention link individual well-being with the larger social and political environment”. It is further asserted that active empowerment mechanisms for local organisational capacity building build on social capital formation, This is credited with skill development in areas such as joint planning and budgeting, monitoring government performance and preparing advocacy campaigns (Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2006; Narayan-Parker, 2002; Narayan, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Vera-Toscano et al., 2013). The above will therefore build the capacity of community to demand participation, transparency, and accountability as elaborated later in this chapter. This further explains why PAR is the methodology of choice, for its appropriateness in creating links between participants, resulting in empowerment for their participation in the local government reforms.

Decentralisation is a broad term and to make it more analytically tractable, it is useful to refine it further. In any decentralisation arrangement, the amount of political, administrative, and fiscal power, authority and autonomy that is transferred through government structures can differ, even when they are transferred to the same level or organ of local government. As Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006) argue, the differences in authority and autonomy result in three different types of decentralisation: ‘deconcentration’, ‘delegation’ and ‘devolution’, as indicated in Table 2.1

	Administration	Financial/Fiscal	Political	Community empowerment
Deconcentration	LG follows central policies, plans According to central norms. Form & structure of LG centrally Determined. Local staff are employees of central ministries, accountable to centre. LG is service delivery arm of centre, little or no discretion in service choice or mix, modes of provision. LG provides information upwards to centre.	LG is dependent on centre for funds; sectoral ministries and MOF provided spending priorities& budget envelope LG has no independent revenue sources. LG reports to centre on expenditure according to central formulas and norms Centre conducts LG audits	No elected LG, officials appointed by centre, & serve central interests. Civil society& citizens rely on remote & weak links to central government for exercising accountability. Little political space for local civil society, central elites control politics.	LG has little capacity & few incentives to seek community input or be responsible to local needs. No incorporation of local preferences in service mix Local communities & poor seek clientelist & patronage relationships with elites at centre.
Delegation	LG follows central policies& norms, has some discretion to tailor to local needs, & to modify form & structure. LG staff may be mix of central and LG employees; LG has authority on hiring & placement; centre handles promotion & firing. LG provides service menu set by centre, some discretion in mix to fit local needs, & in modes of provision. LG provides most information upwards to centre& selected information to local officials, citizens.	LG is dependent on centre for funds; LG has some discretion on spending priorities with budget envelope. Block grants & conditional transfers from centre offer some autonomy. LG has no independent revenue sources. LG reports to centre and local officials on expenditure according to central formulas and norms. Centre and LG conducts LG audits.	LG may be a mix of elected and centrally appointed officials. LG officials often tied to national party platforms, little discretion. Some local accountabilities, but strong central orientation. Some political space for local civil society	Citizens have some local voice& accountability links, but centre remains able to override local decisions. Some incorporation of local preferences Blended centre-local accountability offers some limited options for community empowerment. Local officials have relatively weak incentives to respond to citizen demands. Poor retain clientelist links to centre for some services
Devolution	LG is subject to national norms, but sets local policies & priorities, plans autonomously in response to local preferences & needs. LG determines own form & structure. LG staff are employees of LG, which sets salaries, numbers, assignments, & handles hiring/firing. LG determines service mix, modes of provision, eligibility, & allocation. LG provides information to local officials, citizens.	LG sets spending priorities, plans how to meet service delivery obligations given resources availability. LG has mix of own-source revenues, revenue- sharing, central transfers. LG may have some authority for debt financing but is subject to a hard budget constraint. LG reports to local officials and citizens on expenditure according to central formulas and norms. LG is responsible for audits reports results locally and centre.	Locally elected officials lead LG, may or may not be linked to national parties, platforms respond to constituent demands and needs. Strong local accountability. LG shapes budget priorities, investments, service mix to fit local preferences and needs. Broad political space for local civil society.	Civil society& citizens have strong links to LG for expressing voice exercising accountability. Local officials have strong incentives & capacity to be responsive to citizen preferences& demands. Risk of local elite capture of LG Poor develop clientelist and patronage relationships with local elites, as well as maintain those with centre

TABLE 2.2: TYPES OF DECENTRALISATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT 1

Source: Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006)

The table above shows community empowerment in decentralised local government as enhanced by the different levels/forms of decentralisation. It shows that more empowerment is achieved through devolution than deconcentration and delegation. The following sections provide a brief explanation of the different types of decentralisation set out in Table 2.2.

2.2.1 Administrative Decentralisation

Administrative decentralisation can take the form of deconcentration, delegation or devolution. Administrative deconcentration takes place when a local government follows central policies and plans. The norms, forms and structures of local government are centrally determined. Moreover, local government staff are employees of central ministries, and accountable to centre. In this case, the local government is the service delivery arm of the centre with little or no discretion in service choice or modes of provision and provides information upwards to centre.

In contrast, administrative delegation occurs when local governments follow central policies and norms without discretion to tailor to local needs. In this case, local government staff may be a mixture of central and local government employees. The local government may oversee the hiring and placement, while the central government handles promotion and firing. In delegation, local government provides a services menu set by the central government. There can be some discretion in the staff to fit local needs and modes of provision. In addition, the local government provides most information upwards to the central government.

Finally, administrative devolution is the level where local government is subject to national norms but sets local policies and priorities, as well as plans autonomously in response to local preferences and needs. In addition, local government determines its own form and structure. On top of that, staff are employees of local government, which also sets the salaries, numbers, and assignments and handles hiring/firing. Local government will also determine service mix modes of provision, eligibility, and provide information to local officials and the citizenry (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Brinkerhoff, 2005; Fisher, 2000).

2.2.2 Fiscal Decentralisation

Fiscal decentralisation also takes the forms of deconcentration, delegation or devolution. Following Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006), local government is dependent on the centre for funding. The sector ministries and the ministry of finance (MOF) set spending priorities and the budget envelope. Local government has no independent revenue sources, and therefore,

reports to the centre on expenditure according to centrally imposed formulas and norms. In addition, the centre conducts local government audits.

Fiscal delegation, however, takes place when the local government is dependent on the centre for funds but has some discretion on spending priorities within the budget envelope. Block grants and conditional transfers from the centre offer some local government autonomy; however, there is no independent revenue source. Local government officials report to the centre on expenditure according to central formulas and norms. Centre and local government may both conduct local government audits (Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2006; De Oliveira, 2002; Fisher, 2000).

In contrast the first two, devolution is where, according to Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006), local governments set spending priorities, and also plan how to meet service delivery obligations given the available resources. Further, local government should have a variety of own-resources and a fair revenue-sharing formula and be supported by central government transfers. In some cases of devolved local government, there may be authority for debt financing, but subject to a hard budget constraint. Local government reports to local officials and citizens on expenditure according to central formulas and norms and is therefore responsible for audits and reports results locally and to the centre.

Fiscal devolution gives citizens and their elected representatives decision-making power and grants local-level government discretionary power to act independently in their areas of jurisdiction thus reducing central government control and so empowered (Mugabi, 2004).

2.2.3 Political Decentralisation

Political decentralisation can be understood to refer to either or both of the following: transferring the power of selecting political leadership and representatives from central government to local government; and/or transferring the power and authority for making socio-politico-economic decisions from central government to local government and communities.

Political deconcentration takes place when local government officials are appointed by the centre and serve central government and the civil society and citizens rely on remote and weak links to the central government in exercising accountability. This is often viewed as simply shifting the workload from the central government ministry headquarters to staff located in offices outside of the national capital. Political delegation, however, takes place when local government is made up of elected and centrally appointed officials, which is often tied to national party platforms. In addition, local government is capable of little discretion or local

accountability and has a strong central orientation. There is, however, some political space for local civil society to make its views known.

In contrast to both political deconcentration and political decentralisation, political devolution takes root when locally elected officials occupy leadership positions in local government. They need not be linked to national parties and must respond to constituent demands and needs to maintain their locally granted authority (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2006; Rondinelli, 1981).

2.3 Decentralisation Practices: The International Experience

The global agenda on local governance and development has evolved, with new emphases being placed not only on access to basic services and infrastructure, but also on promotion of growth and employment-generation through decentralization and devolution of power to local government. This global trend has been used to enhance empowerment of local communities in their areas and improve governance and promote local economic development. Due to the different experiences of the reforms by the different countries, it has caused academic debate over its direction, magnitude, and consequences. Before examining the situation in developing countries, the following section describes the experiences of United Kingdom to highlight some of its diversity of forms with a few highlights in Canada.

2.3.1 The United Kingdom Experience overview

This section canvasses the different rationales and practices of power redistribution through decentralisation for local economic development in different social-political and economic settings. In particular, the UK's model of government oversight, especially on accountability and transparency by local government leaders, is important when studying Uganda's decentralisation policy framework for effective promotion of LED by local leaders. This is because the UK is a former colonial master of many African countries including Uganda. The section also provides some examples drawn from the Canadian experience, an important reference point since both Uganda and Canada devolved their systems over very similar time periods. Also, both countries are members of the Commonwealth and have opted for devolution as a form of power redistribution. Also important is that, being a former colony of the UK, Uganda has copied most of its government model from its colonial master; and, as indicated in

the *Pre-colonial and Colonial Uganda (to 1962)* section of the thesis, the history of Uganda approximates that of the UK during the medieval period when it was composed of competing kingdoms and chiefdoms. It can also be noted that the vast majority of developed and developing countries have undertaken some form of transfer of power to sub-state governments, ostensibly for better service delivery and local economic development, which is highly relevant to the Ugandan case. Finally, even though the UK and Canada are both more economically advanced communities compared to those in Africa, it is still interesting to evaluate the the impact of devolution/decentralisation and whether these are considered to have realised any positive outcomes. It is therefore in the interest of this research to undertake this comparative overview to establish a good background to what is feasible before examining developing countries' experiences, and Uganda's in particular.

In the UK and Canada, devolution is employed as a theoretical term used to describe the process of transferring power from the centre to their respective nations and regions. Devolution in UK was enacted in the late 1990s, which allowed regional assemblies to form in Scotland and Wales and be reinstalled in Northern Ireland to develop policies tailored to the needs of their areas (MacKinnon, 2015).

Like in Uganda and other developing countries, Canadians believe that decentralisation and participation are a means of bringing a broader section of a given population into the public decision-making process (Ribot, 1999). Likewise, UK devolution is considered not to be single fixed event but an ongoing process of transferring power from the centre to the nations and regions of the United Kingdom (devolution). Through this process, after ten years of devolution in UK, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assemblies of Wales and Northern Ireland have each developed policy-making capacity. This has in turn facilitated the growing status and the role of the devolved institutions within their regions (Jones et al., 2005; Knox & Carmichael, 2010; Torrance & Evans, 2019). Likewise, Canada's fiscal decentralisation of its health services has had a positive and substantial influence on the effectiveness of public policy in improving the population's health (Rubio, 2011).

It is noted by MacKinnon (2015) that one of the defining characteristics of the UK's devolution process is the fact that the devolved administrations have limited revenue-raising powers,

which contrasts with many other devolved or federal states. Importantly, however, this is due to the block grant mechanism, which allows the devolved governments almost total freedom to allocate these funds between different policy areas. This has most importantly resulted in enabling and empowering subnational states to make distinct budget choices.

Further, in terms of the policy framework, beside the legislative frameworks for devolution, there is also a non-legislative framework of agreements between central government departments and the devolved institutions in the UK. This helps resolve disputes between central and devolved governments. Unlike in most developing countries, the UK system of devolution is asymmetric, in that different parts of the UK have different forms of devolution and varying degrees of power. Some devolved entities like Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland now all possess executive and legislative devolution, while most city mayors in England have only executive powers. The former three can legislate and pass primary and secondary laws, but with reserved and excepted matters remaining the responsibility of Westminster (Torrance & Evans, 2019).

Further studies of the UK model of decentralisation show that it is based upon the separation of powers between the UK parliament and the devolved assemblies. Even though the UK parliament can still legislate in devolved areas, the separation of powers between the UK parliament and the devolved assemblies means that there are no legislative checks on policy divergence. According to Greer (2007), this gave considerable latitude to the devolved governments to develop distinctive policies. In Canada, although local governments are controlled by the provinces in all important fiscal respects, provinces are responsible for most major social expenditures and have a virtually free hand in levying taxes (Tassonyi, 2005). They therefore face essentially no constitutional restraints on tax rates, the tax base, or collections systems and no requirement to harmonize these with each other or with the Federal Government. The system also gives them a free hand in economic development initiatives.

Given the focus of this thesis, it is critical to look at the importance and capacity of the devolved UK governments to effectively promote economic development. Journalist and social commentator David Walker put it as follows:

We are all localists now, centralism has come to be synonymous with bureaucracy, rigidity, and control freakery. These vices are contrasted with the virtues of local and regional diversity, creativity, and innovativeness. The beauty of devolved government is that it can do things differently (Jones et al., 2005, p. 1).

Jones et al. (2005, p. 1) further argue that the UK system is “the brave new world of devolution”. They claim that the territories of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and England; armed with a parliament (Scotland), Elected Assemblies (Wales, Northern Ireland, and London) and Regional Development Agencies (England) provide the basis for doing things differently. While at the same time devolution has caused the biggest shake-up to the British and UK state apparatus in centuries. The most important thing to note, however, is that Jones et al. (2005) offered a cautious reading on the ability of the new localism to produce better socio-economic management. They contend that the devolution experiment in the UK is failing to deliver real modernisation because, by design, it cannot generate coordination and what they refer to as ‘equalization’. In discussing the benefits of returning to centralism as the best context for economic and social policy, Jones et al (2005) argue that only a strong centre can regulate markets and capital movements and prevent the damaging impacts when territories compete by doing things differently. In the same line of thinking, Pike et al. (2015) argue that the causal linkages and interactions between institutions and economic development at different geographical scales has remained unresolved. Further, according to Rodríguez-Pose (2013), whether these interactions exist, their extent and nature, and in what directions they operate are unclear.

Meanwhile, however, and notwithstanding the above claims regarding devolution’s effectiveness and the limited evidence that any economic dividend of devolution has emerged, Pike et al. (2012) agree on certain points. They agree, for example, that to an extent the nature of decentralisation within government and governance systems plays a decisive role. This they say is because decentralisation is important in explaining the role of institutions in economic development at specific geographical levels within multi-agent and multi-scalar institutional settings. In fact, several authors like (Clarke & Cochrane, 2013; Pike et al., 2012) claim that economic development policy in Britain has focused on recovery by underpinning a local growth agenda. This has aimed at realising every place’s potential and is shaped by aspirations of sectorial and spatial local development in UK.

On the issue of local economic development in Canada, through devolution, there was a realisation that increasingly the primary determinants of investment and location decisions reflect the quality of the physical and social infrastructure of a region or locality. The implication is that local governments can play a key role in ensuring that the infrastructure is in place to enhance potential investors’ access to accurate and timely information. Besides that, the building blocks of a successful local economic development initiative include among other

things, robust accountability mechanisms and a commitment to equitable participation and the formation of institutional intermediaries which devolved governments can offer (Tassonyi, 2005). At this point, then, the literature is clear that subnational and local governments can lead in coordinating information sharing and implementing land use and other local policies to enhance local environment for economic development in a sustainable manner. The ultimate question, according to (Tassonyi, 2005), is whether local governments are not too constrained by hierarchical controls.

Regarding oversight of governance in the case of the UK's devolution, accountability and transparency is provided by local politicians and council employee. These operate within a governance framework of checks and balances to ensure that decision-making is lawful, informed by objective advice, transparent and consultative. Key elements of the local framework include officers with statutory powers and responsibilities; internal checks and balances such as audit committees and internal audit; and external checks and balances such as external audit and sector-led improvement overseen by the Local Government Association. Though there is transparent engagement and intervention, there are reported concerns in relation to external audit and how it can be too difficult for citizens to find out about local issues that are important to them. Yet taxpayers have a right to know if there are serious problems at their local authority (Hillier, 2019; Murphy, 2019). Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that in line with the above, the Local Government Association in UK at times argues that greater transparency is not always appropriate, that there should be some private space. Their reasoning is that people who know what is going on, know what is going on, and those who do not, do not. But even when there might be very important and valid arguments about the private space, transparency is desirable and helps ensure the public is not ignorant of the government's difficulties and worries (Hillier, 2019).

A review of the report on Local Government Governance and Accountability (2017-2019) by House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts indicated, however, that the governance system in local authorities is fundamentally sound; that 98% of council chief financial officers are confident in their ability to provide advice to elected members that they might find challenging; and external auditors are confident about the effectiveness of most key governance arrangements at most councils. The same report further indicated that Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfGS)⁴ also showed that the amount of pressure currently placed on the system is

⁴ A social purpose consultancy and national centre for expertise whose purpose is to help organisations achieve their outcome through improved governance and scrutiny.

having an impact. This pressure is said to be due to the new demands and the amount of complexity that councils are dealing with, creating some challenges for governance. This results in more requirements for audits and more arrangements for scrutiny, challenge, and debates to assure effective risk assessments.

Contrary to what happens in developing countries' decentralisation practices in areas of accountability, transparency and corruption, in the UK finance directors want more from external audits than they are getting in what they call an 'expectations gap' (Hillier, 2019, p. 6). Further, directors want local assurance on whether value for money decisions are being taken in their organisations as opposed to value for money arrangements. For that reason, the government was committed to carrying out a post-implementation review of the new audit regime in 2019, and to be held accountable for the progress and quality of works undertaken (Hillier, 2019; Murphy, 2019).

Finally, two important things to this study worth noting: first, like in many developing countries, the UK's decentralisation governance and accountability practices face a risk of being regarded as a costly overhead and could, perhaps, be cut when local governments face financial pressure. However, in the UK, it is agreed by The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts that it is the time of financial pressure that the system needs better governance and a need to invest in that overhead. Secondly, it is also interesting to note that following the "No" vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the then Prime Minister David Cameron announced devolving further power to the Scottish Parliament. At the time, he also considered it important to "have wider civic engagement about how to improve governance in our United Kingdom, including how to empower devolved governments and cities" ((Torrance, 2019, p. 30).

In conclusion, the above brief overview brings to light the fact that debates are still ongoing in developed countries over the optimal form of devolution of power and its impact of political institutions. The debates are particularly focused on the issue of territorial sovereignty and empowerment and how it affects local economic development. The overview also shows how government, policy frameworks, and community representative in these areas work together to make sure that their devolved system works at least minimally to deliver local benefits. And lastly, the overview points out that the emphasis is placed in the devolution literature on civic engagement, which is a method to improve governance in UK and Canada. This is important

to note because it has strong parallels with community empowerment through community learning, a key enabling mechanism examined in this research.

2.3.2 The African Experience Overview

The economic crises and violent political conflicts that have characterised Africa's development have been an enduring feature of its post-colonial landscape (Kieh Jr, 2009; Mukonoweshuro, 1990; Van Dijk, 2008). At the turn of the millennium, there was a call to action for Africans and the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which was adopted by African heads of state in October 2001. NEPAD is an integrated development plan of the African Union, and its goals include achieving sustainable economic growth, eradicating poverty, and ending Africa's marginalisation from the globalisation process. It was agreed that it was critical that African development and regional cooperation programmes take place in the context of good economic and political governance. This included accountable governance to promote good political governance. Good economic governance includes transparency in financial management, an essential prerequisite for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty.

A range of measures were identified as critical for ensuring the renewal of the African continent and decentralisation was viewed as one such measure (Edoun, 2012). Therefore, many African developing countries have been increasingly favouring decentralised governance as the most suitable model of governance through which poverty reduction interventions can be conceived, planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. The expectation is that the process of decentralisation will facilitate the participation of communities in policy development, implementation and monitoring leading to greater ownership of the policy process. Community participation is also considered to increase the chances of long term, sustainable policy making (Kauzya, 2007b). In Ghana, for example, LED is carried out by the district assemblies (DAs), which have a constitutional mandate to pursue the overall development of the district. DAs emphasise that transparency and accountability is essential for the legitimacy of strategic economic development planning.

The African experience, however, shows that much of the decentralisation that African governments have undertaken is about decentralized administration rather than about policy development and implementation, which continue to be made by the central government (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004). Yet according to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), local planning processes should involve economic actors operating at various scales and sectors and be

channelling public investment to support collectively defined strategic priorities. As it stands, in many cases these policies do not reflect local needs or desires and there is little accountability at the local level. They also state that in Africa the public remains apathetic and seemingly inattentive to local affairs, while local administration seems to be disconnected from public leadership. This makes local institutions unable or unwilling to raise funds locally for local development. This is also because decentralisation arrangement in most developing countries, policies are formulated at the centre, and requiring those formulated by local governments to not contradict them (Kakumba, 2010).

Advocates for decentralisation in Africa argue that services should be decentralised if demand and supply conditions are highly localised (Andrews & Schroeder, 2003). However, most of the services sectors that have been decentralised in Africa, including education, primary health care and rural road provision, continue to depend on centralised oversight, authority, and financial resources. Kenya in East Africa and Benin in West Africa, for example, both have central governments that involve themselves in the management of local issues, either directly by controlling day-to-day management operations or by manipulation through ‘decentralising agents’ and out-posted central government officials.

Decentralisation requires appropriate constitutional and legislative frameworks that clearly define the responsibilities and powers of subnational government and the expected fiscal relationship between central and lower-level governments. In Nigeria for example, due to the constitutional gaps to cater for the subgovernment income gap, both decentralisation and privatisation of education has created significant education inequality instead. It was, for example, found that indicators of education efficiency declined significantly because of the increase per capita cost of educating a child. This happens without a working policy framework or laws to redress the shortage caused by these increases. This is also made worse by the negative trends in national government appropriations to sub-national governments and the education sector in particular (Ekpo, 2008; Fatile & Ejalonibu, 2015; Geo-Jaja, 2004).

Furthermore, in Africa generally, there is need for participation, accountability, and transparency so that the abuse of power in the form of corruption and clientelism caused by a long time of centralised systems can be minimised. In Kenya, for example, political patronage transformed state-driven development into a privilege for those close to the centre of political power (Andrews & Schroeder, 2003). This, therefore, made devolution of power very important

to transform development into a right for all and make resources accessible and provide the local people with an opportunity to participate in decision making (Kanyinga, 2016).

2.3.3 Conclusion

As asserted by Kanyinga (2016) above, there is good evidence that decentralisation can promote relatively autonomous administration by local governments and efficient and effective decision taking at the local level. This is because it can create a degree of flexibility for local populations to define and be part of the elaboration of the development strategies that will impact their daily lives. Unfortunately, however, in Africa, a review of the literature indicates that most LED programmes and projects and many other initiatives are not well studied. Moreover, in those instances where investigations have occurred, it is found that LED initiatives are not locally controlled by local government and community organisations and the existing efforts at devolution are not delivering on their promise of LED and the general wellbeing of the communities. To investigate the issue in the Ugandan context, the next chapter undertakes a critical and extensive examination of the literature on the country's devolution reform processes and outcomes.

Chapter Three:

Decentralisation Experience in Uganda: The Long-Standing tradition of cultural nationalism, colonialism, and the ambitious Reform Agenda

3.1 Introduction

To place this study in its appropriate historical and governance context, this chapter introduces the emergence of the Ugandan state and its various experiments with decentralisation in an LED context. The first section gives an overview of Uganda's historical emergence as a nation via colonial occupation and a brief account of the political legacy of colonialism. This is followed by an overview of the post-colonial era including the impacts of the Milton Obote, Idi Amin, and more recent political regimes. These two sections highlight the country's long-standing tradition of 'cultural nationalism' and how Ugandans have been oriented to decentralised governance. Section three describes Uganda's social-economic development context, which is followed by a section on the formal structures of Uganda's decentralisation arrangements and associated programs. The last section examines how Uganda has sought to implement decentralized arrangements to promote empowerment of local leaders and provides an analysis of the contrasting views in the literature for the reasons and consequences of this decentralisation.

3.2 Pre-Colonial and Colonial Uganda (to 1962)

When Sir Winston Churchill visited the place that we call Uganda today in 1897, he called it "a beacon of hope in the heart of the dark continent". His fairy-tale about Uganda was that "You climb up a railway instead of a beanstalk, and at the end there is a wonderful new world, the pearl of Africa". The world embraces many ecosystems from the tall volcanic mountains of the eastern and western frontiers to the densely forested swamps of the Albert Nile River and the rainforests of the country's central plateau. It is a country rich in flora; heavy vegetation in the south with wooded savanna in the central and north, and fauna; with lions and leopards among others animal species roaming the land. Its borders drawn in an artificial and arbitrary manner in the late 19th century, Uganda encompassed two essentially different societies: the relatively centralized Bantu Kingdoms of the south and the more decentralised Nilotic and Sudanic people to the north, making over 32 dialects. This creates a cultural diversity from the Ganda culture in the south and Acholi and Lango in the north resulting in a lifestyle full of a

festivity because of the different rites of passage. These are the places and the people that were united under a single nation-state umbrella to form Uganda.

By 1893, a territory that consisted of peoples organised into African kingdoms and chieftaincies that inhabited the lake regions of central Africa had come under the rule of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC). The IBEAC, which controlled land stretching from the eastern coast of Uganda to the north-eastern shore of Lake Victoria, was a commercial association founded and incorporated in London on 18 April 1888. Its purpose was to administer and develop African trade in the areas controlled by the British Empire. IBEAC administered the region by managing goods and agriculture, its main role being facilitating the construction of a railway connecting the African east coast region of Mombasa to Lake Victoria. However, when IBEAC ran out of money to continue its administrative position in 1894, it transferred its administrative rights to the British Government and the region now known as Uganda became a protectorate of the British Empire (Lancaster, 2012; Mutabwire et al., 2014). The country was composed of previously separate kingdoms and peoples and this history has profoundly influenced the development of Uganda during and after the colonial period. The neighbouring kingdoms included Buganda, Ankole, Toro, and Bunyoro, and the territory of Busoga were incorporated into the emerging country. This process of incorporation was later extended to other chiefdoms, with chiefs who were closer to modern day civil servants than a traditional, pre-colonial, political hierarchy. These chiefdoms were in the north, north-east and north-west and the total area combined now roughly corresponds to that of present-day Uganda (Green, 2010, 2015; Mutabwire et al., 2014).



FIGURE3. 1: MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING THE KINGDOM OF BUGANDA BUNYORO, TORO, AND ANKOLE 1

The Buganda and Bunyoro chieftaincies were the biggest and had more organized and influential administrative systems. It is important to understand how their systems were arranged to support decentralisation of power and responsibilities as these legacies endure down to today. Buganda had a highly centralised system that was critical for protecting the Kabaka's (King's) security in office and for the political ideology of the Kingdom. By 1750, the Kingdom had an organised Hereditary clan with each county under a "saza"⁵ chief. These counties were further subdivided into sub-counties led by sub-county chiefs and then into parishes headed by *batongole* chiefs. All were clients of the *Kabaka*, who was a secular patrimonial ruler. This system shifted territorial and political power to the central capital at the expense of provincial and political power and autonomy (Newbury, 2005).

Turning to Bunyoro Kitala, this was a kingdom which had once been the predominating power in the region between the Great Lakes and whose rulers were believed to be descended from the gods. The Mukama (King) was the head of the kingdom and ruled his people indirectly through a hierarchy of chiefs who were in three grades: the first grade *Abakama b'Obuhanga*

⁵ Saza means an area administration equivalent to a county in Buganda Kingdom.

county chiefs and the second grade were *Abakuru be'Ebitongole* Sub- County chiefs, both were appointed by the Mukama. The third-grade chiefs were *Abakungu* Headmen who administered the villages and estates of the chiefs. The maintenance of the kingdom depended upon the character and ability of the Mukama at any one time to enforce his kingship (Dunbar, 1965)

Therefore, in Uganda there was a long-standing tradition of local nationalism. This was manifested through the presence of different kingdoms, territories, counties, sub-counties, parishes and villages. Decentralisation is therefore important in Uganda—and Africa more generally—because it builds on a more long-standing, traditional conception of African governance. In that vein, the British held the view that these tribal governments were the proper arena for African politics. Subsequently, to promote their indirect rule in 1919, the Protectorate of Uganda authorities passed the Native Authority Ordinance to create districts and district commissioners. This gave them responsibility for a hierarchy of appointed chiefs by the kingdoms at village, parish, sub-county and county levels (Lancaster, 2012). Through this ordinance, these tribal governments are said to have been democratized and given local government functions and the Protectorate began to push for the formation of a unitary state.

In 1930, local councils were created at each of the administrative levels. This was reinforced by the Local Government Ordinance of 1949, which established districts as a local government area and the basis for separate district administrations. Subsequently after 1949, local administration was shared between the central government and district officials. The District Administrations Ordinance 1955 was enacted in an attempt to create a greater, more effective democracy by giving more authority to districts and local governments (Mutabwire et al., 2014). However, the government then made amendments and introduced the Local Administrations (Amendment) Ordinance of 1959. This gave the Colonial Governor the power to appoint district chairpersons and members of the appointment boards. As a result, councils were given some responsibility for district administration, which included collecting revenue. However, the central Government retained the power to control most district councils' decisions (Mutabwire et al., 2014).

3.3 Post-Colonial Uganda (1962 to Present)

Uganda gained independence on October 9th 1962, and by then it consisted of the Kingdom of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro, the territory of Busoga; and the districts of Acholi, Bugisu, Bukedi, Karamoja, Kigezi, Lango, Madi, Sebei, Teso and West Nile (Lancaster, 2012). The Independence Constitution, negotiated in London a few months prior, granted full federal

status to Buganda and semi-federal relationship to the other kingdoms. The Uganda Constitutional Conference of 1961, which negotiated the country's independence, was attended by delegates representing the United Kingdom. Uganda's side was represented by the Uganda government, the Democratic Party, Uganda Peoples' Congress, District councils and Buganda Kingdom. In attendance as well was the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It is said that each group had its own interests. As a result, therefore, these negotiations resulted in a devolution of power which undermined the authority of the central state and created Uganda as a 'quasi-federal milieu' (Lancaster (2012).

However, a more substantive movement towards devolution came with the enactment of the 1962 Semi-Federal Constitution, which was designed to ease the emerging inter-ethnic conflicts among the communities that formed the new state, especially due to Buganda's special status. The stated purpose of the new Constitution was to enhance self-governance, land administration, collection of taxes, and management of local roads, rural water supplies, agricultural extension, and primary and junior secondary education. The Ministry of Regional Administration was created to superintend this new sub-national governance arrangement (Mutabwire et al., 2014). On 22 February 1966, however, Milton Obote, who was the Prime Minister and head of the first Uganda People's Congress (UPC) government, suspended the 1962 Constitution and took over all powers of state, thus giving rise to what came to be known as the 1966 Crisis. This crisis was the result of the Kabaka's dual loyalties to Buganda and Uganda and disagreements with the Prime Minister, especially after the King became the Ceremonial President of Uganda in 1963.

Subsequently, on 15 April 1966, in a parliament surrounded by troops, the Prime Minister introduced without notice a new constitution and the parliament voted on it that very day without debate. The Prime Minister informed members of parliament that they would find copies in their pigeonholes and thus this constitution came to be known as the 'Pigeonhole' Constitution or 1967 Constitution. Among other things, the new federal Constitution abolished the status of kingdoms and merged the office of Prime Minister with that of the President. The result was that all executive powers became vested in the President and Uganda was declared a Republic. The government then introduced a Local Administrations Act 1967, which gave the central government control over local administration in each district. Furthermore, the Pigeonhole Constitution abolished kingdoms and made them districts under the extensive powers of a minister responsible for local government.

Four years later, Idi Amin, who was the army commander and who feared being arrested by the President who had lost trust in him, led a disgruntled national army full of tribal dissension within it to overthrow the government on 25 January 1971. During Idi Amin's reign between 1971 and 1979 the country was divided into 38 districts grouped into 10 provinces. Amin appointed soldiers as governors who were only accountable to him and the Ugandan military and this further centralised power and shifted responsibility away from local governments. Amin's regime was overthrown by exiled Ugandans with the help of the Tanzanian army in 1979 and in 1980 a Military Commission led by Paul Muwanga organized national elections. Obote returned to power for the second time in a vote said to have been marked by significant irregularities. Obote's second UPC government (1980-1985) did not make any significant efforts to re-establish decentralized democratic governance. Instead, the new government re-established non-elected councils appointed by the minister for local government. After a civil war (1980–1986) between Obote's government and Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the current government came into power. At this time, restoration of democratic local governance in Uganda became a fundamental issue. It was claimed by the new government that centralised approach to management of public affairs and development planning adopted in Uganda at the time of independence had failed. The reason given was that the system had not been effective in empowering Ugandans to reduce poverty, improve people's welfare and deliver good governance.

Today, the government's argument in favour of decentralisation as a policy process to drive LED, therefore, is that it promotes democratic local governance. Decentralisation could promote local development through popular participation in local elections and improve representation and empowerment (Kanyinga, 2016). In the same vein, in 2007 Uganda adopted a participatory, bottom-up approach to development planning and embraced local economic development (LED) as a pillar of decentralisation. The idea was to deepen the decentralisation process and empower people at the locality level. Uganda's decentralisation is also claimed to be vital in the achievement of the National Vision 2040, which was launched in 2013 with the goal of transforming Uganda's society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years.

To start the process of decentralisation, in 1986, the new government of Uganda then set up a Commission of Inquiry into the state's local government system. The Commission collected views from all parts of the country and in 1987 recommended a decentralised system to improve local governance. Even though some parts of the country had expressed a preference for a

decentralised government system, the people in rural Buganda were especially enthusiastic for a more federal form of power, principally due to its similarity to the old Buganda Kingdom government system (Green, 2015). Nevertheless, since 1993, the Government of Uganda has pursued a decentralised system of governance, under which political, administrative, planning, and financial powers are said to have been gradually transferred from the central to local governments. By the vote of parliament, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda adopted decentralisation as a form of local governance in Uganda and the parliament operationalised it by enacting the Local Government Act of 1997 (Echelon, 2016).

3.4 Economic and Social Structures and Development Context

Modern Uganda is a landlocked country across the equator located in East Africa bordering Lake Victoria in South East. The country is bordered by South Sudan in north, Democratic Republic of Congo in west, Kenya in east and Rwanda and Tanzania in south as indicated in figure 1.3. Uganda covers an area of 241,551 square kilometres and is divided into over 135 districts and 1,403 sub-counties. Uganda's population is estimated to be about 40 million people in the year 2020, making it the world's second most populous land locked country after Ethiopia.

The economy of Uganda has great potential for development because of its endowment with significant natural resources, including ample fertile land, regular rainfall, and mineral deposits. However, chronic political instability and erratic economic management since the implementation of self-rule has produced a record of persistent economic decline that has left Uganda among the world's poorest and least-developed countries. Pre-COVID-19, Uganda's GDP growth was targeted to be 6.5% for 2020 and GDP per capita is \$823 (nominal, 2020). Contributions to GDP by sector are indicated to be Agriculture 71.9%, Industry 4.4%, Services 23.7 %. The rate of inflation is estimated to be 3.2% (World Bank, 2019)

Uganda's Human Capital Index (HCI) is low, with a child born in Uganda today only expected to be 38% as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health. In Uganda, only 6 % of children can read a paragraph at the end of the fourth grade. Undernutrition is high and stunting affects one-third of all children aged five years and below. At 3%, Uganda's annual population growth rate is among the highest in the world and, despite a reduction in fertility rates, the population is expected to reach 100 million by 2050. Statistics for 2018 show the age structure in Uganda is skewed towards children with 47% of the population between the age of 0 to 14 years; 51% between 15 to 64 years; and almost 22%

over 65 and older. While 700,000 young people reach working age every year, yet only 75,000 jobs are created per year, which leaves more than 70% of Ugandans employed in agriculture, mainly on a subsistence basis. Uganda has many ethnic groups, making it one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region. Decentralisation is, therefore, important in providing a chance to a population with such a diverse ethnicity to participate in its development. This is because participation has long been regarded as a strong integral element of economic improvement and social change (Bowen, 2008; World Bank, 2019).

3.5 Structural Adjustment (Legal & Administrative) of Uganda's Decentralisation and Associated Programs: The Ambitious Reform Agenda

This section focuses on the key tenets of Uganda's decentralisation and the associated programs and how they support bottom-up paradigm and local economic development. It presents some of the decentralisation arrangements (legal, administrative, and structural) intended to empower local governments and local communities for service delivery and sustainable Local Economic Development (LED). The section establishes a benchmark against which to compare how some of the formal systems are being operationalised in practice in the two case study areas of Buikwe and Kimenyedde.

3.5.1 Legal Reform Overview

As mentioned in the earlier section of this chapter, the NRM government, which had just taken over government through a civil war in 1986, set up a Commission of Inquiry into Local Government to review the local government system and structure in Uganda. The Commission recommended, among other things, that it was important to raise the profile of the local councils and grant them sufficient authority and autonomy, launching a rather ambitious Local Government Decentralisation Programme on 2 October 1992. Subsequently, the enactment of the *Local Governments (Resistance Councils) Statute* 1993 emphasized greater local government autonomy and authority, including principles of non-subordination. Through Chapter 11 of the *1995 Constitution*, Uganda adopted decentralisation as a form of local governance. Thereafter, the parliament of Uganda through Chapter 11 of the Constitution operationalised Article 11 of the *1995 Constitution* by enacting the *Local Government Act* Cap 243 of 1997. This *Act* has since then undergone several amendments supposedly to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments. The *Local Government Act* 1997 confers upon local governments a set of powers through which they can execute activities aimed at realising the objectives of decentralisation. These include political, administrative, financial,

judicial, planning, and legislative powers (MolLG, 1997). To date, most of the legal reform requirements for decentralisation in Uganda have been put in place to support the devolution processes of power to local governments (CLGF, 2015; Emorut, 2006; Francis & James, 2003).

Year	Amendment	Expected outcome
2001	Local governments (<i>Amendment</i>) Act 2001	Creation of village and parish councils and executive committees etc
2005	Local government amendment Act 2005	Creation of municipalities, the Public service commission, creation & functions of town boards etc.
2008	Local government (<i>Amendment</i>) Act 2008	Removed the compulsory membership of every village resident to a village council, but provided for every citizen of eighteen years residing in a village to be a member of a village council etc.
2008	Local government (<i>Amendment</i>) No2 Act 2008	Allowed local government to levy, charge and collect local service tax, to spend on basic local services etc.
2013	Local government (<i>Amendment</i>) Act 2013	Appointment of councillors as representatives of disable person on village councils etc.
2015	Local government (<i>Amendment</i>) Act 2016	Provided for local government budgets, development plans, interim councils, and financial arrangements etc.

TABLE. 3.1:AN OVERVIEW OF SOME IMPORTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENTS AND THEIR EXPECTED OUTCOMES

3.5.2 Decentralisation of Power and Powers of Local Governments: Reform Highlights

The Ugandan approach to decentralisation takes the form of devolution of political, administrative, and fiscal functions as described in Table 2.2. Formally, the political decentralisation lynchpin in Uganda is citizen participation in the decision-making process. Citizens elect their representatives at various levels of the local government structure as described in detail in Figure 3.3. Elected leaders provide political oversight, approve budgets, and take decisions, acting as a legislative body. Regarding administrative decentralisation in Uganda, there are three major components: human resource management, local legal regulation, and procurement management. Finally, fiscal decentralisation gives local governments power to receive and appropriate resources. In this case, local governments by law collect and appropriate taxes in the form of local revenue, while also implementing the expenditure functions related to grants received from the central government (MolLG, 1997).

Discursively, the decentralisation approach in Uganda emphasises the transfer of power to local governments to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The policy is justified as being designed to improve power in public decision-making and to build capacities in the local councils to plan, finance and manage their constituencies. This is said to be achieved through encouraging the local people to contribute to policy making and implementation. Ultimately, then, decentralisation is claimed to lead to local and national development by empowering the people of Uganda working within its institutions at every level of society including public, private and civic institutions (Asiimwe & Musisi, 2007; Ekpo, 2008; Mugabi, 2004).

To underpin and deepen decentralisation and transform it into an instrument of local development, the central government's policy reforms include promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Physical Planning, Economic Planning, Bottom-up Planning, Comprehensive National Development Planning Framework (CNDPF) and LED and many others. Notably, the purpose of LED, the focus of this thesis, is to harness the tripartite relationship between local governments, communities, and the private sector. This approach is ostensibly intended to stimulate economic growth and wealth creation at the household level through community-driven developments. Through LED, communities would increasingly participate in democratic processes, more especially as their livelihoods are enhanced from the wealth created at household level (Echelon, 2016). The achievement of LED through decentralisation is further justified by the observation that local governments have been, for several years, grappling with ways to generate local revenue to finance the provision of efficient and effective services in their localities. In addition, with progressively declining revenues from central government, LED initiatives promoting alternative strategies and innovations have emerged as vital avenues towards enhancing creation of wealth at the local level. Further, the disappointing results of the traditional top-down, supply side, sectoral development strategies to combating rising unemployment and regional inequality have driven the search for alternative development strategies that would offer opportunities for growth to all areas. Therefore, LED as a pillar of, and approach to, decentralisation has been intended to create a conducive environment for investment, increase household incomes and generate higher revenues for local governments, all of which is expected to translate into improved livelihoods for the people. To enhance development several changes to the planning system have occurred also, for example, the development of the Uganda Vision 2040,⁶ and the National Development

⁶ National Vision Statement launched on 18th month 2013 to transform Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years.

Plan, to further deepen decentralisation with mechanism for empowering people (MoFPED, 2013; MoLG, 2014b; Mutabwire et al., 2014).

An important feature of Uganda's decentralisation is that local councils are responsible for the delivery of most public functions and services. The district, which is the basic unit of local government, is responsible for major functions and services previously carried out by the central government. District councils are responsible for functions and services including but not limited to primary, secondary, trade, special and technical education. They are also responsible for hospitals (other than referral and medical training centres), health centres, dispensaries, and aid posts. Also, the construction and maintenance of feeder roads are local council responsibilities. Finally, the provision and maintenance of water supplies, agricultural extension services, land administration and surveying and community development are all also responsibilities of local councils. Generally, and important to note is that not all councils are equal in practice, urban councils are responsible for service delivery in urban areas and they enjoy both financial and planning autonomy. This could partly be because of being richer and having more financial and planning capacity than rural councils. Lower level local government in rural areas however, initiate, encourage, support, and participate in self-help projects and mobilise people, materials, and technical assistance in relation to self-help projects. Besides, they generally monitor and supervise projects and other activities undertaken by the government, local governments, and nongovernmental organisations in their areas (MoLG, 1997; Tucungwirwe et al., 2010).

It should be remembered that all the changes outlined previously in the evolution of Uganda's decentralisation approach were built on a major assumption that local leaders and citizens would be able to enforce responsiveness and accountability. This was to be done through empowerment, a social action process that promotes participation of the people, organisations, and communities towards the goal of increased community control (Kakumba, 2010). Such empowerment was aimed at creating greater political efficiency, improved quality of life and improved social justice. At the individual level, empowerment was sought to involve equipping people with decision making capabilities and restoring a belief in their own autonomy and skills necessary to enable them to make decisions concerning their communities (Kipiriri et al., 2003). At local government level, empowered local leaders would prioritise the development of their local economies to make the economies sufficiently vibrant and robust to generate adequate taxable resources to support local development (Kipiriri et al., 2003). Therefore, this thesis focuses on decentralised local government because the practice is argued to be empowering to

local governments and communities for sustainable local economic development through citizen participation in the decision-making process. This is because the value of empowerment of the organised sector of the rural community through viable and effective participation of community organisations stems from the increased capability of the disadvantaged and poorer.; where these members of the rural community can influence decisions affecting their lives and welfare. In the same line of argument, genuine development, economic as well as social cannot take place so long as the rural development strategy falls short of empowering the more numerous but poorer members of the society (Andrews & Schroeder, 2003; Crook, 2003; Kapiriri et al., 2003; Ssonko, 2013)

The local government approach to empowerment and local governance that is set out in Table 2.1 starts with the structural arrangement that includes powers and responsibilities and a legally mandated mechanism of downward accountability through local elections. Civic education programs to help people to understand how local governments operates and what public services to expect or demand from their local government are also necessary in the empowerment process. Equally important as indicated in the literature is enhancing the capacities of representative institutions such as sub-county councils or assemblies to improve their contribution to governance. Their contribution is through planning, decision making, and accountability. The participatory budgeting approach (PBA), too, has important programs that complement the formal elements of accountability systems in local governments. According to Kakumba (2010), to empower communities further Uganda chose to adopt a participatory, bottom-up planning approach to development planning as earlier mentioned.

Amidst all these changes though, there is conflicting knowledge about the effects these newly established reforms are having on promoting empowerment of local governments and people and enabling them to participate in sustainable local economic development. The next sections, therefore, examine how Uganda has sought to promote LED through empowerment of local leaders. To be able to analyse the policy and practice of decentralisation in Uganda, it is imperative to reflect on some of the important structural reforms.

3.5.3 Hierarchy of the Local Government Structure in Uganda

The 1995 Constitution of Uganda provided for the principles and structures of local governments with a five-tier local government system. The system is based on districts and city as the highest units of decentralisation for rural and urban setting, respectively. This research is interested in the rural setting as elaborated in the methodology chapter.

The country is currently divided into 135 districts and 1,403 sub-counties each with an elected chairperson and council as the highest decision-making body. Local Councils (LCs) in Uganda comprise local councils and administrative unit councils. LCs are the highest political authority within the area of jurisdiction of local government and exercise legislative and executive powers in accordance with the law (MoILG, 1997).

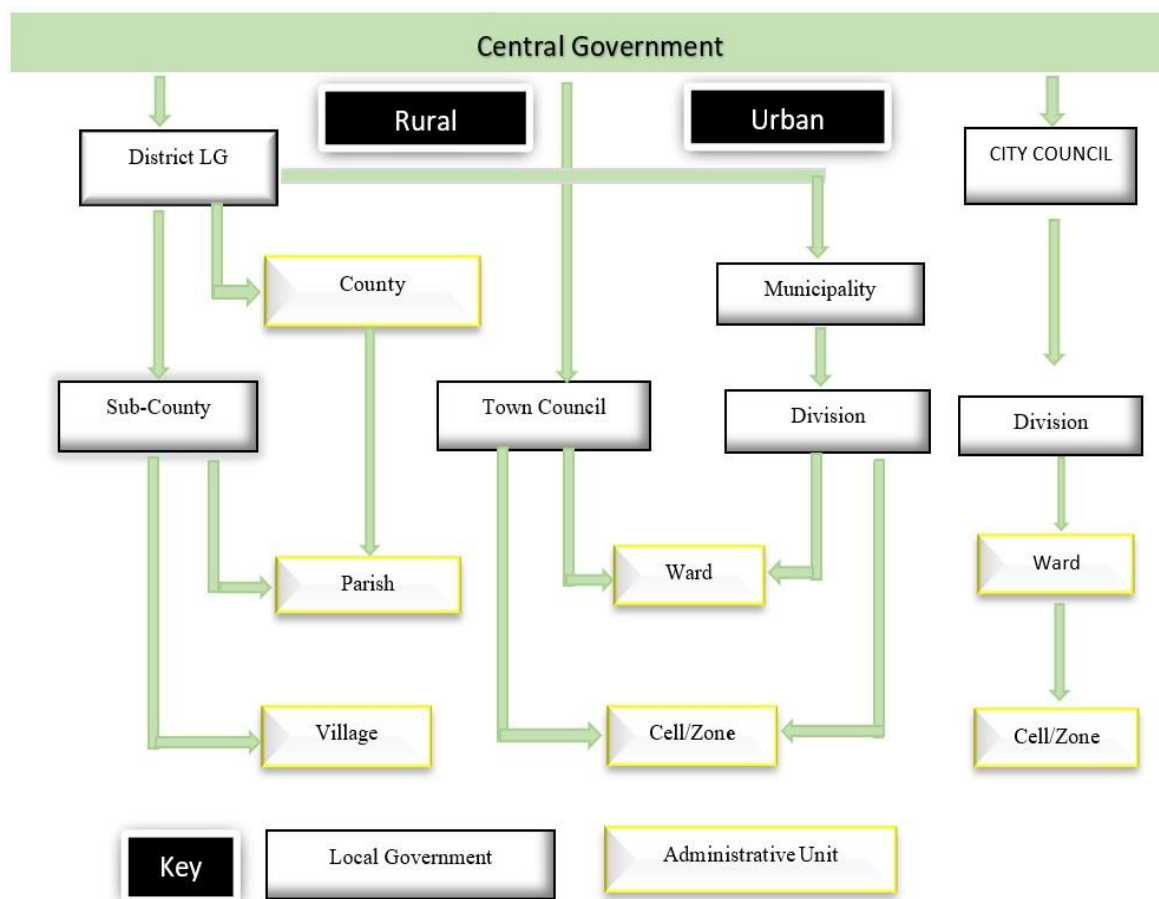


FIGURE 3.2: STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN UGANDA 1

The figure shows the local government and administrative units as laid down from the district to village in the rural and city to cell/zone in the urban and how they connect to each other.

The system is based on the district/city as the basic unit, under which there are lower local governments at municipality/city division and sub-county, town, and municipal division councils. Every local government is a body corporate with perpetual succession. Administrative unit councils on the other hand exist at county, parish/ward and village/cell levels (MoILG, 1997). Administrative Unit Councils (AUCs) are not a corporate body: they function to resolve problems or disputes, monitor the delivery of services, and assist in the maintenance of law,

order, and security. AUCs at the county level consist of all members of the sub-county executive committee in the county. At the parish level, a council is composed of all members of the village executive committees in the parish. Meanwhile, the village council is composed of all persons of eighteen years of age and above residing in that village.

A sub-county council consists of one chairperson (who is elected by a universal adult suffrage); the councillors representing each parish (also elected by universal adult suffrage); two youth councillors (one male and one female) representing the youth in the sub-county (both elected by an electoral college consisting of members of the parish youth councils); the sub-county executives; two councillors with disabilities (females representing people with disabilities in the sub-county elected by all members of parish executive committees); and finally, a woman councillor representing all women in the sub-county (elected by universal adult suffrage). The executive committee of lower local government councils consists of the chairperson, the vice chairperson, and such numbers of secretaries, not exceeding five, as the council may determine.

3.5.4 The Framework for Local Economic Development (LED)

As previously noted, in 2006, the Ugandan Government amended the Constitution to create a sixth objective of decentralisation, which was to promote Local Economic Development (LED) to enhance people's incomes. Subsequently, a National Local Economic Development policy was formulated to provide a framework for partnerships in local economic development and to serve as a vehicle for promoting and implementing LED initiatives at local government level. As stated earlier, the intention of the LED policy is to further deepen the decentralisation process, eradicate poverty, and ensure inclusive, sustainable economic growth at local level. This was to be done through community capacity building (both rural and urban) to identify and demand for services and exercise accountability. The Uganda National LED policy, therefore, set the foundation for implementing the National LED Strategy and serves as a framework for resource mobilisation and capacity development for local governments and municipal authorities.

The official goal of this policy is a transformed local government system that facilitates effective business-oriented local development with a focus on poverty reduction through sustainable inclusive wealth creation. This policy is to be consistent with the Government of Uganda's planning frameworks especially the National Development Plan (NDP), the Rural Development Strategy (RDS) and Prosperity for All (PFA) programmes. Further the policy is to be consistent with the Decentralisation Policy Strategic Framework (DPSF), and Local

Government Sector Strategic Plan (LGSSP) (Edoun, 2012). All these national programmes are designed to work with local governments and propel Uganda towards middle income status by 2020 in line with the aspirations of Uganda's Vision 2040.

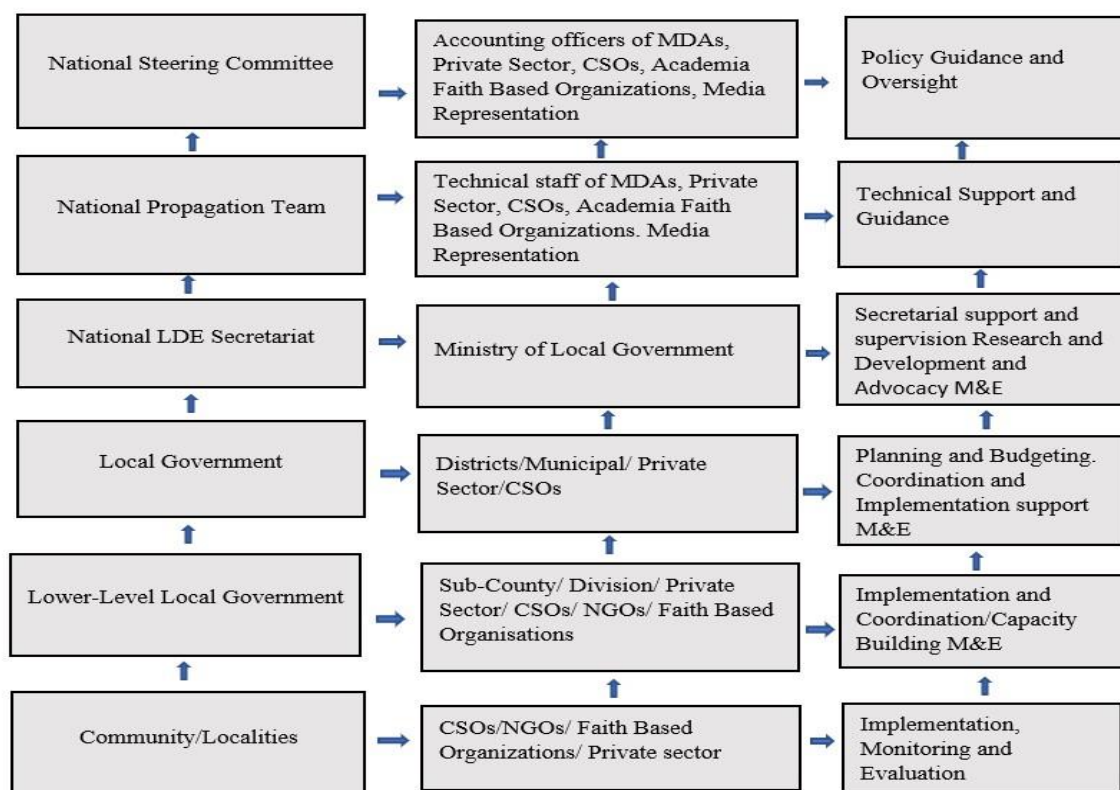


FIGURE. 3.3: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR LED POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION 1

The Functional Linkages Between the Various Coordination structures and their Functions at each Level Adopted from Uganda National LED (MoLG, 2014b)

The framework shows how the implementation and coordination is structured to be done right from grassroot communities/governments and organisations to national organisations.

The LED policy was formulated to mobilise and galvanise the efforts of stakeholders to address development challenges effectively and efficiently. Accordingly, LED should enable local governments to improve the business environment by encouraging the private sector to play its role in economic growth and job creation. LED is to be achieved through the commitments of relevant stakeholders including the private sector, the communities, and civil societies. This is because LED promotes public private partnership related ventures that mobilise investment, create skills and encourage efficient business practices. The LED resource team works with sub-county technical planning committees to ensure incorporation of LED activities in the planning and budgeting frameworks. As indicated in Fig 3.3, the communities (private sector

and civil societies) are represented on the Technical Planning Committee (TPC). TPCs are under the Sub-county Chief in the two communities of Najja and Kimenyedde as indicated in Figs 5.2 and 6.1 respectively (MoLG, 2014a; Mutabwire et al., 2014).

Being a multi-sector undertaking, the LED policy seeks the participation of various stakeholders. The central government has overall responsibility for creating an enabling environment and supporting and monitoring local government policy implementation. Local governments on the other hand are responsible for coordinating policy implementation in their geographical boundaries and for mobilizing stakeholders around a common program.

3.5.5 Bottom-up Planning Paradigm

To empower communities further, as indicated earlier, Uganda has adopted a participatory, bottom-up approach to development planning. Under this arrangement, local government and local councils' plans are formulated, following national goals and priorities as stated in the *National Development Plan* and the *Uganda Vision 2040*. What must be considered in bottom-up planning is the unique needs of the local population in these localities and therefore striking a balance between bottom-up and top-down influences (Kakumba, 2010; MoLG, 2014b).

3.5.6 Structures of Local Government Planning Process

To support bottom-up planning, the Ugandan Government has developed a structure for the local government planning process. Development plans are a legal requirement for all higher and lower local governments in Uganda. For example, Section 35 of the *Local Government Act* (Cap 243) requires district councils to prepare comprehensive and integrated development plans incorporating plans of lower local governments. The same section also obliges lower local governments to prepare development plans incorporating the plans of the lower local councils in their respective jurisdictions. Development plans are, therefore, a basic tool for the implementation of decentralised development programs and services by government and non-government actors in local governments.

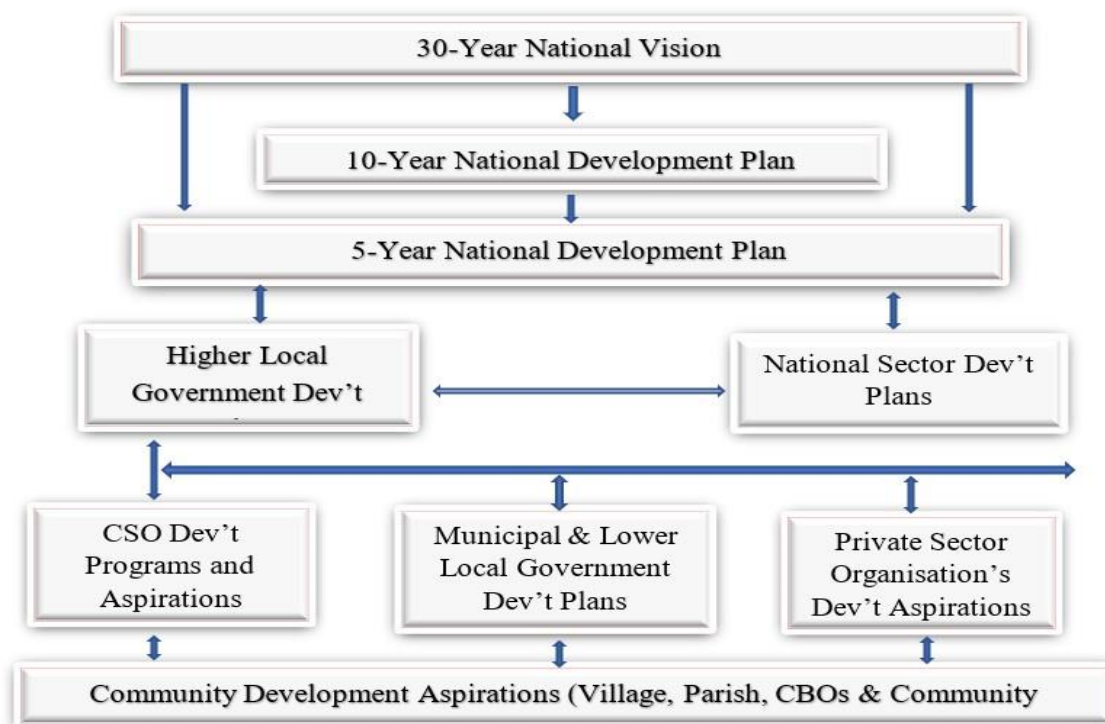


FIGURE. 3.4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERACTION DURING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS 1

Adopted from (MoLG, 2014b, p. 12)

According to this conceptual framework, consultations and data collection takes place concurrently at all levels of local governments beginning in the eighth month of the fourth year of the District Development Plan implementation. During consultations, local governments collect data on the prevailing physical, social, and economic characteristics of local governments, with sector development focussing on opportunities and potential for wealth creation and local economic development. This is done with key stakeholders (private sector CSO, and development partners). Consideration is expected to be given to crosscutting issues and any other basic data that is essential in informing the formulation of the Local Government Development Plan (LGDP) strategic direction or its implementation modalities.

The Local Government Development Planning Guide, produced by the National Planning Authority (NPA), helps steer the process of preparing local government development plans. The guidelines in the Guide help operationalise the local government development planning functions, roles and mandates as enshrined in the *1995 Constitution*. Production of local government development plans is supposed to be a political as well as a technical process. It emerges from the active roles of elected local government councils, their executive and sub-committees as well as from technical departments. The Guide is intended to facilitate and

harmonise development planning processes in local governments where: (i) local governments' development aspirations are adequately coordinated towards a common strategic development direction guided by the *Uganda Vision 2040* and the NDPs; and (ii) local governments' development needs and opportunities, including those of lower councils, are adequately integrated in sectors and National Development Plans. The Guide also aims to facilitate all development actors in a local government (CSOs, PSOs, and communities) to effectively participate and contribute to achieving a common strategic development direction for a specific local government.

At the end of the financial year 2019/2020, a new Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) 2020/21-2024/25 was announced in which the government promises to increase average household income and improve the quality of life of Ugandans. This was to be achieved through the Plan's objectives which include, among others, enhancing the productivity and social wellbeing of the population and strengthening the role of the state in guiding development. The NDPIII replaces NDPII, which sought to achieve competitiveness for sustainable wealth creation, employment, and inclusive growth. In a recent report, the Ugandan Government stated that the country will likely fail to achieve the key NDPII objective of obtaining middle income status by 2020. This is because a large proportion of households (68.9%) still operate a subsistence economy, there is widening income inequality, particularly between the regions, there is low capacity in public service, and these are coupled with alleged widespread corruption. There is also, uncoordinated approaches to implementation planning, and dwindling local revenues that are insufficient to fund local service delivery.

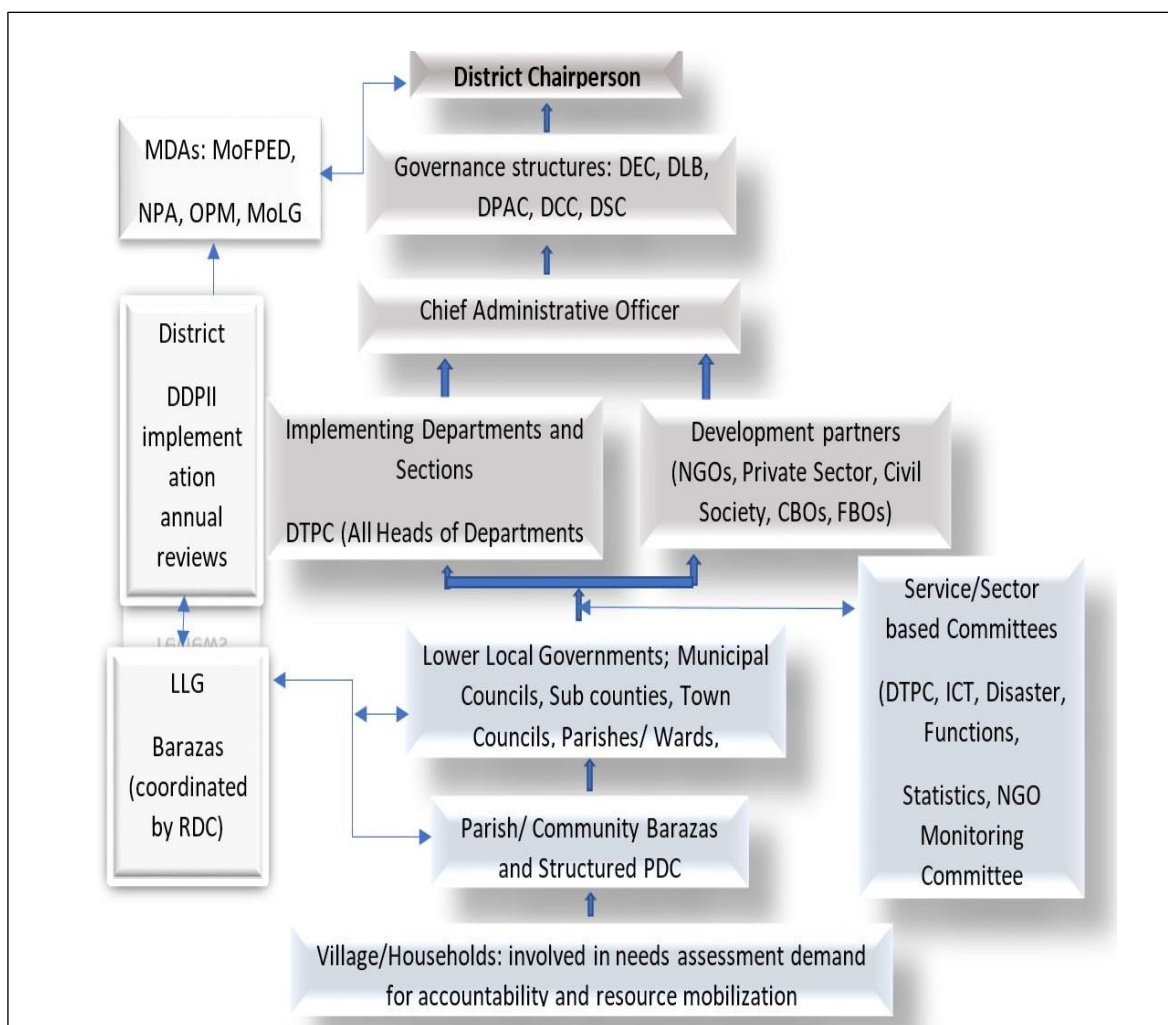


FIGURE. 3.5: DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION FRAMEWORK (DDPICF) 1

Source: (MoLG, 2015)

Key:

MDAs-Ministries Departments and Agencies; **NPA**-National Development authority; **MoFPED**-Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development; **OPM**-Office of the Prime Minister; **DDP**-District Development Plan; **MoLG** Ministry of Local Government; **DPAC**-District Procurement and Accounts Committee; **LLG** -Lower Local Government; **RDC**- Resident District Commissioner; **DEC**-District Executive Committee; **DLB**-District Land Board; **DCC**-District Contract Committee; **DSC**-District Service Commission; **DLB**-District Land Board; **DTPC**-District Technical Planning Committee; **CBOs**-Community Based Organisations; **FBOs**-Faith Based Organisation; **PDC** - Parish Development Committee.

To participate in sustainable local economic development at the local/village level, the above framework was to have village/household as the starting point for a needs assessment and ensure accountability and resource mobilisation. The idea was that the community would discuss the assessments during a parish *baraza* session, which the parish councillor would then

present to the council meeting at the subcounty council meeting and then to a *baraza* session in the presence of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and the district councillor. A district councillor presents the outcome to development partners and the district departments responsible for implementation and then through the CAO to the district chairperson.

In other words, the District Development Plan Implementation and Coordinating Framework (DDPICF) uses a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) approach. This approach seeks to involve all key stakeholders in the process of developing a framework for measuring results and reflecting on the projects achievements and proposing solutions based on local realities, to enhance the bottom-up planning paradigm. The lower local governments are entirely mandated to engage the communities to participate in all development interventions, ensure equitable resource allocation, conduct village needs assessment, give feedback on project and programme progress coupled with resource mobilization (MoLG, 2015).

3.5.7 The Local Government Accountability Process

The accountability process was established to improve financial accountability and responsibility. This was to establish a clear link between the payment of taxes and the provision of services financed. This would be done through improved capacities of the councils to plan, finance, and manage the delivery of services of their constituencies as well as LED. This promised to bring political and administrative control over services to a point where they are delivered.

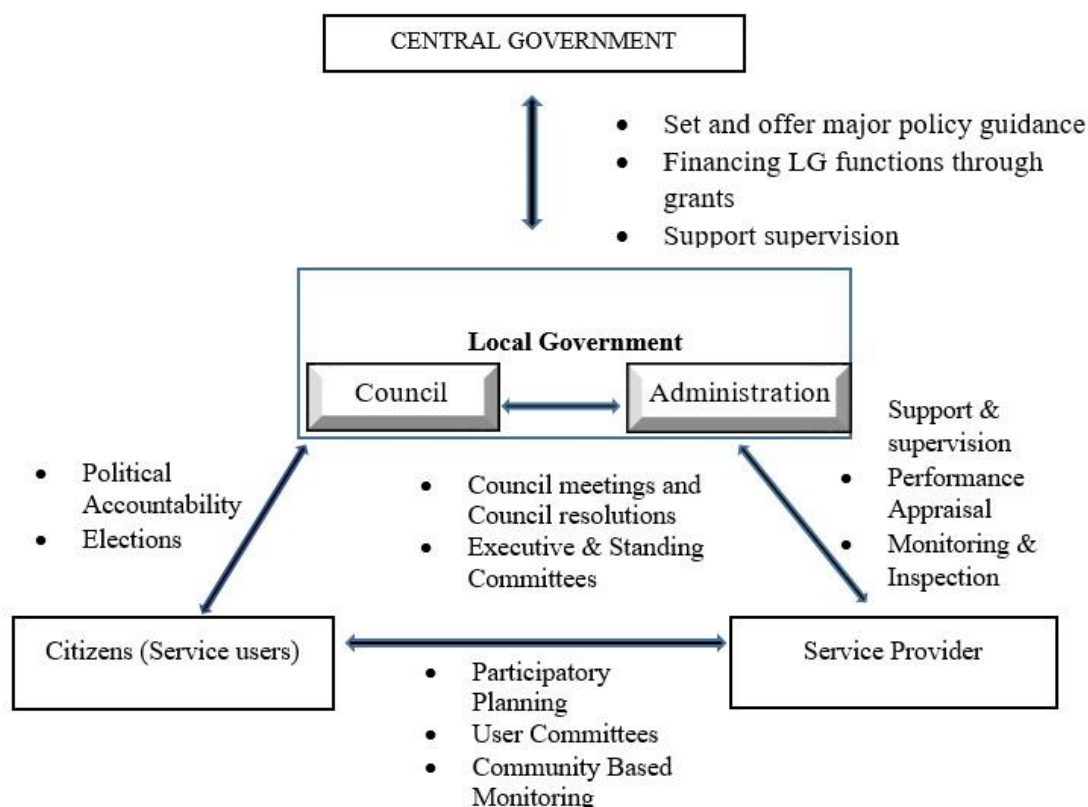


FIGURE 3.6: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK 1

Source: Adopted from the Joint Annual Review on Decentralisation Report (JARD, 2004: 15)

The framework emphasises that even when there are financial and accounting regulations prescribing financial and accountability measures for compliance by all local governments, the annual budget process forms the basis of accountability. The law, therefore, provides for the budget to be the local government's financial plan of revenue and expenditure for a financial year. It reflects the funds available to a local government, their source, and the distribution of the funds between functions and services. Being a very important financial plan, the law provides for a robust budgeting process which starts with a Budget Call Circular, and proceeds through a Local Government Budget Framework Paper, Budget Conference, Budget Consultation, Draft Annual Work Plan, Laying of the Draft Budget Estimate, and finally Approval of the LG Annual Budget Estimates by a council.

Further, the law provides for local government council standing committees to make their recommendation before a budget is debated, amended, and finally approved by a council. Fundamentally, a local government council must ensure that the budget is used to achieve the objectives it sets out. It is also important to note that supplementary budgets are provided for by the law (MoLG, 2016; MoLLG, 1997). The budget is an important contract between the

community, local politicians, and local administrators. The accountability relationship, therefore, is significantly determined by the way the elected leaders periodically feedback decisions and information from council meetings to electorate. According to the Framework, there is an obligation that the councillors must be politically accountable to the electorate. This assumes that local governments have adequate resources and capacity to use them effectively: that is, that there is a community that clearly understands their role in raising resources for local development and demands accountability from their leaders without expecting monetary or other rewards at election time.

3.6 Section conclusion

This section has detailed the formal hierarchal structures of Uganda's system of decentralised governance and its associated programs. This has established a benchmark and an understanding of the programs that complements the formal elements of empowerment in decentralised local government systems in Uganda. The section has shed light of the ambitious policy reforms of Uganda, while the next section outlines the current understanding of actual experiences.

3.7 Perspectives on Uganda's policy experience of decentralisation: A Literature Review of an ambiguous legacy

A review of the literature indicates that decentralisation in Africa is an ambitious process that seeks to empower local communities to engage in their own development. It is further pointed out that, when it comes to Uganda, the field of decentralisation is characterised by a vague and more general conceptual and legal framework - that the concept takes the form of a list with lots of activities to do, but with little possibility for big achievements beyond a verification of outputs. There is however another belief that if the practice were conducted as set out in various policy frameworks, it would possibly improve the participation of communities in the management of their affairs (Ahikire, 2004). Further, Uganda is reported to having departed significantly from the ideal sequence of decentralisation reforms, which would have strengthened the power of local governments to resist central government interference and prevented it from taking back much of what was initially decentralised (recentralisation) (Awortwi, 2010).

It is further reported that since its launch in late 1997 almost every aspect of Uganda's decentralisation policy has been subjected to dispute. The reasons given are that the policy was a political strategy: that is, it was designed to break the country from its autocratic past and

secure popular backing for the National Resistance Movement (NRM), which took government after a civil war against Milton Obote's government (Gubser, 2011). While Gubser's argument was not accepted by all analysts and is certainly not the official Ugandan position for decentralisation as set out in the first section of this chapter, there are many reasons given in the literature that endorse the same motivational understanding. To assess Uganda's actual experience of decentralisation, the review of literature that follows is organised around decentralisation's political, administrative, and fiscal components.

3.7.1 Political Decentralisation

As discussed above, the legal framework of Uganda stipulates that the decentralisation system shall ensure the full realisation of democratic and participative governance at all local government levels. For that reason, Uganda has enhanced participation in decision-making by enabling local communities to determine their local leadership through democratic elections and provided institutionalised structural arrangements for participatory, bottom-up development planning (Kauzya, 2007a; Mugabi, 2004).

To achieve political decentralisation, Uganda's decentralisation policy provides for democratically elected local councils at all levels in the country, from the village to the district. These councils are reported by the government to be inclusive and to have promoted popular participation. It is further emphasised in official reports that the marginalised and vulnerable categories of Ugandan society including women, youth people with disabilities and the elderly who constitute a big proportion of the population are also represented and allowed to participate in decision making process in areas where they live. Ssonko (2013), however, challenges this claim by asserting that the quality of the elected councillors is affected by their level of education as there is no minimum education requirement to hold office as a district or sub-county councillor, and academic qualifications are not part of the eligibility requirement for office. Although educational requirements are a controversial provision in all democracies because they lead to accusations of elitism and elite capture, being uneducated results in many officials failing to express themselves adequately during plenary sessions, while others cannot make written contributions. This, according to Tucungwirwe et al. (2010), has affected their effectiveness in debates with their counterpart, that is, the educated administrative and technical staff. The lack of education potentially undermines the political arm of the local government and the principle of participation as stipulated by the legal framework.

According to Ugandan Government reports, local government councils have been granted holistic powers to raise revenue, including determining and implementing revenue raising mechanisms, and altering boundaries. Part of this assertion is challenged in our later discussion of literature on the fiscal decentralisation. Another remarkable achievement as reported by government is that lower Local Councils function as local courts. That they are easy to access because operate at the lowest level and they have promoted rule of law. Under this arrangement, local Administrative Police is used to enforce the law, while the executive handle local disputes including business ones not exceeding a certain amount of money. However, as will be discussed in data analysis, this study found out to the contrary.

DDPICF ostensibly allows local communities to participate in sustainable LED at lower local government and village levels. Frameworks were intended to empower people by ensuring lower levels of government and villages/households were the starting point for needs assessments and could exercise accountability and resource mobilisation. It is however questionable where these leaders, most with poor educational backgrounds can participate in such processes, and the extent to which these processes are in fact empowering local governments and people. For example, a Process Evaluation report by the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda (Echelon, 2016) on the Framework found that the majority of people at village level were not consulted during the planning process. More worrying, the report found that few people were even aware that local development planning was occurring. Regarding LED, the report also highlighted that the priorities agreed to at the budget conference that starts with planning at village, parish and then sub-county levels are not followed. There is no feedback given to the communities about their proposals. In many cases they only find out at the end of the planning period that their proposals were not considered.

The overall legal policy framework in Uganda requires that policy practices shall be guided by the principle of decentralisation and devolution of government functions and powers to the people. The policy demands that this be done at the level where they are most appropriately managed. However, one result of this has been a significant increase in the number of local governments, well beyond the few with management capacity and a reasonable resource base. This has put immense pressure on local service delivery and administration in many local government regions (Klaver & Tibamwenda, 2009; Mugabi, 2004). At the start of 2019/20 financial year, for example, 7 more districts were operationalised. This brought the number of districts to 134, resulting to 352 new town councils and 54 new sub-counties. This was done with no matching administrative staffing and financial support levels. According to the

Ugandan government, this increase in the number of administrative units is motivated by the necessity to improve service delivery and governance. However, according to other analysts, the result has been a decline in service delivery in new and old units alike due to declining economies of scale and a consequent lack of financial and human resource capacity. It is also claimed that these new administrative units are often political bargaining chips to reward party cadres and silence political opponents, taken without considering if the new local governments can be appropriately managed (Kakumba, 2010; Ssonko, 2013).

The legal framework for overseeing the performance of persons employed by government and politicians above has introduced the *Baraza* tool. It is reported by Kyohairwe (2014) that *Baraza* were introduced in 2009 to foster public engagement in local democracy and accountability. As a Presidential initiative to create space for citizens to discuss and evaluate the performance of government programs in their respective communities, *Barazas* enable local people to hold government officials, especially at local government level, to account for the resources spent on public programmes in their areas. These are normally held bi-annually. The intention, according to Mutabwire et al. (2014) and Kyohairwe (2014) is to empower communities and the citizen to demand better service delivery and accountability and to identify policy and implementation challenges. Kyohairwe (2014), however, further reports that the major challenge of the *Baraza* is that local leaders have limited information on matters being raised during sessions. This, coupled with limited knowledge of governance matters, low interest, and generally poor education, limits their effectiveness with political and bureaucratic leaders.

A second initiative to promote effective local consultation is the use of ‘score cards’⁷ to assess council performance. Government introduced the Local Government Councils’ Score Card Initiative to support the Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP), co-funded by the Netherlands. The Scorecard Initiative aimed at assessing the performance of the councils, chairpersons, speakers, and councillors to determine how well they carry out their political responsibilities and functions. Research on the Scorecard Initiative by Hout et al. (2016) found that it resulted in a stronger sense of accountability among local government councils. However, earlier research claiming that the Scorecards were a tool to deepen decentralisation and deliver effective governance and quality goods and services was found not to be the case. Kyohairwe

⁷ Periodical assessment reports on council’s performance on their mandated responsibilities

(2014) claimed that the scorecards require a relatively higher level of knowledge, information, and analytical thinking and that this always disadvantages the local people with low education.

3.7.2 Administrative Decentralisation

The Ugandan legal framework stipulates that local governments shall employ persons in the service of local governments. In addition, local governments oversee the performance of persons employed by central government that provide services in their areas. Local government also monitors the provision of government services or the implementation of projects in their areas on the understanding that this would lead to better performance of local governments. Government reports indicate that, as a result, all local government staff are now more responsive and accountable to local government. Ssonko (2013) argues, however, that in addition to the shortage of financial resources, local government also suffers from a shortage of skilled and experienced work force. It is revealed that local governments in Uganda continue to operate at minimum staff levels, in some instances as low as 9% of the approved establishment.

To enhance the devolution of power, the District Service Commission (DSC) originally appointed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), which gave the local government a degree of autonomy to manage its affairs. However, in 2006 the Ugandan government recentralised the role of the CAO, transferring the power of appointment from the DSC to the Public Service Commission (PSC), which was based in the country's capital, Kampala. The Government's justification for this change was that appointment by the DSC meant that CAOs could not carry out their duties independently due to conflict between them and the political leaders. According to the Ugandan Government, these conflicts resulted in unfair dismissals of CAOs, who then took successful legal action, which had almost bankrupted some districts (Echelon, 2016). Green (2008) argues, similarly, that the control of central government transfers to local government by central government appointed CAOs undermines a core element of the decentralisation reforms, since local leaders have less control over the CAO. This, accordingly, has led to more allegations of corruption due to declining downward accountability (accountability mechanisms which give more power to citizens, both for exercising their rights formally as voters, and informally through citizens' organisations), which is now replaced with upward accountability. Also, Kampala the only city in Uganda before the 2020/2021 financial year that saw the creation of other new cities, had its executive powers moved from the city mayor to the Kampala Capital City Authority Executive Director who is appointed and supervised by central government cabinet minister for Kampala city. With all the reasons given,

this ultimately swapped power and responsibility away from the city local government back to the central government.

Finally, despite Uganda's initial success in decentralisation, as widely heralded by the international community, corruption remains widespread at all levels of society Ssonko (2013). Such corruption takes the form of bribery, financial leakages, conflict of interest, embezzlement, false accounting, fraud, influence peddling, and nepotism. In fact, Ssonko (2013) argues that decentralisation in Uganda has led to a dispersion of corruption and is therefore a failed policy in terms of overseeing and monitoring the provision of government services. While decentralisation was to be a principle applied to all levels of local government to ensure people's participation and democratic control in decision-making, resistance from central ministries to what has been perceived as a loss of power has limited its extent. In turn, this has curtailed the degree of decentralisation of power and responsibilities to local governments while opening up opportunities for corruption, countering the earlier success claim (Elsey et al., 2005; Mugabi, 2004).

3.7.3 Fiscal Decentralisation

Devolved fiscal decentralization involves revenue generation and sharing, where a local government sets spending priority and plans how to meet service delivery obligations given the resources available. In Uganda, this is claimed to have been achieved by a variety of locally sourced revenues coupled with central transfers and with some authority for debt financing. The system requires local government to report to local official and citizens on expenditures made according to central formulas and norms, as well as to undertake audits and issue reports on results both locally and to the centre.

The 2014 Ugandan Government assessment of decentralisation performance reported that local government have been empowered through fiscal decentralisation.

There is now more political participation from stakeholders' meetings, planning meetings and budget conferences, transparent mode of information on media and notice boards, awareness creation through induction and exchange visits, local resources. Grants from government and public expenditure management (PEM) systems enable services to be delivered largely as intended in both strong and weak councils (Mutabwire et al., 2014, p. 22).

Klaver and Tibamwenda (2009) had also reported that there was reasonable progress to implement fiscal decentralisation with 40% of the national budget spent through both conditional and non-conditional grants and therefore better service delivery at the local

government level. Ssonko (2013), had however, contended that there was very poor service delivery due to continued acute limited finance and that it was the most critical challenge facing local governments in Uganda. This challenge is put to the limited sources of local tax revenue and overdependence on grants from central government. For that reason, although local governments can make their own budgets, most of the resources available are already designated for activities determined either at the centre or by aid donors. Local governments can only freely allocate unconditional grants and locally raised resources. Moreover, recent reports show that the percentage of locally collected tax revenue that is sent back to local government has been reduced by the central government because of its budget constraints. At the same time, the graduated tax (a progressive tax), which contributed 80% of local revenue for rural local government and 30% for urban local government, was terminated for being unpopular and expensive to collect. Nevertheless, its abolition ultimately reduced the autonomy of the local governments (Kyohairwe, 2014; Musaazi, 2018; Ssonko, 2013).

Devas and Delay (2006) reported that, in Uganda, an independent expenditure tracking system was introduced in the 1990s which revealed that less than 20 percent of the primary education capitation grants provided by the donor community was reaching the schools. It was claimed that local administrative officials and some politicians captured the rest, undermining the effort to establish a sound financial base and development in local governments. As a result, to establish a sounder financial base, international aid donors directly financed several local government programmes. Therefore, while in other countries some donor funds were channelled to local government through properly designed national systems of intergovernmental transfer, in the case of Uganda, donors used *ad hoc* arrangements and parallel channels. However, donors have had a profound but not always positive effect on the financing of decentralisation. This is because it has resulted in the duplication of work and a loss of power and control on the side of political representatives.

The fiscal framework directs those appropriate measures shall be taken to enable local government units to plan, initiate and execute policies in respect of all matters affecting the people within their jurisdiction. In the early 21st century, it was reported that numerous achievements were realised in terms of improving governance and service delivery through democratic participation and community involvement as compared to the previous centralised government system (Mugabi, 2004; Onyach-Olaa, 2003). At the same time, this assessment was disputed by Francis and James (2003), who indicated that experience of decentralisation

proved to be disappointing because of the insufficient fiscal decentralisation, inadequate capacity, lack of central government commitment and lack of accountability to citizens.

A recent study carried out by Mushemeza (2019) appears to support the more positive findings, claiming that the overriding achievements of the decentralisation policy in Uganda has been the significant levels of citizen empowerment and decision making. In an apparent contradiction, however the same author also notes that although the legal framework was comprehensive to drive decentralisation, it was not exhaustive enough to cater for all the objectives of decentralisation including empowerment as laid down in the policy. He gives the example of the *Local Government Act* CAP 243 that sets out a sectoral approach to service delivery but does not give due guidance for local economic development. In his recommendations Mushemeza (2019) indicated that the Ugandan Government should re-engage in the decentralisation discourse, given its critical importance to the political economy of the country and development efforts. He emphasised that Uganda's development trajectory, aiming at attaining the middle-income status, requires that decentralisation policy be implemented in a cohesive manner to empower through strengthened intergovernmental relations. These relationships should also be aligned to respond to the national drive for wealth creation, transformation, and local economic development. Mushemeza (2019) further argued that to drive the decentralisation agenda forward, the call is for adequate LED financing and facilitation of political leaders to monitor the implementation of decentralised services. In summary, local governments need to be facilitated to institutionalise LED as a primary driver for individual and household incomes as well as local revenue; and that Government should uphold the moratorium on the creation of new districts.

3.8 Conclusion: Is it a failed promise of decentralisation and what should be done?

Conclusively, the general view that emerges from the literature reviewed (chapter two and three) is that devolution has the potential to empower local leaders and communities and can thus improve governance in a representative local government democracy. This can potentially foster LED and the wellbeing of the communities given the structural adjustments and the several frameworks in the developing countries and Uganda in particular. Also, the examples given in the literature overview of United Kingdom suggest the same. There is moreover a general view in the literature that when there is proper devolution, empowerment takes place and subsequently improves governance. And as such, for example, local governments can be subject to national norms, but set local policies, priorities and plans autonomously and in

response to local preferences and needs. Also elected officials can respond to constituent demands and needs, whether linked or not to national parties and with a broad political space for local civil society to act. The same literature on African decentralisation has indicated though, that in many African nations including Uganda, ambitious decentralised local government reforms may not have achieved their intended goals despite many positive official reports. Yet the same literature has also shown that in Africa there is concern that central government leaders often serve their own interests instead of those of the people they represent. And, that leader's immunity from accountability is facilitated by the democratic failures of the larger governance system. Important to note, and as indicated by the literature, is that the success of decentralisation depends to a considerable extent on the motives for adopting the policy and the relative power and influence of the different actors involved. If the motives are not pro-people, then the different decentralisation frameworks will not work because the central government does not support them. It is on such a basis that structuring and institutionalizing the interface between people and their local governments to have a meaningful empowering of communities requires proper structural arrangement and practices. Further, and as noted by (Crook, 2003; Kauzya, 2007a), support for decentralisation comes through patient and sustained negotiations, sensitization, persuasion, demonstration of positive results and sometimes, when necessary, coercion. This is because if decentralisation is to be successful, it needs to be conceived as the transfer of power and authority to the people, not only to local government.

Given the partially contradictory accounts of decentralisation in African countries, and in a context of steadily increasing poverty levels, there is some doubt as to whether the existing literature is telling a clear story about how decentralisation policy has been implemented in practice on the continent and whether its related practices like bottom-up planning are achieving the intended goals.

To further understand how and why decentralisation is working in practice, this thesis sets out to investigate the policy practice. The following chapter, therefore, sets out the methodology used to examine decentralisation from a lived-up experience of the people who are charged with practicing it. The methodology not only aims to find out what reforms are required for Uganda's decentralisation policy to ensure it promotes greater empowerment of local government and communities, but also, how local leaders and communities can participate in leadership and bottom-up planning paradigm that decentralisation promotes. These issues lie at

the core of this thesis, with answers leading to possible improved practices in Uganda, and potentially other African countries, and the developing world more generally.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology utilised by this thesis that is aimed at understanding the decentralisation process from the bottom up and the practical experience of communities. The chapter outlined the overall Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach taken and the methods and techniques used to obtain data and the safeguards employed to limit bias. It begun by examining PAR by locating it in research as a qualitative research paradigm.

4.2 Participatory Action Research: Theoretical Overview

This thesis critically analysed how decentralisation is implemented in Uganda from a community and grassroots perspective and, using the PAR approach, makes evidence-based policy recommendations to further empower local government leaders for Local Economic Development (LED). Beyond that, this research project was also an empowering journey because, in working with Ugandan communities, it aimed to improve participants' practices and confidence in their formal leadership performance. The PAR approach, with philosophical roots traceable back to the thoughts of Marx and Freire, was selected because it envisions social change through emancipatory action of the marginalised poor in their communities (Rahman, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 2001). Further, PAR was also selected because it is a systematic and collaborative research approach that occurs between the researcher and marginalized/oppressed members. These members, often seen as co-participants, work with the researcher to collect evidence on which to base group reflection, plan for change and act.

The decision to use PAR methodology was therefore fundamentally informed by the need to have the two case studies and their communities involved in the study. The democratic change that is driven by PAR, and its empowering objective, and my earlier embeddedness within the communities supported me to study and understand the phenomena under investigation, and reflexively write my thesis.

My position in this study as a researcher was to recognise and safeguard against the potential dangers of relying exclusively on tradition, authority, and common sense as the source of

knowledge to guide the study. Therefore, I involved myself in what Rubin and Babbie (2016, p. 10) call critical thinking “so that we can spot fallacies in what others may tell us about their practices, wisdom or the interventions they are touting and watch out for common errors” like overgeneralisation and selective observation.

PAR had been successfully applied in situations that required democratic change (Johns, 2008; Titchen, 2015). For example, Kurt Lewin’s principles of Action Research were applied to the improvement of workers’ output and motivation in a coal mining industry in Britain after the second world war (Bradbury et al., 2008). This methodology was also used in Lewin’s action research approach, which was linked to T-group training introduced during the 1940s (McArdle & Reason, 2008). T-group training was not just about training in human relations, but also about developing a capacity for self-reflective learning and an invitation to relate to others in more open, authentic, and equal relationships. When trainers held a meeting and invited some trainees to join in the ensuing discussion it was made evident that people could learn a great deal about their own behaviour while learning to inquire together. McArdle and Reason (2008) further claim that T-group training was an experimental method that involves making changes and simultaneously studying the results in a cyclic process of planning, action, and fact-gathering. The T-group approach emphasised the power relationship between the researcher and those researched, and sought to involve the latter, encouraging their participation in studying the effects of their own actions. In the same way, Dick (2000) asserts that Lewin’s theory of social action, which emphasises a strong link between theory and practice, had a significant impact on a generation of researchers and thinkers concerned with group dynamics. For example, it was found that with regard to decision making, if group members were involved in and encouraged to discuss the issues themselves and were able to make their own decisions as a group, they were far more likely to change their habits than if they had just attended lectures giving appropriate information, templates and advice (Lewin, 1946). And lastly, in the 1970s, PAR became more prominent and successfully used in works of Marja Liisa Swantz in Tanzania, Orlando Fals-Borda in Colombia and Rajesh Tandon in India (Brydon-Miller et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, different variations of this approach have evolved since Lewin’s day, although its utility as a scientific research method is sometimes questioned due to its ‘messiness’. Goodnough (2008, p. 452), for example, affirms that “messiness and uncertainty are inherent and often necessary in PAR”. But messiness notwithstanding, PAR’s strengths endure as it offers groups and communities an involving, self-evaluative, collaborative and decision-

making role in the research process and it is now widely accepted as a sound research method (McArdle & Reason, 2008).

For the purposes of this study, and building on its long history as the research method of choice for marginalised communities, PAR is understood as an interpretive and qualitative method that emphasises grassroots empowerment and local control (Reason, 1998). Apart from being a process that emphasises the examination of the political economy, distribution of power, authority, economic factors, allocation of resources and cultural factors, its application is useful to identify opportunities for social change (Freire, 1970). This is done through dialogue and conscientization wherein marginalised people engage in critical analysis and organised action to improve their situation.

For purposes of this research, conscientization is a Freirean term that refers to the development of critical social consciousness in which dialogue and analysis serve as the foundation for reflection (Grande, 2008). Freire believed that conscientization make participants to be more conscious of their subjugation and to critically evaluate the effects of this subjugation on individuals and on their communities. Freire (2005, p. 51) explains:

Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world to transform it.

Conscientization is a conscience raising technique Paulo Freire used with the Brazilian poor and illiterate to encourage these members of society to read at a time when literacy was a requirement for suffrage. Conscientization proceeds through the identification of generative themes. Freire identifies the themes as representations that have a powerful emotional impact on individual consciousness and help to end the culture of silence in which the socially dispossessed internalise the negative images of themselves that have been created and propagated by the oppressor in situations of extreme poverty. Freire explained that conscientization/critical consciousness is a socio-political educative tool that engages learners in questioning the nature of their historical and social situation. The goal of conscientization according to Freire is to foster action in subjects in the creation of democratic society (Freire, 1970).

Further, in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire mentions that in every society a small number of people exert domination over the masses, resulting in dominated consciousness (Freire, 1970). In place of the dominated consciousness then-present in Brazil, Freire sought to attain a critical consciousness. He advocated an active teaching method that would help the individual

become more aware of their own situation by obtaining the instruments of both literacy and knowledge that would then allow them to make choices and become politically conscious (Calvès, 2009, p. 3).

As a consciousness raising approach, PAR also gives researchers the opportunity to conduct research that makes participants conscious of the challenges of unjust and undemocratic economic social and political systems and practices. This can be achieved through PAR, even though the approach is sometimes said to be risky, because of the resistance one can expect from dominant groups and authorities ((Brydon-Miller, 2001)).

Furthermore, PAR seeks to address social injustices, as opposed to focusing on individual people's problems, and adopts a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It "seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4). This is further supported by the idea that community development starts from the premise that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, results in high levels of participation and can be channelled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. PAR further contributes to the important emphasis on power as a significant aspect of knowledge, and specifically points to the injustice that arises when the construction of knowledge is taken away from ordinary people and placed in the hands of an elite. Such injustice is not the only outcome; equally significant is the error that arises when indigenous information and wisdom are ignored in favour of the abstract 'objective knowledge' of outsiders (Reason, 1996). PAR therefore makes research an agent of transformation because its core concept is that people have a right to determine their own processes of analysing their own challenges and solutions to sustainable development.

4.2.1 Locating PAR

PAR is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm. According to Stringer (2014, p. 36), it is "phenomenological (focusing on people's actual lived experience or reality), interpretive (focusing on their interpretation of acts and activities) and hermeneutic (focusing on how people make meaning of events in their lives)". In terms of its epistemological stance, PAR uses an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm where, according to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), the intention is to understand the world of human experience rather than make predictions. This approach is supported by Merriam and Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995)'s viewpoint that most

qualitative studies usually utilise the interpretivism/constructivism paradigm. This is so because the key philosophical assumption upon which these types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world. They argue that social reality is not an objective entity, rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality. Espousing this philosophical assumption, the primary interest of much qualitative research is to understand how meaning and knowledge is constructed by people. In other words, qualitative researchers are interested in the way people make sense of their world and their experiences (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

For the purposes of the thesis and given that most African communities appear to lack power in decentralised settings often characterised by neo-patrimonialism and patron-client relationship, PAR was considered the best approach to research this phenomenon. PAR is considered to be democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry (Reason, 1998).

To do a study of grassroots lived experience and the community responses to decentralisation in Uganda, PAR methodology as described for its advantages in the above section was employed on the two chosen communities to do mixed methods approach data collection as described in the next sections.

4.3. Focus Area of Study and Study Population

Lower-level government (LLG) councils at sub-county level were selected because they are closest to the communities and elected by and from the area local population. The elected councillors represent the different local communities and are mandated to engage these communities to participate in all development interventions. These interventions include ensuring equitable resource allocation, the conduct village needs assessment and the provision of feedback on project and programme progress and associated resource mobilization. Councillors are elected to represent the different community special interest groups including youth, women, people with disabilities and the elderly; and are expected to work in conformity with the values, norms, and aspirations of the people. A council provides a platform for the representative involvement of communities in a wide range of policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects to orient government programmes towards community needs. They also help in building public support and encouraging a sense of cohesiveness within the society. Employing PAR to work with councillors, therefore, provided a good study of on-the-ground practical experience of decentralisation and related practices of local communities.

The council meetings were chosen to be the area for “action and observation” because the council is a representative unit and supreme organ of local government and the highest political authority within a community’s area of jurisdiction. According to the *Local Government Act 1997 (Cap. 243)* and as amended, it is stated that subject to the national constitution, a Local Government Council within its area of jurisdiction exercises all political and executive powers and functions. The Act further specifies that a council provides services as it deems fit, protecting the Constitution and other laws of Uganda, and promotes democratic governance and at the same time ensures implementation and compliance with government policy. The *Local Government Act 1997 (cap. 243)* stipulates that local governments monitor the performance of persons employed by the central or local governments to provide services in its area of jurisdiction and monitor the provision of government services or the implementation of projects in the area. Council meetings approve annual budgets and estimates, approve the development plan, make by-laws for proper conduct of the council’s own business, and so forth. Most important to note is that it is during these council meetings that the council discharges its functions which requires a functioning, independent, competent and empowered council (Mutabwire et al., 2014). Because of these given roles and responsibilities of the council, council meetings are an area of especial interest for this study. More so, the observations, reflection and replanning of these meetings were necessary for a possible change.

The study involved two separate case study areas of Kimenyedde sub-county in Mukono district and Najja sub-county in Buikwe district in the central part of Uganda. Mukono district was chosen because it is the region in which I grew up and I was keen to use PAR to empower the community. Mukono is regarded as an old model district and was once awarded a national trophy for excellent performance in effective local governance (Asiimwe & Musisi, 2007). Its government has far-reaching and interesting strategic objectives which include: to identify and collect sufficient revenue to ensure that services delivery standards are met; contribute to the sustainable growth of the local economy through production; to increase the level of basic education; improve the district infrastructure including, roads, water sources, and buildings; to provide accessible health services, increase access to safe water and sanitation; and to promote democratic and accountable local governance. The District Executive Summary is to consolidate democracy through a decentralised model of governance with a vision to have improved quality of life for the people by reducing poverty levels. It also has a mission that ensures effective service delivery through strategic planning, equitable resources allocation and reducing disparities so as to attain sustainable economic growth and development (Mukono,

2017). With the above district strategic objectives and executive summary in mind, I anticipated to have a study that would properly answer my research questions as listed in Chapter One.

Buikwe district was chosen because it was carved out of Mukono District to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its administration. Furthermore, this district represents the newly formed districts since the majority of the districts in Uganda have just been created in the recent past, from a total 33 districts in 1986 to 135 today. For purposes of this research, Buikwe district has an interesting mission of promoting socio-economic transformation of the entire society of the district, with special attention to the vulnerable and marginalised groups for sustainable and gender responsive development. The district mandate is to mobilize and empower communities to harness their potentials through cultural growth, skills development, and labour productivity for sustainable and gender responsive development. Among other objectives and policy issues, its aim is to empower communities to appreciate, access, participate manage and demand accountability in public and community based initiatives (Buikwe, 2015). I also hoped to have an extra explanation on the effect of proliferation of districts and their performance since the district has now existed for long enough to assess the performance of one of its subcounty for purposes of this research.

Najja and Kimenyedde are both rural Sub-counties with six and five parishes respectively. These number of parishes are in general the national average number of parishes per sub-county in the 1,403 Sub-counties in Uganda. Further, Najja and Kimenyedde have an average of about 45,000 people each: 49% male, 51% female, and 49.5% male and 50.5% female respectively. This gender ratio matches the national population figures. Both sub-counties are rural with the major economic activities being mixed subsistence farming with two rainy seasons a year. The two stable rain seasons makes agriculture more economic, and it is a major source of employment (over 85%), like many other rural regions in Uganda and neighbouring countries. As elaborated further in chapter five and six, both sub-counties have stable local government councils operating with in relatively peaceful context, ensuring a steady and stable study period (MoFPED, 2017; MoLG, 2015; Mukono, 2017).

4.4 Data collection Methods

The field study resulted in the collection of data using multiple instruments (mixed methods). These included observation checklists during council meeting (action cycle), interview schedules, field notes and, documents and relevant reports during reflection and leadership

development workshop (planning and reflection cycles) (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the use of these methods encouraged research participants to explore the issues of importance to them in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. This was important to generate an in-depth understanding of issues surrounding the policy and practice of decentralisation an idea Kitzinger (1995b) supports. At the start of the study, I requested participants to keep notes and diaries for recording their own views and thoughts about the project as it evolves. This informed and eased their reflection about the project and they were able to read out aloud from their diaries during planning and reflection meetings. I sought permission to have copies of the notes from the participants and to capture as much data as possible from them.

4.4.1 Document Selection and Data Analysis

During the progress of the study, participants were requested to provide any documents or policy instruments used in the execution of their duties as councillors, for the purpose of this study and data collection. Examples of such documentation provided included: previous meeting minutes, standard rules of procedures, development plans, annual budgets, local government act, local government financial and accounting manual 2007 (Elliott, 1991). During planning and reflection, participants shared ideas about these documents, discussed some of empowerment connotations and suggested possible recommendations on how these documents could be amended to improve performance. Many of these documents were found to be relevant to group learning and, as judgements about their being underutilised or inadequate in empowering local leaders are discussed in the different sections of chapter seven, it is important to clarify how they were employed.

To give one example, and as explained by a district councillor of Kimenyedde, the Local Government Act 1997 Cap.243, Section 82, Article 2 was interpreted as making it difficult for councils to access funds for emergencies. Though this article seemed to be a measure to stop possible corruption, the councillor claimed it made the process of acquiring finance arduous for emergency cases. In another example, it was noted that the Local Government Act provided among other rules that the minutes of a council meeting, and other official documents like budgets, be written in the English language. This provision, as explained by councillors in Najja sub-county (page 101), challenged the capacity of many councillors who were not able to read English and understand the contents. Further, it was noted that the Act set out the duties of administrative staff, which potentially eroded the powers of councillors to make decision about and supervise developments. Participants also realised, however that there were some

provisions in the law that they could use to enhance participation. For example, participants used the above provisions to request that some documents be translated from English to local languages, while accepting that official copies would continue to be kept in the English language as required by the law.

Another example of documentary critique occurred when the group examined the Local government Financial and Accounting manual of 2007. The manual sets out how funds are allocated to specific sectoral areas and how, in many cases this contravened this council planning and development priorities. A discussion occurred during a PAR reflection about how accounting regulations prohibited the council from managing finances, including restricting them from entering into contract agreements that exceeded a value of one million Uganda shillings. Though it was recognised that the Central government might have reasons for restricting the amount to this threshold, the provisions prevented the council from engaging in many development projects. It was therefore suggested that the threshold amount should be increased since most common business activities, both in government and the private sector, were for much higher money values.

Another resource employed in this PAR research was *The Rules of Procedures* booklet, which, helped participants to improve their performance during council meetings by learning about and better appreciating how meetings are conducted. This improvement in the conduct of the meetings resulted in the overall effectiveness and time saving, and improved meeting outputs. One procedural rule, for example, required the distribution of necessary documents prior to the council meeting, although this had not been happening prior to the PAR study commencing. As a result of requesting the prior circulation of documents, councillors were better prepared and conduct themselves more in accordance with the rules as indicated in the case study chapters. Community members also became more engaged at the council meetings, building more conscientization.

As a final example, PAR reflections also studied budget papers, which often confirmed that changes in sub-county budgets had been made without consultation giving rise to concerns over accountability, transparency, and participation. The explanations given by sub-county chiefs for these budget changes without consulting with the council were not accepted by those attending the group discussions. This was because, by studying the provisions of the law, it was clear that it was the council's prerogative to pass the council budget. These issues were relevant to the study of the Decentralisation policy that occurred during the PAR study circle sessions.

The study of the documents helped councillors to better know their responsibilities and developed their desire to know more and demand for more participation in policy implementation as provided in the bottom-up planning paradigm.

The study of the documents further provided the basis on which participants provided several discussions and recommendations as outline in the analysis and recommendations chapters. I sought consent before examining and making copies of the above documents and took several audio recordings of workshops, council meetings, group discussions with councillors and technical staff for both case study areas. The audio recordings were transcribed, and organised along with observation lists, field notes and relevant documents. These have been used in the thesis to address the research questions through their analysis and presentation in Chapters Five and Six.

Data analysis mostly took place synchronously with the data collection during the different cycles. In line with the PAR, participants were involved as co-researchers in the study and therefore their interpretations, analyses and decisions were important. This resulted in important changes during the various phases of the study. In fact Douglas (2002, p. 61) asserts that “integrating data collection and data analysis allows the analysis to be shaped by the participants in a more fundamental way”. With the purpose of empowering, building competencies and improving the leadership performance of the participants, for this research integration of data collection and analysis were necessary. This was also necessary because co-researchers were not just providing the data to the research but further engag in decisions on the practice of their leadership. This analysis would therefore help the participants to decide possible changes in their own practice the policy. In the process, this built stronger networks and trust amongst themselves and helped create what Putnam (2000) terms ‘social capital’. This concept refers to the trust that exists in social networks that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Such social capital allows citizens to resolve collective action problems more easily through enhanced communication, a willingness to compromise and increased cooperation.

4.5 Study Population: How Participants were Recruited

4.5.1 Meetings

Since I was born in the region, this made it easier to collaborate with the Mukono district CAO and Kimenyedde sub-county chief. I was able to meet the sub-county chairperson to organise for the survey meetings in Kimenyedde. Likewise, in Najja sub-county, in collaboration with the chairperson of Buikwe district I met Najja sub-county chairman for a rapport meeting. I

met the two sub-county chairmen with letters of support from Mukono district CAO and Buikwe district Chairman. I explained to them the intentions of the study and requested them to organise for the survey meeting.

Both in Kimenyedde and Najja during these meetings, I made a presentation on the research topic, explaining the meaning and importance of the topic, which visibly aroused participants as seen through their enthusiasm.

At the end of the survey meeting, willing participants completed an evaluation survey form which inquired into (a) their individual understanding of their official responsibility; (b) their opinion regarding decentralisation, local economic development, and the bottom-up planning paradigm; (c) if they think that they participate in the planning and leadership of their areas; and (d) whether they understood PAR and willing to take part in the study. I proceeded to invite willing participants to take part in the study through information letters and consent forms. These forms clearly stipulated that it was totally by choice and that they were free to choose not to take part in the study. Fortunately, all participants in both sub-counties accepted, and we agreed that they were free to invite other councillors who had missed the survey meeting. We agreed that additional participants may be recruited through word of mouth including other councillors who had not attended, technical staff and other stakeholders who are usually invited for council meetings. I encouraged interested councillors to contact me and then take them through the recruitment process individually by providing all the detailed information that was presented in the survey meeting. Additional participants were requested to complete an evaluation survey, review the information letter, and sign consent form, making it clear that they are free to choose whether to take part in the study. Councillors who had missed the survey meeting, in both sub-counties came up for recruitments. By the time we had the first LD workshops (planning) all council members, some technical staff members, and a few other stakeholders for both sub-counties had accepted the invitations. Though most of the participants attended all the LD workshops and reflection meetings, a few missed some of the LD workshops and reflection meetings.

Councillors in the selected sub-counties were selected because they compose the sub-county council and represent their respective communities in their constituencies and to the different local community-based organisations including school management/ educational committees, health committees, planning committees, and finance committees (Uganda, 1997). This ensured that the participants and I studied and understood the involvement of citizens in a wide range

of administrative policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects to orient government programmes.

Kimenyedde was to provide 16 councillors. This is because there are 5 parishes each one providing 2 councillors (1 male and 1 female) and then at sub-county level, 2 Youth councillors (1 male and 1 female) and 2 councillors for people with disabilities (1 male and 1 female) and finally the 2 elders, male, and female. Najja in Buikwe district was to provide 19 councillors because it has 7 parishes. However, unlike Kimenyedde a pair of parishes in Najja S/county i.e., Tululu and Busagazi were combined to elect one councillor. This made the total number of councillors for Najja sub-county to be 18. Both sub-counties provided one council chairman making the number of politicians for this research to be 37 (17 for Kimenyedde and 20 for Najja).

During a council sitting though, the following categories of people are invited to attend even when they do not contribute to the debate during the meeting unless invited to do so: Sub-county chief, Subaccountant, Senior Accountant Secretary (SAS), Community Development Officer (CDO) Agricultural Officer, Veterinary Officer, Health Assistant, Parish Chiefs, Gombolola⁸ Internal Security Officer (GISO), Officer in Charge (OC Administrative Police),

School zone Leader⁹, In- Charge Health Centre III¹⁰. Others in attendance can be community key stakeholders i.e., chairmen, LCIs, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and senior citizens. Though this study was primarily interested in the political leaders, council meetings (Action/Observation) were attended by many other people. On making a rapport, it was suggested that interested technical staff and district councillors be invited to take part in the study. We later realised that in the context of this study, if disempowerment was the problem we were trying to address, singling out the sub-county councillors could lead to further disempowerment because of resistance from dominant groups and authorities as Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) suggested. It was therefore beneficial to include some other interested stakeholder technical staff and the district councillors, otherwise the research would fall short of empowerment-oriented research outcome. It is in fact suggested by Sørensen (2006) that

⁸ Local name for the Sub-county geographical area.

⁹ Headteacher of one of the schools in the Sub-county providing leadership and representing the rest of teachers and headteachers in the Sub-county zone.

¹⁰ Decentralized health service unit at sub-county level to provide basic preventive, promotive and curative services.

individuals cannot be empowered in complete isolation of those who possibly deny them access to mutual respect and valued resource.

Some of the department heads accepted to participate in the study and these included sub-county chiefs for both sub-counties, SAS for Kimenyedde and CDO and one Parish chief for Najja Sub-county. The two district councillors for Kimenyedde and one for Najja participated. This made the number of participants to total to 44 participants (25 males and 19 females)

Kimenyedde Subcounty (Mukono District)	Category of Participants	M	F	Total
	Council Chairperson	1	-	1
	Parish councillors	5	5	10
	Youth Councillors	1	1	2
	People with Disability	1	1	2
	Elderly People	1	1	2
	District councillors	1	1	2
	Sub-county Chief	1	-	1
	Sub-Accountant Assistant (SAS)	1	-	1
	Parish Chief	1		1
Sub Total		13	9	21
Najja Subcounty (Buikwe District)	Council Chairperson	1	-	1
	Parish councillors	6	6	12
	Youth Councillors	1	1	2
	People with Disability	1	1	2
	Elderly People	1	1	2
	District councillors		1	1
	Sub-county Chief	1	-	1
	Community Development Officer	1	-	1
	Sub-Accountant Assistant (SAS)	1	-	1
	Parish Chief		1	1
Sub-Total		13	11	24
Total		25	19	44

TABLE 4.2 PARTICIPANTS BY THEIR CATEGORIES 1

4.6 Participatory Action Research: Project Application

4.6.1 Reconnecting for Genuine Collaboration

The relationship between researcher and participants is a significant issue in an empowering research project like this. In this case, since I have lived and worked with these communities for a long time and intended to work and live with them after the study, employing the PAR research methodology was considered very beneficial to the project due to its cyclical nature and continuous effect on development (Noffke and Stevenson (1995). The PAR approach

gave me an opportunity to reconnect and work alongside the participants to collectively inquire into a problem that affected all of us - putting decentralisation into practice. This was done through reflection on the information gained and generating possible recommendations to resolve the problems, a key feature of PAR (Stringer, 2014). This was further supported by the assertion that PAR is socially responsive, and takes place in context thereby liberating the researchers and enhancing learning, teaching and policy making (Stringer, 2014).

During the study, “movements”¹¹ were set up that continued to organise Leadership Development workshops (LD) and meetings to reflect on what they have achieved in terms of improving their practice. More so, participants were working with a person they knew and one with whom they have shared the challenges of implementing decentralisation. Collaboration was manifested during the LD workshops (planning) and group interviews (reflections) where a lot of learning was achieved and observable improvement in the way members relate with their fellow councillors and the interpretation of the policy and its related practices. In that respect, participants freely discussed the way they thought decentralisation as a policy was being put into practice by themselves, those in upper local governments and central government. They discussed what they thought from their own experiences and interpretation of the policy and practice should be done to improve their performance. The study was therefore a sincere reconnection and genuine collaboration.

4.7 How the field study was carried out

The research was carried out in two complete three-phased cycles of Planning, Action and Reflection. This was partly because participants agreed that we should follow the quarterly financial releases. Quarterly financial releases relate to the disbursement of funds, and they were the basis around which the research phases were planned and carried out. These releases greatly determine the activities of the sub-county governments, and the decisions taken at subsequent council meetings. The financial releases made by the central government flow down through the district to the sub-county. Each phase of implementation involved the characteristic cycle of PAR (Figure 2,4).

Qualitative data was collected throughout the PAR multiple loops learning phases of Planning, Action/Observation and Reflection/Replanning. Multiple loop learning phases have been

¹¹ A group of people working together to advance their common shared ideas.

successfully used in several research projects, including Ruth et al. (2017) research on “Bottom-up Accountability Initiatives and Largescale Land Acquisitions” in Africa.

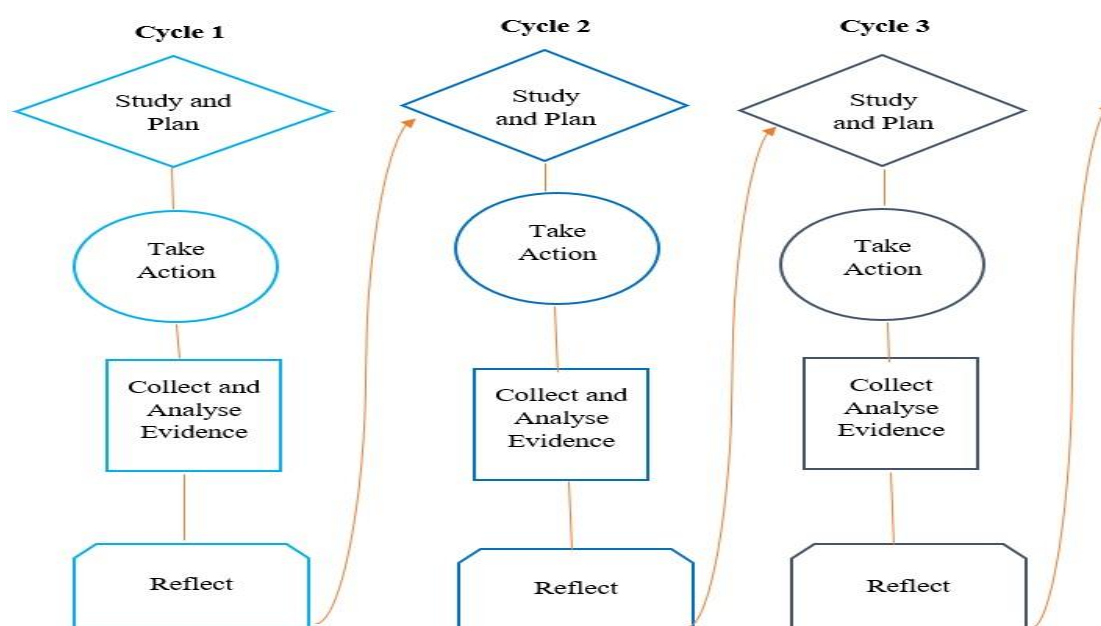


FIGURE. 4.1: MULTIPLE LOOP LEARNING, ANALYSIS CYCLES, PROBLEM SOLVING DURING PAR 1
Adopted from Centre for Collaborative Action Research, 2014.

Figure above shows the cyclical nature of PAR which requires researchers to engage in continuous cycle of “plan, act, observe, and reflect”(Noffke & Stevenson, 1995, p. 5)

4.7.1 PAR Phase One:

4.7.1.1 Planning cycle: Leadership Development Workshop

Working along with the chairman and the speaker of the councils, I promoted the idea of Leadership Workshops. For Kimenyedde Sub-county, the chief invited participants to a leadership development workshops at the sub-county community centre. For Najja Sub-county, however, it was the chairman who organised and invited the participants. At the opening session, and after members had agreed on the agenda of the day, the district councillor for Kimenyedde and the chairman for Najja Sub-county made keynote addresses. They both spoke at length about the challenges they faced in trying to do their work and the opportunity they had now got to talk about it outside the formal and restricted meetings. In both meetings, I made a presentation on the community empowerment mechanisms, which included improved access

to information, inclusion, participation, accountability, local organisational capacity and so on. Participants reflected upon the current decentralisation policy and practices, the local economic development policy, and the bottom–up planning paradigm. Guided by the research topic, participants were able to discuss the “opportunity structure” of the policy and where these policies and systems were empowering them to influence and contribute to the LED and foster the well-being of their communities. The participants were given time to suggest ways to improve some of the systems and their practices.

A strong sense of responsibility for the research project emerged and this, coupled with their expert understanding of the situation, made PAR very relevant for this project. On this note, Stringer (2014, p. 13) explains that “active participation is the key to feelings of ownership that motivates people to invest time and energy to help shape the nature and quality of the acts, activities and behaviours in which they engage”. This kind of leadership development workshop (LDW) took place in the two sub-counties prior to the ensuing council meetings. These workshops and planning sessions were audio recorded with the consent of all the members and this aspect was made clear in their information letters and consent forms. Participants were encouraged to make their own notes for reference in subsequent discussions.

4.7.1.2 Action & Observation Cycle: Local Council Meeting

I sought permission to attend the local council meetings for both sub-counties which by law are expected to convene every after two months. In Kimenyedde, I presented Permission Letters from the district CAO (Chief Administrative Officers) Mukono District; for Najja, a verbal request was made by the District Chairman of Buikwe District for me to access them.

Council meetings provided an opportunity for action and observation. The meetings gave me an opportunity to use overt participant observation method to observe the deliberations during the action cycle as mentioned in earlier section (Gold, 1958). It made it possible for me to assess if members were able follow and contribute to the proceedings of the meetings and to try to experience the meeting from their viewpoint. Overt participant observation other than covert was particularly inevitable. This was because it would be impossible to take part in the council meeting just like any another citizen as council members were the same participants in this study, and thus already aware of the reasons for my participation. They were also informed by the chair/speaker of the council about my attendance in accordance with the standard rules of procedure for local government councils’ meetings in Uganda. If there was to be observation, note taking and voice recording of the meeting for purposes of a study, it required authorisation

by the speaker of the council. The bias caused by observer-effect which is usually caused by awareness of being observed (overt) rather than unknowingly observed (covert) was very minimal. This was minimised by the fact that I was known to the participants, and there was growing confidence between me and the participants as the study progressed.

The opportunity to undertake participant observation gave me insight into what council members' actual contributions were in meetings and what was provided to them prior and during the meeting that enhance their participation. Furthermore, this meeting helped me to prepare for the group discussion interviews at the close of phase one of the study, as there was a lot of action on the side of the councillors, observation and recording on my side.

4.7.1.3 Reflection Cycle: Group Discussion Interviews.

Participants had been made aware that the day was to be divided into two parts; the morning session was for reflection while the afternoon session was for replanning. Following the observation in the council meetings in both sub-counties, I and other research participants convened a group-discussion meeting to discuss their views of the previous meeting, their role in the leadership in their jurisdictions. This meeting was guided by semi-structured interview questions (Appendix H). There was much more reflection and capture of information on the previous activities, and my goal to collect information on participants' role as leaders and their assessment of the success and failures of the previous council meeting was met. More discussion by the group was conducted on decentralisation, LED and bottom-up planning practices and their success in enabling them to participate in the leadership affairs. Group discussion interviews were used because they are quick and convenient and use group interaction as part of the methods. In addition, people were encouraged to talk to one another, asking questions and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view and benefited as earlier mentioned in this chapter. This group work helped us to tap into the many forms of communication that people use in day to day interaction including jokes, teasing and arguing just as Kitzinger (1995a) further asserts. This resulted in a long day of learning from each other. As mentioned earlier, an interview schedule was designed earlier on to help guide the interviewer through the key issues required for the study at this stage. As one could expect, however, during the interviews many other questions were raised as members wanted to learn more from their colleagues.

Through the group interviews, participants updated their programs for the Phase II leadership workshop. I had made a tentative working program (appendix I) for the leadership development

workshops prior to the commencement of the study and I had distributed it to the participants. Due to the emergent nature of PAR, the working programs were refined together with the participants at this time. Alongside the new government programs that were suggested for discussion in the next LD workshop i.e., Youth Livelihood Initiative Program¹² and Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme¹³, were the Rules of Procedures for council meetings, though at Najja more interest was on OWC. These group interviews were audio recorded with the consent of all the members and this aspect is clearly written in their information letters and consent forms.

4.7.2 Phase Two

4.7.2.1 Replanning Cycle: Leadership Development Workshop II

During the second LDW, a group discussion was held. The groups in both sub-counties, guided by the previously agreed program, looked at the challenges they face and came up with possible solutions. Additional time was devoted to the study of the Rules of Procedures of council meetings and to current government policies including LED, the Youth Livelihood Initiative, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme and “Operation Wealth Creation”¹⁴ (OWC). Participants also discussed whether and how programs were enhancing LED and their participation, and how the local community interests were catered for. In Najja, special attention was given to the OWC program because it had replaced the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)¹⁵ program at the operational level. NAADS was at first considered a role model for a demand-driven, decentralised and market-oriented agricultural reform in Africa, but was considered to have failed and had been suspended by the Ugandan President in 2007 (Rwamigisa et al., 2018). LDW II provided an opportunity for participants to discuss community empowerment mechanisms further, which included among others: access to information laws, sunshine laws, open hearing laws, public expenditure tracking surveys, citizen report cards, media reporting, advocacy campaign, civic education, participatory budgeting, and citizen review boards. The purpose of these discussions was to prepare participants for a forthcoming council meeting after the release of the second quarter financial statements.

¹² Programme launched in 2013 to benefit the youth through livelihoods, skills development, and institutional capacity building to empower youth in Uganda.

¹³ An initiative by the government of Uganda to improve women’s access to financial service, etc.

¹⁴ Intervention program by Uganda government focusing on raising household incomes for poverty eradication and sustainable wealth creation.

¹⁵ Government of Uganda programme that aims to increase farmers’ access to information, knowledge, and technology for profitable agricultural production.

4.7.2.2 Action Cycle: Local Council Meeting II and Observation

Like in Phase One, I attended the second council meeting after the second quarter financial release. This meeting helped me to do more assessment of the contribution of the members in the meeting proceedings as compared to the previous meeting. This meeting informed the next reflection in the group-discussion interview meetings in Phase II and then the LDW replanning in phase III following PAR cycles. This phase also enabled an assessment of the learning and improvement of councillors' performance in the council meeting.

4.7.2.3 Reflection: Group Discussion Interviews II.

Like in the previous reflection meetings, both in Kimenyedde and Najja Sub-counties, the morning sessions reflected on how the previous council meeting had been carried out, pointing out achievements and weak points. The afternoon sessions were dedicated mostly to the field notes (notes individual participants had written for their learning purposes) and gathered documents during the study. There was also replanning for the next council meeting. By the end of this workshop, the expectation was that enough data would be collected to enable the research to assess if there were any changes in the way councillors see their position in the policy and practice. Furthermore, these two Reflections were in preparation for a further Replanning (LDW III) and Action (Local Council III) phase in case there was a forthcoming council meeting although a possible lack of seating allowances might jeopardise future council meetings.

4.8 Conclusion

Given that PAR is carried out in a recurring cycle of Planning, Action and Reflection as detailed in this chapter, and using data collection methods as given earlier, a great deal of qualitative data was collected for this thesis. The data consisted of six sets of audios recorded workshops (averaging four hours each), meetings interviews, and my written notes of my observations. There was too a volume of documents collected to understand the structure and operation of Uganda's decentralised system of government. Also, several documents like Rules of Procedure, budgets, previous council meeting minutes etc provided more data.

Employing this data, I was able to provide an account of the actual grassroots experience of decentralisation along with how the PAR process led to empowerment that improved the capacity of participants to operationalise decentralisation better.

Chapter Five

Integrating Policy into Practice in Najja Sub-County

5.1 Introduction

Chapters Five and Six present data on how Uganda's formal decentralised system of local government is being experienced at the grassroots level in the case study areas of the Najja sub-county and Kimenyedde sub-county, respectively. Mindful of the messiness of the PAR approach, the data in both cases is presented in the sequence of the cycles and activities as they were carried out during the study. Both chapters prepare for Chapter Seven that deals with the in-depth, analysis.

The researcher developed the model (Figure 1.5) below which demonstrates the conceptual foundation on which decentralisation on the ground practice was investigated.

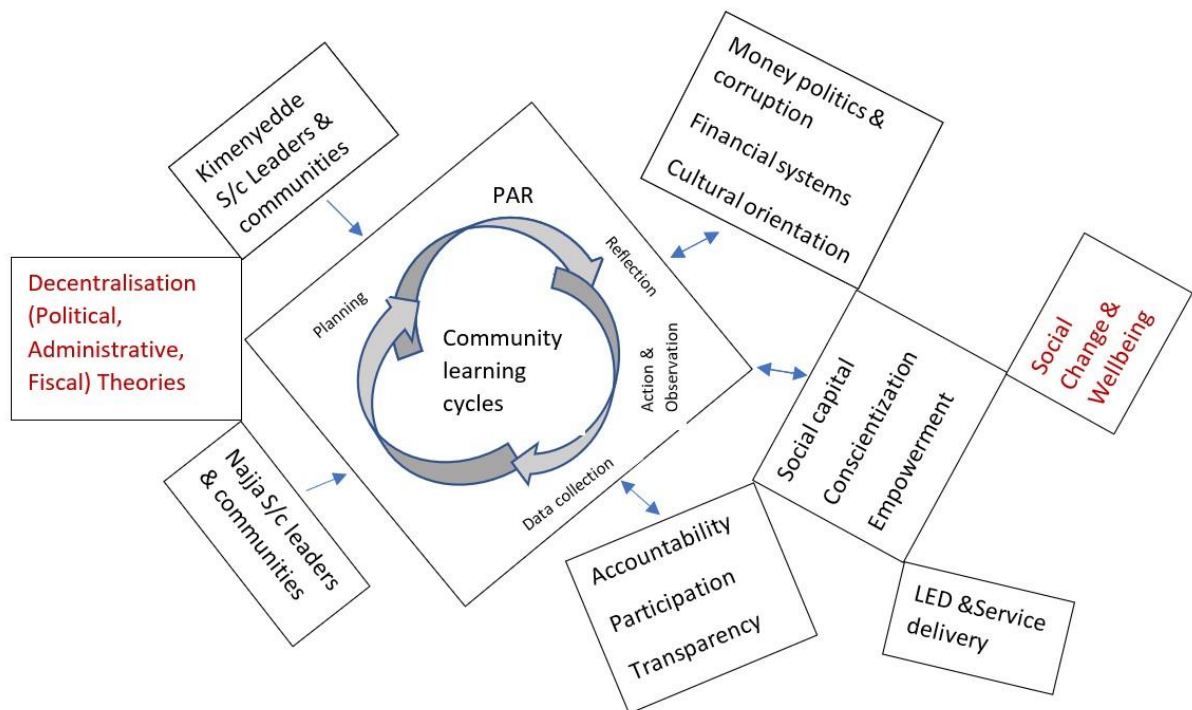


FIGURE.5.1: MODEL FOR COMMUNITY LEARNING (FACT FINDING, ACTION, REFLECTION. AND REPLANNING) 1

The model above shows how the two communities' leaders of Kimenyedde and Najja were involved in PAR through learning cycles of planning action reflection and data collection.

The involvement of the leaders resulted in conscientization, social capital building and resultant empowerment. The process created awareness of the many challenges facing participants during policy practice. These challenges included a lack of accountability, poor participation,

non-transparency, money politics and alleged corruption, rigid financial system practices and gendered and hierarchical cultural orientations. Throughout the research process, participants devised ways to try resolve these challenges through improved leadership and better implementation of decentralisation policy to deliver LED, services, and ultimately, potential social change. As earlier stated, this chapter presents data on on-ground practice of decentralisation in Najja Sub-county.

5.2 Change of Place: From Najjembe to Najja

Following several unsuccessful attempts to contact the political leadership of Buikwe district and Najjembe Sub-county before arriving in Uganda, it was only on arrival in the country that I was able to meet with the Chairperson of Buikwe District Council and seek permission to attend council meetings for Najjembe Sub-county and participate in a study with them. Permission was required because, as previously discussed, Ugandan law grants higher levels of local government the power to give lower-level councils guidance on carrying out their functions and settling disputes and on the functions it devolves to lower local government levels. Consequently, a district chairperson has substantial influence and responsibility over lower-level governments. It was during this meeting with the Chairperson of the Buikwe District Council that I was informed that my selected case study, Najjembe Sub-county, had very recently been partly annexed to form Lugazi township, a new town council administrative unit. This annexation had created considerable instability and confusion in the remaining part of Najjembe Sub-county which now lacked clear leadership. The Chairman suggested that it would be better if I selected an alternative sub-county and our further discussions and negotiations resulted into choosing the neighbouring Najja Sub-county as an appropriate alternative. Importantly, this provided me with a suitable sub-county to examine that had a stable council and was even more rural than Najjembe Sub-county, a key criterion in the original project design.

The Buikwe District Chairperson also questioned my choice of doing research at the level of a sub-county rather than a district. He stated:

I doubt their capacity to know anything that can be of substance to your study. You see, those councillors are usually used for political mobilisation during presidential/parliamentary campaigns, but not for serious development programs. They have a small budget to manage, and most activities are now managed at the district level and central government. I advise that if you choose to work with them in this research, you involve the sub-county administrative staff because they have much more information.

He did, however, agree with me that government and communities at that level can be able to give the exact challenges they face in their areas and how they think they can solve them. He also agreed that the study would make them understand their situation, since they are going to take part in the study as co-researchers. He agreed that this would ultimately foster possible change to the community since these councillors are close and work within their communities. He stated: "...I might attend some of your meetings if you wish because that is where my residence is".

After I clarified that it was exactly the closeness of this level of devolved government to their communities and how their empowerment could potentially better enable them to operationalise decentralised government at the local level, he agreed to allow me to proceed. The Chairperson then contacted the Chairman of Najja Sub-county by phone and I was able to make plans with him. In discussion with the Najja Sub-county Chairperson, I emphasised the voluntary nature of the study and his community's participation in it. Afterwards we agreed to conduct an initial survey meeting.

5.3 Najja Sub-county

Najja sub-county is in a rural region of Buikwe District in central Uganda and is composed of 7 parishes and 45 villages. The composition of its Council consists of a chairperson; seven councillors representing each parish; two youth councillors representing the youth in the sub-county (one female and one male); two councillors with disabilities (both female and representing people with disabilities); the elderly representative and finally, a woman councillor representing all women in the sub-county. Each of these council members are elected according to the law (see Chapter Four). Najja Sub-county Council meets the legal requirement that at least one third of councillors be female. A full meeting of the Council, therefore, consists of 13 councillors although additional people usually attend including opinion leaders, technical staff, and two councillors representing the sub-county to the district.

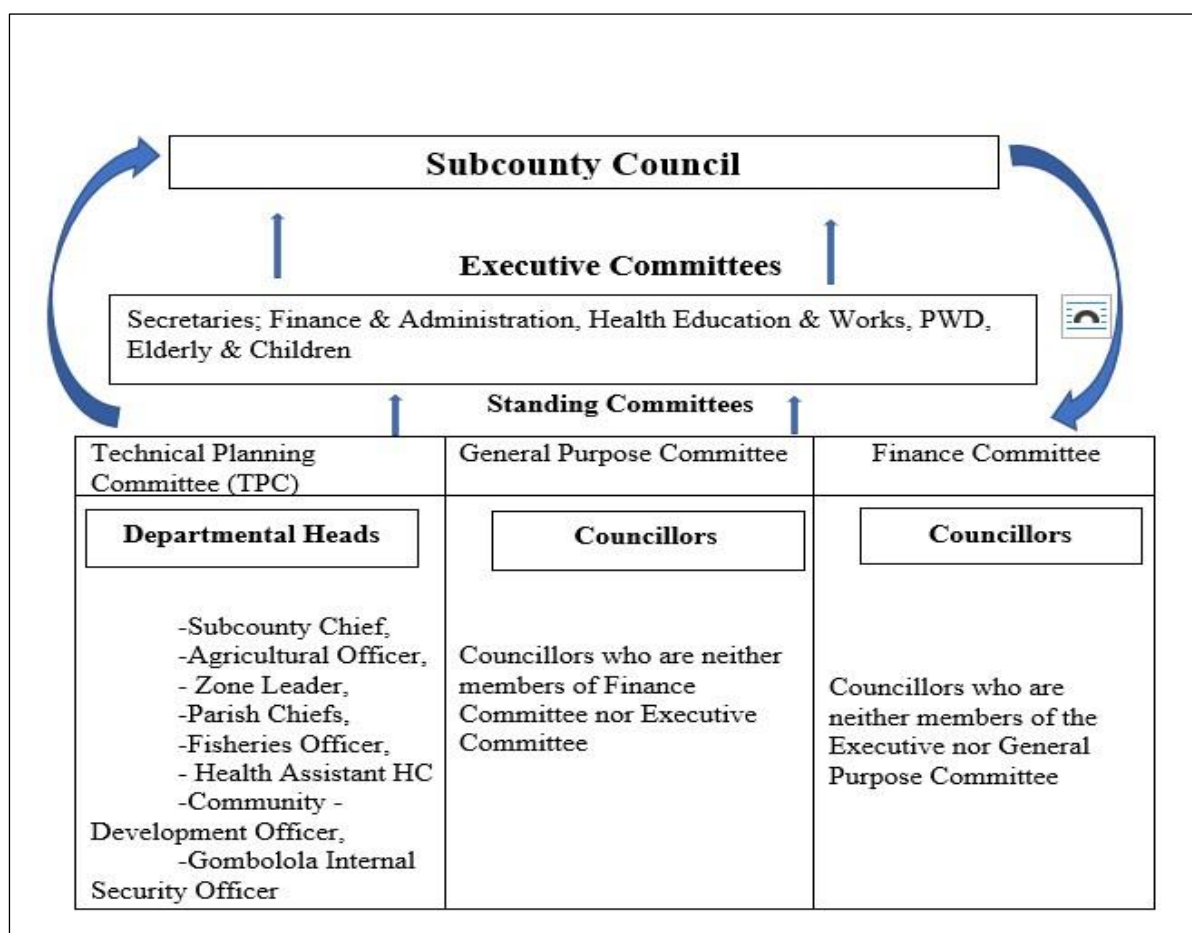


FIGURE. 5.2: NAJJA SUB-COUNTY LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAYOUT 1

This Figure shows that the council is the topmost authority followed by the executive committee below which are standing committees.

According to the Najja Sub-county's Chairman, the Executive Committee for Najja S/C was composed of three members, with the Chairman also served as the Finance & Administration Secretary, and the Vice Chairperson as the Secretary for Health, Education and Works. The remaining Secretary position was for People with Disability (PWD), Elderly and Children. According to the Chairman, the doubling up of roles occurred because of limited human resources, with many councillors lacking the skill and capacity to fill available offices. Apart from the Chairman who is paid a monthly salary, depending on the size of the budget of the Sub-county, the rest of the councillors receive sitting allowances whenever they hold a meeting.

Concerning the size of the Executive Committee, one study participant later informed me that this concentrated executive occurred because the Chairperson was a member of a small political party to which only a few councillors subscribed. Since most of the councillors belonged to the national ruling party, the chairman's choices when forming his own executive committee were limited. According to this participant, this politically informed outcome had had a negative

effect on the performance of the local government because all executive power was concentrated in the hands of a few people. It was also uncommon to find out that the speaker to the council who is elected by the councillors from among themselves was also from the “opposition” NRM i.e., national ruling party. A participant noted:

Where could the chairman get people to work with when only a few members from his political party made it to the sub-county through elections? He must do everything almost by himself. Can you imagine that the wife of his brother-in-law is the Vice Chairperson of the Executive, and at the same time is a Secretary for Health, Education and Works combined! Power rests in the hands of a few, moreover, of the same family. It is absurd and a form of corruption.

5.4 PAR Methodology

5.4.1 Phase One

This phase included the survey meeting, first leadership development workshop, first council meeting and first reflection as well as replanning for Phase 2.

5.4.1.1 Survey Meeting: Introducing Participatory Action Research to Co-researchers 20 July 2018.

This phase was a preparation phase, and it was primarily to invite participants to take part in the study. This included forming a team, introducing participatory action research, agreeing on an area for research and action, and outlining goals among other activities. A survey meeting was organised in collaboration with the Najja District Chairperson, Sub-county Chairman, and his Vice Chairperson, and a total of 24 people participated. At the start of the meeting, the Vice Chairperson, who seemed to be a little truculent at the prospect of the research, cautioned me as follows:

We are fed up with researchers and specialists who came here with their studies and yet at the end, we do not get to know the outcomes of such studies. Participants must therefore know how they are going to benefit from this kind of study, otherwise, they will not attend to the end. As you may know, people are chasing after daily survival, therefore they will give their precious time if they benefit from a project in some ways. Benefit can be through learning and improving their skills or in form of monetary benefit or material gifts.

At this point, I realised that it was going to be a challenge to bring council members together and make them co-researchers. However, I was determined to make the research process a learning experience for all participants. Interestingly, by the end of the meeting, participants had become interested with one participant coming up to me and noting:

We came to see a white man in a black man's skin. You know you people who go to America, we call you the 'Ba-Summer'¹⁶ you come with dollars. We thought you were going to give us some dollars from Europe, England and Australia, and those other places. That is why we are all here. But anyway, I think this is an interesting study to be part of.

During the meeting, I made a presentation on my research topic, explaining the research questions and research objectives. I described the importance and purpose of the study, how PAR works, and how it can benefit understanding and analysis of the challenges community's face and collectively find possible solutions to them. I also explained how the PAR approach to research promotes team building and empowerment of co-researchers. I made it clear to the participants though that the study was not designed to insert me into the politics of the place. I further explained to them that PAR gives them an opportunity to directly participate in the planning of the research process, making necessary changes along the way, keeping records, discussing, and analysing outcomes, and making recommendations. I mentioned to them that the outcome of the study was likely to improve their own council performance and ultimately improve service delivery and LED in their constituencies.

After my presentation, the Council Chairperson thanked me for choosing Najja Sub-county for the study. He encouraged members to be part of the study so that they could improve their understanding of policy and their responsibilities. He stated:

When I looked at the topic we are going to investigate, I realised that we have been missing such opportunity for this kind of study, this has been long overdue. I strongly believe that, by the time we finish this study we shall have benefited from it, we shall not remain the same....

The Chairman's positive reactions towards the study was supported by one of the participants who stood up and said:

This sounds different! If we are going to be involved in the planning of the discussions, where we all have an equal say of what we think can be solutions to challenges facing our leadership, we should all embrace this kind of approach. We are tired of taking the silent-listener's position as if we cannot contribute anything! We know the challenges we are facing, better than anyone else for goodness's sake...

At the end of the meeting, I observed visible excitement amongst participants. Participants completed an evaluation survey form to let me know if they were ready to take part in the study

¹⁶ These are economic migrants who, when it is summer in Europe, go back home to Uganda and lavishly spend their money. "Ba" is prefix for 'of'.

and I then formally invited them to take part in the study. Through information letters and consent forms, I made it clear that it was totally by choice and that they were free to choose not to take part. All the participants expressed their interest in taking part in the project through signing consent forms. Together we agreed on the program and the topics to discuss during the forthcoming workshop. At the end of the survey meeting, I observed that participants appeared to be looking forward to the first leadership development workshop, which was set for 2 August 2018 and as reflected in their responses see Table 1.5.

Survey question	Respondent one	Respondent two	Respondent three
How successful has the survey meeting stimulated your thinking about empowerment in decentralisation policy and practice	The meeting has made me aware of my responsibility to work towards a working policy through continuous learning. I am excited about the new journey.	It has stimulated me because I had not thought about empowerment as an attribute of decentralisation, though I will need to learn more about it.	It has awakened my thinking because I have been able to realise that empowerment will come with our learning and improving our leadership skills
How successful has the survey meeting been in stimulating your thinking about Local Economic Development	I now think that we have not been doing enough to question how things are done with LED and other related initiatives. This study will probably awaken us	For a long time, these programs have been a no-go area for us in political leadership. It is today that I have realised that I need to find out more about these programs	Local Economic Development is very important to be ignored by us. We need to be involved as much as possible
How would you rate the contribution of decentralization in empowering you to participate in the local economic development & leadership in general?	Issues concerning money have always been left to the technical teams. I did not know that decentralisation would give me chance to be directly involved.	With leadership we try our best, but with LED we did not seem to know our responsibilities as political leaders. We need to understand our duties and responsibilities in these areas of leadership.	There seems to be no working framework to involve both local governments and those parallel structures in charge of programs like NAADS and OWC
How do you rate the relevance of PAR to your leadership skills & empowerment?	I think this is going to give us an opportunity to do research on what we have been doing and hope to educate ourselves and improve our leadership skills	With leadership skills I am optimistic, and I am looking forward to new ideas from my friends, but with empowerment I am yet to see	I am excited about getting involved and having my own ideas shared in research program.
Would you like to participate in this study	Yes, I cannot miss this opportunity to learn more about this policy	This is a one-time opportunity every one of us must take. We need to find out what went wrong	Yes, I would not miss this opportunity.
Would you recommend other persons to join in this study?	Everyone should be given a chance to learn from each other because we all have different experiences.	Yes, I would because it looks a promising study.	Everyone with stake in the wellbeing of the people need to participate in this organised study of our practice.

TABLE. 5.1: AN OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION SURVEY MEETING AT NAJJA SUB-COUNTY 1

The responses as given in the table above indicated the enthusiasm, readiness, and willingness of participants to voluntarily take on the study project. They took the study to be an opportunity to learn from each other and improve their leadership skills.

5.4.1.2 Planning: Leadership Development Workshops (LDW), 26 July 2018

The first Leadership Development Workshop (LDW) was a planning session for the research in Najja Sub-county and the forthcoming council meeting. The workshop took place at the Najja Sub-county Community Centre located at the Sub-county headquarter in the afternoon of 26 July 2018. The workshop was attended by 10 councillors, five parish chiefs, four heads of department, Sub-county chief, Chairman, Speaker and two district councillors. The Workshop was first addressed by the Sub-county Chief who in all official documents is referred to as SAS (Sub-county Assistant Secretary). This contrasted with the earlier agreed arrangement in which the Chairman LCIII was to address us first. This abrupt change to the program reflected what can be called “the messiness” of Participatory Action Research (Goodnough, 2008, p. 452). Knowing this was the case, I had prepared myself to be flexible if things did not go exactly according to plan. In his brief remarks, the SAS read out a few of the challenges he considered lower local governments faced from his notebook in the following way:

I want to appreciate the opportunity to talk about decentralisation in such a forum. I have been working as SAS for now 15 years in different sub-counties. I want to tell you that, there was a shift in the development planning mechanism from a needs-based to a proactive vision-based planning, along with other related changes including Uganda Vision 2040, National Development Plan and LED. This has resulted in the need to adapt the local government development plans to the new planning paradigm.

He went on to explain that the challenge they face, both the technical staff, and political counterparts, was to strike a balance between bottom-up and top-down influences expected out of the Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan (NDP). He hoped the study could find a solution to this. He further explained:

Since this study is also interested in the LED policy, I have the following to add; the Uganda national LED policy, which was informed by an analysis of the national and local economic context, had an overall goal of transforming local government system into that facilitates effective business-oriented locality development. This is with a focus on poverty reduction and sustainable wealth creation. We have been disoriented by the same problems of implementation of decentralisation programme which among others, inadequate infrastructure development, low household incomes and savings. The other challenges are narrow revenue base for local governments and overdependence, continued orientation of local government as

instruments of service delivery rather than wealth creations and development. More so, limited capacity of local governments to attract and retain competent staff and ineffective participation and coordination of stakeholders in locality development. I hope this research will have a bearing in finding solutions to some of these problems.

Parts of the SAS's presentation were quite technical, and I observed that some members did not seem to follow what he was saying because some of the technical words that did not have an equivalent word in the local language. He did, however, help the meeting see the challenges from the standpoint of the technical staff. The language challenge, rooted in the existence of over 32 dialects as outlined in Chapter Three, is later found to be a fundamental issue and generated debate in subsequent reflection and Leadership Development Workshops.

Next, the Sub-county Chairman gave a keynote address during which, he spoke about the challenges the Council faced in undertaking its work. He welcomed the opportunity to discuss decentralisation and its practices outside of formal and rule-restricted council meetings. To drive his point home, the Chairman laboured to define decentralisation and his understanding of the policy in his own words as follows:

[Decentralisation is] a mechanism that is intended to make sure that local communities get a chance to participate in deciding by themselves and through their elected councillors how they want to be led, with the main objective of improving their wellbeing in a sustainable way. If I am to comment about the Sub-county Chief's comment on bottom-up planning, we only need one thing, politicians, and the technocrats from the central government to relinquish our due power and responsibility to us so that we can do our part.

He then presented his assessment of what he thought about decentralisation policy. He contended that the system had shifted from a decentralisation to a recentralisation process. He pointed out that what used to be done by the community during the budgeting process at this lower level of government some years back had long stopped. He said:

We used to have local level community members participate in the budget process. These meetings stopped, possibly because central government wanted to save money, or someone misuses the money allocated for this process. Lack of legitimate elected village councils for over 17 years now could also be a cause of this.

He further explained that today, directives on what should be in the budget come from central and higher local government units. This according to him has been possibly because the bigger percentage of government financial support to local governments is in the form of conditional grants as opposed to unconditional grants. According to him this has caused less enthusiasm of the local leaders in the budget process. As a result, there is reduced control by local governments

of the local economic activities and thus disempowered them to effectively lead communities to prosperity.

Another meeting participant questioned outright the definition of decentralisation and wondered about the claim of “communities getting a chance to participate”.

The involvement of local leaders is not enough, and what is executed many times differ from what the citizens wanted. This is partly because the funds are not enough and so the central government determines priority areas to invest the available funds. In this case, development programs are determined through “bottom-up planning” but by parties outside the Sub-county.

He explained that for that matter, locals saw no reason to participate in the budgeting process. And that this coupled with seemingly less development achieved out of their paid taxes had made tax collection resisted and therefore difficult and costly to collect.

The Chairperson further explained how a lack of control over finances had disempowered local governments. He explained what he called the ‘vagueness’ of the law regarding the collection and distribution of local tax revenue and wondered:

How much tax revenue do we collect, and how much do we retain at this government level? Much of the central government funds come while attached to sectoral areas, which in many cases are not in line with what the local communities wish. The unconditional grant is very little, therefore, the little that we collect locally is used for administrative purposes only and not even enough. I am baffled by the way local revenue is distributed after collection. When we collect say 100 shillings, 18% of that is paid as income tax to central government through Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), 35% is sent to the higher local government, then the balance 47% in this case 47Shs for example. Out of 47Shs, 25% goes to LCI and 5% LCII! The sub-county government in this case will remain with 32.9% and equivalent of 32.9Shs.

He noted that the revenue is spread so thin that it could not cause development whatsoever. He claimed that not even the recurrent budget could be financed by this revenue.

In support of the Chairman’s submission, another participant contended that it was true that they collected some money in the form of taxes, but the taxpayers did not see good results from their money. He claimed that unfortunately they did not understand that it is very little money that is retained at the local government level. The participant went on to explain that:

Road maintenance is very poor, and when you meet the chief about the poor work done, he tells you that the money received can only produce such poor work. Being the top accounting officer of the sub-county government, SAS executes all government projects, we have no power over him even when we must monitor his work.

The Chairman continued to explain the dilemma faced when the Council did not have the power over the availability of funds, nor the authority to demand accountability and obtain related information. He reminded us that local governments are mandated by law to mobilize and develop their people. And because locals contributed a little money through a tax, they demanded that services be delivered from their local government and this set local leaders on a collision course with locals when the government failed to deliver. He further explained that:

... this has resulted in loss of confidence in us and thus disempowerment of local leaders. I can say that leaders in lower local government cannot effectively monitor central government projects over which we have no proper information. This is because we are not part of the tendering process let alone choice of the project since tender boards are constituted at district government level. We are less empowered to make meaningful leadership/guidance to local people's development.

He further explained that lack of effective development programmes and resources, counsellors have in many cases opted to resolving local family conflict instead. Councillors go as far as using their personal resources to do public work to remain relevant to the community. He contended that it was for these reasons that people with a reasonably good education were not interested in taking leadership positions in local government, stating:

For some of us who did not go to school, our goal is to have some of these political titles for purposes of accessing other resources for our personal development, but there is nothing much we can do for people. We are now left to getting involved in child misbehaviour, land wrangles, family fights and breakups of which we have no professional training neither.

According to the leadership structure, the two senior leaders at Najja Sub-county government are the council chairperson, and the sub-county chief. Until recently, the policy gave the sub-county chief absolute financial control and government project implementation powers, albeit under the chairperson's supervision. This arrangement put the chairperson as the political head of local government in a precarious situation according to the council chairperson, who explained it this way:

Can you imagine, I must ask Sub-county Chief if he has money to facilitate my field trips to supervise his work? In many cases, the Chief says that 'there is no money'. This I believe is to avoid supervision, especially when there is shoddy work done. I want to propose that since the central government has a tax that it collects directly from certain activities in our areas, I think if we are to participate meaningfully in the development of our areas, the tax we collect at the sub-county level, should be entirely retained, and used by us [rather] than passing it to the higher local and central government.

The Chairman suggested that the system should go back to the old practice where political leaders like himself used to have control over local government finances. The Chairman

informed the workshop that the practice was stopped with the excuse that politicians misused the money through entertaining and bribing voters during election seasons. He further proposed that at least the political head should be a key signatory to the sub-county bank accounts.

When it was my turn to speak, I made a presentation on possible community empowerment mechanisms (see ‘Research Argument’ in Chapter One). These included access to information, inclusion/participation, accountability, local organisational capacity and so forth. Participants explored and reflected upon the current decentralisation policy and practice, local economic development policy and the bottom-up planning paradigm. Guided by the research topic, participants were able to discuss the policy’s “opportunity structure” and if the policy and the systems it put in place had empowered them to influence and contribute to LED and the well-being of their communities.

Regarding inclusion, information flow and participation, one participant claimed that:

There are weaknesses in the policy in many ways, for example, we are expected to monitor programs and projects in our areas. However, we have no say in the planning of these projects despite bottom-up planning approach to planning. Much as we are mandated to plan for our people in line with the central government, we get different program from central government agencies. These agencies implement and monitor these different programs on behalf of the central government. The purchasing officers for the project items under OWC and NAADS, for example, are not part of us! Therefore, what is supplied is always different from what we planned and prepared our people for.

This claim was supported by one of the technical staff members who agreed that the councillors got to know very little of what takes place in the government compared to the technical staff. That technical staff knew a lot more, even though they too had limited control. He gave the following example:

Recently, there was a communication from the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) that he had received orders to change the way sub-county budgets and accounts are managed and we must work according to those orders from central government. That means we, the technical staff who are directly under the CAO, will work according to his demands, not the wishes of the politicians in the local governments. Unfortunately, there is not any arrangement in place to explain to our political counterpart.

On the issue of participation and inclusion during council and committee meetings, one participant noted that it has always been very difficult to participate fully in discussions and debates. Most members had no capacity to comprehend and follow what was taking place due to a lack of information coupled with an incapability to read and understand the issues at hand. According to this individual, it was during the budgeting process that the problem of

incapacitation is most pronounced. It is a technical process, where most councillors fail to contribute, yet it is the budget that determined most of the development activities of the sub-county. He emphasised that:

At some point the chairperson—who by the standard rules of procedures for council/ committee meetings is not expected to attend committee meetings—he however on many occasions bends the rules to attend to help guide councillors who represent the communities but unable to comprehend issues at hand.

He explained that this was because councillors on the committees did not have any ideas on how to approach budget issues as compared to the technical staff, whose interests might be different to the wishes of the people. “I wish most of these documents can be translated to the local languages for some of us to at least read to understand and be able to follow”.

Another participant went on to explain that in many cases, the chairperson of the sub-county was equally semiliterate, which in many cases gave the technical team a leverage against the political wing, rendering them disempowered and disoriented. He however noted that:

For us we are lucky to have a chairman who is educated and who can stand up to these educated technocrats and ask for answers. There should be a minimum academic qualification of at least a diploma level for the chairperson of a sub-county council for proper monitoring.

At the end of the workshop, participants analysed the information gathered and agreed on the following: there was a need for more leadership development workshops for participants as there was a lot that councillors did not know, especially regarding what they needed to have to deliberate effectively in council and committee meetings. It was also agreed that soon after the next sitting of the council, a reflection meeting should be held and be guided by an interview schedule agreed upon the same day. It was also agreed that there was need for both the political wing and the technical staff to work together having been broadly realised that teamwork was needed to deliver services and development. The group also realised that the two political and administrative sides were not necessarily in conflict and that perhaps some other people benefitted when they were at loggerheads. The most important achievement during this session was the conscious realisation of the members of the challenges they faced and of choosing to work together in trying to solve them.

5.4.1.3 Action and Observation

Action, Reflection and Replanning Activities at Najja Sub-county

Action



Committee of the Whole Council



Replanning



Leadership Development Workshop

Reflection



Group Discussion

FIGURE. 5.3: PLANNING, ACTION AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AT NAJJA SUB-COUNTY 1

5.4.1.4 The Council Meeting of 10 August 2018

Council meetings are the supreme decision-making bodies at all levels of local governments. It is a tradition in Najja Sub-county to invite additional people other than councillors to attend as mentioned earlier. According to participants, executive meetings were expected to occur once every month and standing committees and councils every after two months. This meant that they expected to meet six times during the fiscal year that runs from 1 July to 30 June. In Najja Sub-county, however, the practice was to convene a maximum of three council meetings a year which, according to project participants, was too few for meaningful planning, execution and monitoring of service delivery and local economic development. When I got the opportunity to speak privately with the Chairman in his office before the 10 August 2018 Council Meeting, he explained to me how availability of money for sitting allowances determine executive, standing committees and council meetings: "...in fact, when there is no money there is no meeting". He further explained that in cases where councillors accept to sit with a promise that they will get the money in future, the sub-county chiefs have experienced conflicts with the councillors when they fail to receive their money. He noted that because of this, most sub-county chiefs will always avoid calling for council meetings unless they are assured of the sitting allowances. He asserted that:

When a long time passes without meetings and councillors start demanding for them, the chief avoids them by keeping away from his offices for fear of being pressured. At the end, we have two council meetings a year and at most three. This has rendered councillors redundant and useless because, it is through these meetings that we plan, work, and legislate for our people.

These observations by the Chairman were confirmed by the Sub-county Chief during LDW Phase 2 who stated that the law prohibited him from calling for a council meeting if he had not received the money for the councillors' allowances. He said that the law makes him legally liable for covering the costs and that he could suffer penalties.

According to the Council's Rules of Procedures, the Order of Business (OB)¹⁷ is determined by the Business Committee prior to the meeting and communicated to Councillors at least seven working days prior to the Council meeting. The OB is tabled by the members of the Executive Committee and what is on the Order Paper must be given priority during the meeting. However, this procedure is not followed by the Najja Sub-county council. The Speaker briefed me on this in the Chairman's office prior to the 10 August 2018 Council meeting:

¹⁷ This is a sequence of items that is to be taken up during a meeting in a legislative body.

Because of lack of money and like in many rural sub-counties we limit the number of standing committees; the most common culprit is the Business Committee. What we do is to informally meet between two or three of us and make an Order Paper and then communicate by text messages to the members' cell phones, the date and time for the meeting. Since many councillors do not have easy access to text messages, most councillors get to know about the items on the order paper on the very day of the meeting when they come over.

In this case, the Order of Business for the first Council Meeting for the financial year 2018/2019 was made by the Chairman and his Deputy and later communicated by text messages to the Speaker who, by law, was supposed to be the Chairperson of the Business Committee if it had been constituted. When the Speaker, whom I later discovered was a local trader, arrived and asked for a copy of the Order Paper to peruse, I observed him comment without any apparent remorse that:

The day you agreed on this, you called my phone when I was going to the market, but this is fine, it will work, after all we do not have much time to stay here for the whole day.

It was at this meeting that I requested to include on the Order Paper the following item: 'Comment on the previous financial year performance and the 5-year development plan'. I anticipated this would provide me with an opportunity to learn more about the degree to which members were informed of the issues concerning development and the general business of running the subcounty. I was informed, however, that I had no standing to propose any item for the meeting. Fortunately, however, I was also informed that the Chairperson was expected to give "The State of the Local Government Address". While I was aware that this was supposed to occur prior to the reading of the budget before 30 June, I was informed that the Chairman had decided to give the Address that very day. I was also informed that the Council Meeting was to be turned into a 'Committee of the Whole Council',¹⁸ giving the chairman, speaker, and other technical staff members the time and opportunity to discuss the Address and consider some other items in the budget. I was also interested to observe that a Council member was called into the Chairman's office and directed to move some of the motions the Council would later consider. It was explained that this action was taken to reduce any possible questions arising from the abrupt changes on the agenda.

Following the above events, it was time for the Council Meeting, which proceeded in the following manner. Led by the Sergeant-at-Arms¹⁹, a procession of the Speaker, Chairman and

¹⁸ A committee composed of all members of the council.

¹⁹ An officer appointed by a deliberative body, usually a legislature, to keep order during its meetings.

the Clerk to the Council entered the Council Chambers where most of the Council members had already been seated waiting for the meeting to begin. We all stood up at the sight of the Speaker and we did not sit down again until the National, Kingdom and Sub-county anthems had been sung. A prayer was then led by the Clerk to the Council as directed by the standard Rules of Procedures for a meeting to start.

Immediately after, the Clerk of the Council presented and read through the Order Paper, which was written and read in English. This was then followed by the pre-determined chosen council member moving a motion to adopt it without any amendments. I observed that Council Members had no significant opportunity to amend the Order Paper as presented by the Executive Committee. The actual words of the pre-determined Council Member's motion were:

Through honourable speaker, I stand to move that, since we have started a little bit late, without wasting any more time we adopt the order paper with no amendments whatsoever. I think the items contained in the order paper for this council meeting are very many and cover everything that we need to discuss!

While three members raised their hands, the counsellor that the Chairman and Speaker had previously prepared prior to the meeting was chosen to second the motion. To me as an observer, it appeared that counsellors had little opportunity to amend the Order Paper or the motion itself to include additional items even if they had wanted. It also appeared to be the case that some members did not fully understand what was contained in the Order Paper since it was read in English and no interpretation was provided. The Clerk to the Council also struggled to read it because her English was not proficient, and this made it even more confusing to many counsellors. I also observed that most members did not have any documents with them, neither the Minutes of the previous meeting nor the Order Paper itself.

Another observation was that most of the honourable members did not have a paper or a pen or any electronic devices to note anything down. This happened even when we had agreed during the LD workshop that, as co-researchers, they should have notebooks and take notes for reference during a subsequent reflection session and the next LDW. I later learnt that it was difficult for even those few who could write to concentrate and make some notes. It was also made clear to me that there was no money to buy stationary to be used for this purpose.

Before inviting the Chairman of the Local Government Council to address us, a motion to turn a council into a committee of the whole council was made. The chairman of the committee of the whole council (previously Speaker of the Council) took the opportunity to make his own remarks including introducing me to the council. He welcomed me as a person born in

Kimenyedde and that I will be attending the meetings as an observer and research student. He further elaborated that:

He was given permission to attend our council meetings and he is therefore here legally. As many of you know, he is a student of research with a very interesting approach different from what some of us have seen. We had a very resourceful workshop with him recently and we plan to have more meetings with him this financial year, welcome to Najja Mr. Lubuulwa.

The Chairman of the Sub-county was invited to give The State of Local Government Address.

The following is a summary of some of the major points made:

I would like to highlight the challenges we have faced in the previous financial year on issues of taxation, development, NAADS, OWC security, politics, health, and education. I am gravely concerned about the continued restructuring and recentralisation of these development programs...There are now new administrative/management systems by the central government alongside the widening gap between the political leaders and technical staff at lower and higher local government...

He explained that the parallel structures through which the central government is channelling development initiatives have left local leaders at bay, not knowing how to contribute to these initiatives. "...it is no longer a government system through which we can actively participate to serve our people, I call decentralisation an "eyes-on hands-off" policy..."

The Chairman communicated a lot of scepticism about the workings of the bottom-up planning mechanism as an empowering paradigm to enhance participatory local economic development. He described bottom-up planning as just a thought put on paper but not in practice. He gave an example that the President of Uganda has always said that, through Decentralisation, Bottom-up Planning, NAADS, and Operation Wealth Creation, every household shall be able to earn at least 20 million shillings per year. He described it as mere politics when he explained that:

Research indicates for example that, for a household to come out of poverty it requires at least 500 stems of banana, however, central government without consulting us, supplied 800 stems of banana to be distributed between 3,232 households in Najja Sub-county! This cannot help people to improve their lives. Besides, bananas do not grow well in our area, we need other crops other than bananas.

He supported his submission by asserting that when you look at the development plan that has less than two years to end, only three tenths of that plan have been executed in the last 3 years, very little has been done, so, "bottom-up planning is in theory but not in practice".

On a more positive note, the chairman talked about several achievements including the recently concluded village council elections, the drilling of some boreholes for safe drinking water and the construction of a semi-permanent market structure for local food vendors.

In his conclusion the chairman returned to his discontent with decentralisation where he said:

Decentralisation was a good policy, and if it were retained and practiced the way it was when it was first introduced, perhaps it would have evolved into meaningful transfer of power. We would be able to have better communities and improved local economic development.

He concluded that decentralisation largely remained for presidential election purposes, and that after election season, central government lost interest in local governments and simply say, ‘game over wait until next election season’.

After the address there was an open debate on several issues before a motion was moved to change from the Committee of the Whole Council to a Council again to conclude the meeting.

One very prominent challenge observed during this meeting was the loss of direction and confusion. Councillors frequently wanted to present issues concerning their constituencies, even when these issues were not listed on the Order Paper. At one point, a counsellor stood up and raised a ‘Point of Order’ and, when he was invited to speak, said:

In my area, we have had a series of attacks by thieves who steal our goats. These thieves have devised a way of dressing up the goats with capes and sunglasses to make them appear like human beings traveling in a van. This they do to confuse by passers and nightwatchmen who are guarding the village. We have lost several goats to these thieves; something must be done...

He forcefully continued despite several points of order being raised by his colleagues. The Chairperson struggled to guide the meeting away from this seemingly ‘new item’ on the list of items (agenda) to discuss in the meeting. However, many other members had already had their interest aroused and were willing to continue the discussion for some time. This reflected a lot on the absence of the opportunity for members to contribute to the Order Paper prior to the meeting and not knowing the proper procedure of having their pertinent concerns raised in the council meeting. Another observation was that meandering of members around issues that are not on the order paper was potentially caused by their lack of competence to talk about the pertinent issues on the agenda.

A final observation was the presence of some vocal opposition during the meeting, which led to what I perceived as uncoordinated talking among members. This resulted in time-wasting, and not making sense as members were using the word “no” without proper elaboration. I could not connect their submission to the subject matter. This was partly confirmed when the speaker said:

Whenever we have a council and committees’ meeting, we should not waste time making unnecessary and unclear opposition, what is agreed upon at the committee level for example, should not be resisted by the same members of the same committees during presentation to the council. You should also be aware of the rule of ‘collective responsibility²⁰’. Some of you oppose everything for the sake of opposition and waste a lot of our valuable time. Remember, we get a few council meetings a year due to lack of resources, we cannot afford wasting time.

Being able to observe the proceedings of the 10 August 2018 C meeting gave me a good insight into how the Najja Sub-county operated and how council members managed their debate and sought to contribute ideas and influence outcomes.

5.4.1.5 Reflection and Replanning: Group Discussion Interviews 18 August 2018

Following the first leadership development workshop and observation of the 10 August Council Meeting, a semi-structured group discussion interview meeting was convened with the participants. The purpose of this meeting was to reflect on their performance in the previous Council Meeting and to develop a new plan for the one forthcoming. This follow-up meeting was attended by eight councillors, one district councillor, five heads of department and three parish chiefs and the Chairman. On the list of items to be discussed included participants’ views of their leadership role in their jurisdictions and constituencies, the Chairman’s State of the Local Government Address, Decentralisation, LED, and bottom-up planning practices.

Aware of the difficulty in controlling councillors and focus on the agreed items on the set program in such a free environment, I still presented to them some of the questions we had planned to discuss. I welcomed members to the group discussion and I then asked them to suggest other question or issues of interest that they felt would inform this research and enhance their learning. The team agreed to add the following item proposed by the Chairman: “State House/ President Welfare Fund”.²¹

²⁰ Rule that enforces members of cabinet/committee to publicly support all decisions made in cabinet/committee.

²¹ A presidential initiative to develop models to tackle poverty and speed up transformation through Poverty Alleviation Department (PAD) housed in State House.

Even though the item would be appropriately covered during the replanning (LDW) session, the Chairman was eager to share with us how the State House Programs have sidelined and disempowered his government and wanted to know if there were any suggestions on how it could be handled. Knowing the dynamics of PAR and after agreeing with the rest of the members, the Chairman was allowed and invited to talk more about the issue following his opening remarks and he said the following:

There should be more discussion on possible abolition of the president's welfare fund. Its advocate says that various government programmes implemented by ministries cannot reach all Ugandans. They say that, when the president is moving around the country and is approached by people with various requests, he cannot just shrug away or send them to ministries.

He informed participants that recently, national Cabinet endorsed the continued allocation of money under the welfare vote to state house with the reason that the various government interventions cannot reach everybody. And therefore, whenever the president is moving around the country, there are people who accosted him with direct requests. He further contended that:

This kind approach to development according to me cannot work. This is because without formal structures, state house cannot supervise these programs. When central government sideline local government, the program is destined to fail. What I am witnessing now is us leaders and the communities fighting for the president's attention to access these resources for individual personal benefit!

At this moment one participant asked what people in areas where the president had not reached would do to benefit from these programmes since they must make a direct request the president.

The chairman explained more about the President's Welfare Fund. He said that it is a state house programme, which is reportedly injected a lot of national funds in poverty alleviation focusing on model villages and demonstration farms, used to teach local communities how to embrace modern farming. He said that the fund is said to be used in skilling the girl child in vocational studies and given seed and equipment after graduation. However, a program which is said to have claimed a lot of money in the past two years seemed not to be integrated within the local government system. He said:

I hear that some people have received some money from this initiative in our area! We are not even consulted while choosing the people to benefit from this program, so we are rendered useless. At the same time, these initiatives are a duplicate of OWC, NAADS, Youth Livelihood Programme and many other programs.

These programs and many more were not known to most members since very few of them had knowledge about them. We agreed that the group needed to find out more about these

Presidential Initiatives so that we could initiate questions at the next council meeting during question time for technical staff to answer. A suggestion was to invite the area Member of Parliament or the Chairperson LCV to the next council meeting to listen to these concerns. This was subsequently agreed up on. The chairman continued to explain the fund to the participants. He said that the fund is said to be used to support youth groups through provision of common user facilities and start-up capital. He also explained that since mid-2018, the President has been donating money and equipment to various youth groups in Kampala, the capital, and the reason the president gives is that he cannot live comfortably in the neighbourhood of poor people without doing something about them. He said:

The president also raises a moral call or faith-based question about his donations. The President says his chances of going to heaven may be compromised if he has beneficial knowledge but does not pass it on to his neighbours. I think all this is to justify his actions and at the same time make sure we local leaders have no control over the local electorates since we cannot offer much for their development. Can you imagine all that money is given to the youth in the city when poor youth are here in the rural areas!

In trying to steer the meeting back to reflect on the previous council meeting, I read out the next question. This was about the success of the previous council meeting in achieving its intended goals.

My observation during the council meeting was that the rules of procedures were difficult to follow by the councillors. This was now being confirmed when the Sub-county Chief explained that the rules of procedure are not followed in their entirety, councillors pick a few of them. He elaborated that there are so many rules that are not followed just because councillors do not know what they mean. He gave instances where someone stands up on a point of information or clarification and then he raises a point of order. He pointed out that point of information and clarification is directed to the member holding the floor, and such a member is at liberty to give way or not. But in this case, a member who rose on a point of information stayed standing and waiting for the speaker to stop him so that he can deliver his point. At this time, you have two honourable members holding the floor and in the process the meeting became vague and time consuming.

My other observation was on the power dynamics during the council meeting. During this session participants confirmed my earlier observation on the power dynamics when the Sub-county chief further said:

Councillors are drawn from the wider community which is defined by its social structures based on political, economic, and social differences i.e., political party affiliations and positions, economic status, gender, education, and religious background. Those variables define the individual councillors and their capacity to comprehend and influence decisions during council and/or committee meetings. At the end, it is the technical staff who are blamed for the failure of the policy.

At this point along our discussion one participant, who is at the same time the Speaker of the Council, tried to elaborate as to why lack of skills in attending and successfully participating in a meeting negatively affect the council's performance. From his long experience he noted the following:

If a member raises on a point of order, as speaker I make sure a chance is given to whoever is giving a point of order to speak, to my disappointment, a member raises a point of information or clarification. When you stop that member from further deliberation, it raises a lot of friction and in fact, when the meeting ends, some other informal meeting takes place outside the chambers to condemn the speaker for being impartial.

He further explained his submission that this behaviour has caused division and more conflicts among councillors and subsequently, delay in decision making and development. He quoted some members claiming that "You see, the speaker stopped me from speaking because I am not from the same political party with him." He suggested there is need for councillors to be more educated and informed about these rules of procedures. "I am happy for this kind of study because we are now learning, and we are the same people who make such mistakes".

On cultural norms, it was observed that women gave a lot of respect to their male counterparts as a matter of culture to the detriment of the many women they represent. It was perplexing to observe honourable members kneeling before the chairman, the speaker, and other male honourable members before the meeting and after. The respect and fear the female councillor had towards their male counterparts finds its way into the formal meeting and it was observable. It is with that fear that when a member asked why there was no reaction when a motion to adopt an order paper without amendment was not challenged, one female participant had this to say:

How can one oppose 'Hajji'²²! That is what he wanted. It would be unroyal to him if you suggested otherwise or opposed the motion he supported. Hajji has always proposed and supported well-thought-out motions. Arguing against them would be a waste of time and a self-embarrassment.

²² A male Muslim who made an Islamic-religious pilgrimage to Mecca, is usually physically and financially capable.

Hajji came out to suggest that members should always feel free to oppose him. That it is all good for them to bring out what they think is right for the meeting. He further explained that at times he takes a hard stand on issues to save time.

On political party affiliation and position, the speaker to council said:

As you know, the chairman belonged to a small political party which is in opposition at national level and because of this, during a council meeting it is kind of disconcerting to see the chairperson of the executive treated as opposition in his own government. And because of this, the chairman's address in the committee of the whole council was treated by most of the honourable councillor as unfair criticism of the national government.

This was echoed by one participant during this reflection session by stating that:

Much as there are many areas where the central government has let us down, when you reflect on the chairman's address you realise that he has never appreciated the effort our government to develop this country. Well, we shall have to wait for the time when the government of his party takes overpower for him to appreciate any thing NRM has done for us.

The chairman tried to defend his position by asking if the failures outlined in his speech were not true. It was at this point when one participant (parish chief)²³ asked the chairman if he is sure whether if his political party came into power it would do everything it promised. This parish chief went ahead to question the chairman if he himself did well his part of monitoring government programmes.

I observed that the chairman was becoming visibly uncomfortable and he reiterated his point:

The common whispered question the political head like me ask their sub-county chiefs is always, "Chief how much money did we get this quarterly release?" The sub-county chief will always answer at leisure "something not much I guess". When you do not have money, you do not have power and you cannot lead people to development.

The chairman went ahead to remind the participants that the key signatory to the sub-county resources is the sub-county chief and the second one is the sub-accountant²⁴, both are civil servants. He suggested that the political head should be part of the signatory to the local government bank accounts so that he can know well in advance the reason for withdrawing the money. He said that this would be better than doing what he termed as a 'post-mortem' after money has been misappropriated.

²³ A civil servant whose mandate is to cause implementation of government programmes at parish level.

²⁴ A member of technical staff receiving and/or making payments on behalf of the Subcounty Chief

As the chairman was given more time to elaborate, he went on to answer some of the questions on our interview schedule when he said:

By the way, when the Internal Auditor or Auditor General comes to audit the works and books of the sub-county, he/she goes to the sub-county chief. This Chief is the accounting officer; as such he is the one who makes the budget, withdraw money, spend it and he is the one who is audited! If some of the documents the sub-county chief present to auditors is fake and some of them are purported to be from the political wing, how will they be queried when the political head is not consulted whatsoever and who clarifies such query?

He further suggested that the political wing is involved in the financial management of the sub-county to prevent resource misuse. He contended that if the Sub-county chief presents financial supporting documents that are purportedly made by him or any other councillors who are not represented during the auditing process, it is an unfair practice, and it promotes corruption with impunity.

Visibly supported by almost all the members in the group discussion apart from most members from the technical staff, the chairman questioned with a sense of disappointment the decentralisation arrangement. He elaborated the councillor's helplessness in the policy practice, where he wondered whether councillors are expected to be policy makers or just whistle blowers only when things go wrong? He expressed his disappointment with the technical staff who always come in to give technical advice against the politician's good ideas. Yet, principally, their guidance must take precedent, making the sub-county chief to act as a counsel to the council and completely disempower the political wing of the local government. He explained that:

You will realise that most of the power in the decentralisation arrangement is vested in the sub-county chief, but remember the political leaders are the representative of the people in the sub-county. Unfortunately, however, in most cases, the sub-county chief is interested in his personal gain and he has no mandate to give political accountability. For us political leaders give accountability through providing positive social-economic changes for wellbeing of the people we represent. I am not saying that the political head should be the one to spend the money, no. What I am saying is that, when the money is changing hands, we should appear prominently in authorising it than just stopping at planning level.

He acclaimed himself for being capable of making the chief show him the bank statement and ask some questions. He said that he can do this because he is educated, but most of the political heads elsewhere have very low level of formal education. That they have no capacity to question and because of this, information is kept away by the chiefs who university degree holders are. He further asserted that:

Decentralisation policy does not clearly provide for the political leaders to question the chief over how money has been spent even when we are the head of local governments. Though they are some policy provisions through which the political head can try to squeeze information out of the chief, if the leader is not enlightened enough to know the availability of some policy provisions, it becomes difficult to achieve transparency, participation, and accountability.

He went ahead to explain that for that reason, it is difficult for development to take place out of the very little resources at the sub-county level of government. He suggested that leaders needed more leadership development workshops to educate themselves about the policy, the laws governing the people and to clarify/resolve the differences between politicians and the technical staff.

One participant raised the concern that the lack of documents prior and during the council/committee meetings made it difficult for them to follow the meeting proceedings. The participant suggested that it could possibly be a deliberate move by some executive members to disable councillors by denying them access to information on order to avoid questions. However, another participant held a different view of the same issue, stating that:

It has been very difficult to empower councillors by relevant documents. For example, members of the different committees meet, and in most cases do not make written report which would be very vital in informing the councillors. Can you imagine a financial committee sitting and does not provide the resultant report to the council? And during the council meeting someone say “yes we had the meeting but the secretary to the committee did not take minutes” or minutes were taken but not printed to be ready for this council meeting!

He suggested that reports must be written and if members would receive them in time, they would be able to traverse their constituencies to physically see and assess the projects being reported on. This could help during the meeting because they would then be discussed from an informed point of view.

Another participant said, “most of these councillors cannot write such a technical document like reports, usually it is the technical staff who attend these meetings as secretary to these committee meetings”. He suggested that technical staff just chose not to write these reports.

According to another participant, there were no means by which councillors could compel the secretaries to the different committees to produce a report in time. This was because there were always excuses including lack of stationery and money to print out reports. At times they talked of the remunerations being not enough for all the work they were asked to do. There was also a fear that some of these technical staff did not have the necessary technical skill to produce these reports.

Concerning the issue of not having the previous council meeting minutes in time as the law requires, one participant further clarified that:

One time, minutes of the previous council meeting were printed and given to members in time to prepare for the forthcoming meeting, most members turned up for the meeting without them, they had forgotten them back home and most of them had not read them! Some cited language problem since they were written in English which they cannot read.

A participant suggested that “meeting minutes that are sent to councillors should be translated into our local language first, but those which are kept in the files at the offices be kept in English language so that we are not at odds with the law”.

Another participant when asked about OWC and bottom-up planning had the following to say:

Bottom-up planning and OWC has destroyed our relationship with the people we lead. This so because, when the president visits the district, he just mentions that his government has given each sub-county 180 million shillings every year without any elaborations or breakdown of this money. This makes the community to think that we got the money and misused it. This has resulted into mistrust and lack of confidence in us by the communities.

He explained that three quarters of this money was paid to OWC and NAADS workers in terms of salaries and allowances, yet they did very little work, most work was done by the departmental technical staff. For this reason, very little reached the community for real development purposes.

In agreement with the above participant’s comment, another participant; a councillor to the district council commented:

Monitoring Government programme like OWC/ NAADS, is difficult. For example, one-time a supplier delivered only 200 filets, far less than what was expected in a delivery. As a supervisor I had no control over the supplier because the supplier takes orders and paid by some other people without our input. The best I could do, was to give a report and leave it at that. There is no policy mechanism to follow up such cases to their logical conclusion. Another incident happened when a supply of dairy cows to farmers was made. As a member of Production and Natural Resources committee at the District government I tried to follow this supply. I reported that, all the cows they supplied aborted because they had been made to travel long distances while in-calf, against any possible veterinary doctor’s advice.

He explained further that the poor farmers who received such cows invested heavily in medical treatment to revive the cows but eventually some died. At times, these cows were redistributed to new farmers after the original receivers failed to continue with the project. Unfortunately, the new recipients were not informed of the history pertaining these cows until they also failed to

sustain the project. Subsequently, farmers find themselves more poverty-stricken than they were before. “For this matter I call the programme ‘Operation Poverty Creation’”, he concluded.

A participant suggested that,

We have good cows that can endure the environment and give reasonable amount of milk at a less management cost. Just like it is known that some crops grow better in some areas than others, even certain breeds of cow do better under different environments and can be managed cheaply by a certain culture and class of people. Why don’t coordinators of OWC/NAADS buy cows from the already existing farmers in our areas for redistribution?

Other participants further pointed out that the cows supplied to farmers were so demanding in terms of medical care and feeds. Due to these expenses people spend all their little saving on these cows and at the end fail and give them up without any proper mechanism for compensation. A participant reiterated that “in fact, communities end up in a worse economic situation than they were before the program.”

On bottom-up planning, a participant agreed with previous participant’s discussion on the performance of this paradigm when he noted:

Bottom up is not working because we plan for projects that we think will benefit the people but instead, we get most of the money in form of conditional grants without considering, what we planned and what people of the area want to do.

The chairman weighed in to support the previous participant’s submission and explained further that the program does not work and yet leaders have no say about it. He talked about his poor working relationship with the military colonel who is coordinating OWC at the district level as an example. The colonel no longer takes his calls just because of their disagreement regarding the program, he claimed. He said that this was after asking him whether he sees any benefits for the 180 million shillings claimed to have been invested in the sub-county every year by the central government. He told him that there are no tangible local economic improvement and people are becoming poorer, asserting that OWC program is worse than NAADS.

He explained how he telephoned the colonel to asked him to explain why they supplied what was never asked for in the sub-county request lists, and why not considering local government planning cycle as was given. He went on to explain that the pineapples that were supplied could not grow well in that area, they cannot yield results, and that the area needed maize, banana, or cassava, which was the original timely request. To his dismay the colonel instead accused the participant for always being against government programs. He argued “Where is our role as leaders and why do they sideline us”? He went further to say:

When the suppliers of these seed/planting materials are paid by the central government to supply, they just supply anything to anybody at any time without considering planting seasons. When farmers are not prepared and ready for such supplies for example coffee seedling, the supplier will just take the seedlings to any prominent farmer whether he needs the seedlings or not.

He told us how he and other colleagues had recently found over 600 overgrown seedlings in a recently dead farmer's tree-shed, "I am sure the supplier was paid to supply the same". He said that this is common with all other crops and animals supplied by the same programme. "Let central government give us chance to monitor these programs right from the supply side down to the farmers in our communities", he suggested.

We concluded this session with more reflection on how the research was progressing. We discussed the possibility of having the next Re-planning session on a different day from that of the Reflection day. This was because participants felt a bit exhausted to continue with the Re-planning just after a long session of Reflection. However, we agreed that in the interest of time and resources, it was better to have both the same day. Members also suggested that I should attend some of the standing committee meetings if they happen to take place.

5.5.1 Phase Two

5.5.1.1 Leadership Development Workshop and Replanning, 18 August 2018

The second Leadership Development Workshop (LDW2) was held to evaluate the outcome of the Council meeting and replan the direction of the study to ensure effective progress. This had been partially undertaken during the reflection session as members had proposed some key changes for Phase 2. However, during LDW2 more agreement was reached on the way forward. It was agreed, for example, that prior to the next council meeting, a plan was needed and that every member of the group needed to prepare for it. One element of the plan was for members to make regular visits to the Sub-county headquarters to ensure they knew the day and date for the next Council meeting. It was also agreed to request access to the Order Paper by asking the Clerk to Council to distribute the minutes of the previous council meetings and any other relevant document at least a week prior to the meeting. Finally, the group agreed it would be important to have access to the Rules of Procedures booklet for the council meeting. To all these, the Chairman and Speaker, who were present in this session, agreed and promised to work as a team to provide the information where possible.

5.5.1.2 Observations of the Council Meeting of 21 December 2018

This second council meeting provided an opportunity for the following to take place: to observe the contribution of group members to the meeting's proceedings and to compare it to the

previous meeting, to make the basis for the Phase Two reflection meeting; and to give the participants the opportunity to practice what was discussed and learnt during the previous reflection and replanning.

For this meeting, I was unable to learn how the order paper had been developed. However, unlike the previous council meeting, I observed that most members had early access to the minutes of the previous meeting, a copy of the previous meeting minutes, the order paper, and a copy of the sub-county budget for 2018/2019. I also noted that a question time had been scheduled to discuss issues that were not listed on the order paper.

Just before the meeting's formalities commenced, which included the singing of the anthems and saying of a prayer, I perceived there to be a visible sense of belonging and confidence amongst group members. The tension I had observed at the previous council meeting was not evident at this meeting right from the start.

It seemed that no members had been pre-assigned to move or second the motion to adopt the agenda.

One member had approached me just before the meeting and said to me:

I did not know that my chairman was also struggling to get information from the Sub-county chief. I thought they connive to steal the money. I did not even know that the S/C chief is also faced with pressure from the CAO. I think we just need to work together as a council to have this policy work for us all, instead of suspecting and fighting each other, we can do it. This study is making us aware of what is happening around us.

After reading the order paper by the Clerk to Council, the Speaker before calling for a motion to adopt the Order Paper, explained to members that there was not much need to amend it as there was an item for question time, though he encouraged any amendment if necessary.

A motion was raised to adopt the order paper by a member who said "members, allow me to move that, since there seems to be no members with an amendment to the order paper, the order paper be adopted without any amendments." Immediately, another member rose to second the motion.

In his opening the Speaker to the Council made several remarks and notably the following:

Honourable members, I am happy to report that the executive through clerk to council was able to distribute most of the documents that are needed for today's council meeting, I am pleased that we have been able to start in time. I hope that this time around we shall be able to follow proper meeting procedures.

He explained that this was because they were able to photocopy a few pages from the standard rules of procedure booklet and distributed to members several weeks ago for councillors to get more familiar with these rules. He continued welcome me:

I want to welcome Mr. Lubuulwa, again as a friend of this council with whom we are learning and researching around our policy and its challenges in empowering us for leadership and development of our area. I am sure that many of you who have attended numerous sessions with him have benefited.

Regarding budget issues, the Clerk to Council read out the next item which was the Report from the Finance Committee. The chairman of the committee read the report. In brief, his major request was for the council to allow him to transfer the available classroom construction money to road construction.

Honourable speaker, and honourable members of this council, as you may be aware, this financial year, 26 million shillings was allocated for the road grading and repair from Kiyindi to Mawotto. But as you may be aware, the money is released in small quarterly instalments. However, when a small instalment is put on the grading of the road, you realise that the work is halfway done. By the time you get another instalment, you find that the road is already destroyed by the rains due to the rain season that you go through before another release is received.

He explained that because of these conditions, the estimated amount of money to do the work was not enough. He requested the council through the Speaker to allow him to use money that was received for classroom construction to do road repair. He explained further that this would enable him to complete road repairs once and for all before the rainy season came again. He lastly suggested that when the last two releases were received, they should be used for the classroom construction.

Another member at this time rose on a point of order. The speaker asked the member if he was sure he was really going to make a point of order, which he confirmed.

A member holding the floor said:

Honourable speaker, we were not given this report to scrutinise before this meeting, and we are not sure of what is in the report in terms of figures. Is the chairman in order, to ask us to allow him to transfer the money without knowing the figures he is talking about? We do not know how much was released on the road grading, neither do we know how much was received on the classroom construction.

The speaker responded on the point of order raised by requesting the chairman to produce copies of his report before the meeting could continue. He reminded the chairman that not

providing the necessary information in time to honourable councillors frustrates them and delays the meeting.

A few copies available were handed out to some of the members present. It was immediately pointed out by another councillor that the total sum of money released for both road and classroom construction totalled US\$27 million and it was questioned why the chairman requested all the classroom construction money to be transferred. The chairman defended his position by saying:

The previous release was used to do some work on the same road, but as I told you the work was not completed, and it looks like we are going to start all over again. That is why I want to do the work and complete it this time so that it does not turn out to be more expensive.

The mention that there was a previous disbursement of funds for the same road then created a lot of debate because members seemed not to remember talking about it at previous meetings, and the report had not made any mention of that release.

Another member raised his fear that: “even if we have had a lot of rain this season, it was potentially true that the company that is doing the road construction is not competent”. At this point, members began whispering among themselves, noting that it was the chairman’s construction company that undertook both the road grading and classroom construction. However, no one rose to speak out about it to the council.

A member of the Finance Committee rose on a point of information and used his time to explain his dissatisfaction about the allocation criteria for money for construction at the different levels of government:

Road construction makes me fail to understand what decentralisation all is about. When you read through the different budgets and other documents, there is a very big difference between the amount of money the government gives Uganda National Road Authority (UNRA), the district local government and the sub-county local government to make a kilometre of a marram road. Though the levels of standard of work expected to be done at the different levels of government may be different, lower local government should also be given money that can do reasonably good work.

He elaborated further that there is a lot of inequality in the costing of jobs and the funding of the construction of government buildings. He said that central government gives significantly less money to local governments to do the same job it does, resulting in poor quality work and/or incomplete projects.

The information provided by this member did not appear to help in resolving the issue at hand; and the chairman continued to argue for the diversion of the funds. He did, however, also use this time to undercut the Central government's approach to development. He stated:

Look at the central government current financial year theme "Improving Education for Development"; this emphasises education and is reflected in the national government financial year plan, which of course takes precedent. However, this has contradicted with the five-year development plan and our aspirations for this year, "Feeder Roads for Market Accessibility".

He explained that because of this, more money was allocated to education than road repair and construction, which in some way contradicted the bottom-up planning process. He also complained of the law that bars a council to transfer money from one sector to another, which he claimed completely disempowered local governments.

A female councillor moved a motion:

I would like to support that honourable chairman be given chance to borrow the money so that the road can be constructed. People in my constituency are wondering what happened to the construction that had started but stopped without any notice.

Another member rose to amend the motion and suggested that "on condition that council is informed how the previous release was spent". The speaker offered guidance that the council should accept the transfer of the funds and forward its proposal to the CAO. He further suggested that the council should be provided with a report on how tendering and procurement of the construction companies doing these jobs for the subcounty were done.

On request, the Sub-county chief provide guidance on the subject matter, by informing the council that the sub-county government has no access to such documents. Giving the reason that all tender boards and contract committees were constituted at the district and not sub-county level.

My observation at this point was that there was uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the Sub-county chief's assertion that a sub-county government had no access to this information on the tendering and procurement process. The Council nevertheless resolved that the money be diverted for now. Subsequently, the Chairman was tasked to collaborate with the Sub-county chief to put together the necessary documentation and send it to the CAO for a final decision. The chairman and councillor from Kiyindi and Mawotto were tasked to follow up the road and the classroom and make sure that construction was completed by the end of the financial year.

A member of the financial committee was then given a chance to say something and stated:

I suggest that we are given full responsibility to manage our resources so that at the end of the financial year we give a comprehensive report on how we have used the finances and be accountable to our electors. What would happen if the CAO refused to divert the resources as the council has resolved?

A member rose on a point of information and used the time to complain to the council that it seemed that the job of councillors was simply to supervise government programmes and projects as decided by the central government. He said:

...that is why, when we pick out emergency cases in our respective constituencies for immediate response by the district local government, we get frustrated. When for example I reported to the CAO a collapsed pit latrine at one of the primary schools, he only quoted a clause in the law thus, “diversion of funds is not allowed” and left it at that.

He expressed the view that this kind of practice where councillors cannot solve community problems makes them feel so powerless and fearful of going back to the community they represent. This is because they feel that they have failed the people. Yet, at the same time, a community problem that was small and manageable at the outset if modest resources were deployed becomes more severe and eventually costs more resources, and at times, even lives.

The Clerk was then requested to read the next item on the agenda which was ‘Discussion of the chairman’s previous address’. The address given in the previous council meeting had been about the performance of government in the previous year. The address had identified several challenges in providing services and fostering development in the Sub-county. The address had also pointed out how higher-level local government and central government were impeding the council from doing its work.

A member rose to discuss the chairman’s speech, commencing with the security management system:

It is so disappointing for National Police to come and arrest a resident without consulting with the local leaders and the local police. When the relatives of the suspects come to enquire from their leaders and local police of their whereabouts, they cannot get help since leaders have not been informed about the arrest.

He suggested that if decentralisation was to take root, the lower levels of local government commencing with village council should be respected, their councillors considered leaders, and they should not be sidelined when undertaking certain activities. Decentralisation, he claimed, required that all stakeholders respect each other and work together at all levels of governments.

It was at this point that a member informed the council that officers of the local police had been replaced by the central government police and military. He claimed that:

This is sign of recentralisation of power because they get their command from elsewhere and therefore it is difficult for local leaders to have a say on the security of the people. Today, unscrupulous people use these police and military men to harass their business opponents and grabbing land from the innocent locals. Previously local police were under the supervision of the sub-county chief and it would be used to keep law and order in the area.

The chairman was tasked to work with Gombolola Internal Security Officer (GISO) to meet with the regional police commander to enquire about what had happened to the local police and to find a way of working together with the local leaders. He was tasked to talk about the misuse of national police and military by the wrong elements of our communities and those from other parts of the country.

When the chairman was tasked to go and find out why people were being supplied with the wrong items as mentioned in his report, he stated:

When it comes to NAADS and OWC, I would suggest that the agricultural official of a given sub-county be the one to advise on what should be given to the people for farming or the animals to keep and this to be strictly followed. This is because different area has different climate conditions, and it is not right therefore for someone from far away to decide what to supply to the people for farming. Even the cows they distribute to our people are of poor quality or not good for the culture of the people or not good for the kind of environmental conditions.

He explained further that at times suppliers claimed that they have supplied in-calf cows for dairy milk, only to realise after keeping the cow for some time that they were beef cattle not dairy cattle; or in the case when it was dairy milk cattle, not in-calf. He further informed the council that for a long time they have questioned why central government hire staff under NAADS and OWC to do the same work that the Sub-county veterinary and agricultural officers are hired to do. "These employees have the same qualification, but relatively very little salaries are paid to them by the Sub-county as compared to their counterparts". I observed that the discussion of the chairman's address continued with greater participation as compared to the previous council meeting.

During Question Time, which was the next item on the order paper, several questions were raised concerning the central government's intention of recentralisation of what used be done by local government. The most prominent question was related to the institution of the State

House's²⁵ involvement in development initiatives, which they said had sidelined local governments; and the parallel structures, which they claimed undermined bottom-up planning and disempowered local government leaders.

There was also a question as to why the development plan of 2015/16 to 2019/20 had not been implemented yet, even though it was a bottom-up planning initiative. To this question the chairman responded:

Such plans are proposed to woo voters into voting for the president and after elections, the government concentrates on different things. That is why most of the programs that are said to enhance local economic development are implemented by other government agencies yet bottom-up planning was to give us an opportunity to participate and decide what we need to develop in our areas.

It was resolved at this point that the executive extend an invitation to the area member of parliament to talk about it. The council also encouraged the district councillors who attended the council to present their concerns to the district council.

My overall observations of this meeting were that it was a lively affair and there was great teamwork. There seemed to be a sense of direction, ownership, and involvement by most members present. It was exciting to see the meeting ending with everyone appearing happier and prouder and with less frustration on their faces as compared to the previous meeting.

5.5.1.3 Group Reflection, 18 January 2019

Semi-structured interviews had been planned to discuss the bottom-up planning paradigm and to follow up on the previous meeting. The interview questions related to empowerment mechanisms available within the policy and to suggestions to empower community leaders. During this session, participants were encouraged to talk about what they thought about the project in terms of improving their capacity to participate in leadership. The leadership development, which came after the reflection session, gave participants time to replan for the study and the forthcoming council meeting. During this part of the session, participants' field notes and the documents that they had accumulated during the study process were referred to.

The group interview started with a question about the previous council meeting and how participants rated its success.

²⁵ The official residence of the president of Uganda.

The speaker of the council was the first to provide his assessment. He commended the teamwork spirit that was exhibited during the council meeting and expressed the hope that local government could work on behalf of the people.

We all now know that getting resources work for us, councillors need to make a team that can push the civil servant to deliver services, but when we are divided in our small cocoons, we do not learn, and we are taken advantage of.

On the same note, another member encouraged the distribution of all necessary documents to members at least a week before the meeting for review and preparation. The member said:

...some of us have children who can read, they can help us to understand these documents if we receive them early enough. I do not understand why the chairman was not willing to give us the report from the finance committee, yet it was helpful to make a resolution.

Another participant assessed the previous meeting as a great success as, for the first time, there was less time wasted on procedural issues and because of that several resolutions were reached. This participant further emphasised the importance of self-help in the empowerment processes of the council. He said:

No one is going to empower us, after all, no one is willing to do so. It is us to be sincere and help each other. We should ignore the different classes we find ourselves attached to. Some members fear to ask the Chairman and the Sub-county Chief to provide information, it is up to them to provide the necessary information for councillors to be productive during the meeting.

The vice chairperson suggested that there should be a way to improve deliberations in the meeting. He also pointed out the challenge of having very few council meetings a year because of the allowance-driven meeting system, which acted to deny the council opportunities to meet.

I do not know why the law prohibits the chief to arrange for a council meeting before he is assured of the availability of the seating allowances. The law should give us a right to claim for of sitting allowance arrears so that we can have a meeting when necessary and claim allowances later. This can help us to have the maximum number of meetings permitted by the law.

At this point one of the district councillors who attended the meeting informed us on how council meetings at the district level are arranged by the CAO. The CAO can arrange for the meeting only when assured of the allowances to members and how the arrangement is disheartening to council members. She said:

.. these allowances are part of the money released from the central government, therefore central government in a way control when council should be sitting by either providing or not providing the money. At times after a meeting, members are not given their allowances, citing network failure for the district to access money which in turn dishearten members. Some time back council seating allowances used to come from local government accounts directly, but this was stopped. The whole situation curtails participation, transparency, and accountability and at the same time promote corruption. This is because the technical staff use these unclear systems to steal the money meant for government functions.

Another participant emphasized the importance of council meetings for service delivery and local economic development. The participant further emphasised the importance of induction of councillors and the importance of the study. He said:

Council meetings are vital for local leader's participation; therefore, the induction and training of councillors is a critical element in strengthening decentralized system of governance. This is because experience reveals that for a variety of reasons, there is a very high turn-over of councillors each time there are local council elections.

He restated the point that unfortunately, induction is done only once at the start of each five-year political term and suggested that what has started as a study, should continue because it has helped to develop the confidence of the councillors through learning and discovering the best way of handling the challenges they face.

Another participant could not hide his excitement at having called the chairman to order when he did not lay the finance committee report during the council meeting. He expressed himself in the following words:

I was happy to have been the one to call the chairman to order even if I was not able to get a copy, but at least my other colleagues got a copy and there was a better discussion thereafter. We need to press for the report cards that were talked about during our induction at the start of this current term of office. This could possibly give us a great deal of information.

On the same note, a member commented on how for the first-time councillors were active and participative during a council meeting and how the speaker seemed to be fairer.

We had a good meeting because, usually by the end of the meeting we are up in arms fighting each other over small differences. Usually, a council meeting a few days to Christmas is taken for just getting some allowance money to spend on Christmas. We do not do serious discussion like we did this time around.

On the question of bottom-up planning, participants had different opinions. A councillor who is a secretary for education for the Sub-county Executive Committee observed that jobs

allocation to civil servants does not empower the council to improve service delivery. He gave an example where the headteacher requested for a mathematics teacher to be recruited to a government primary school, and how the district would just recruit and send any teacher available who may not be well qualified to teach mathematics. The councillor suggested that:

The sub-county chief who at the same time head of civil servants at that level, in consultation with the school management and the district government, should recruit the new teachers.

The chairman at this point raised his concern about bottom-up planning amidst a new system that had started this financial year, known as Integrated Financial Management System. This was a system where budgets and accounts of the local governments were controlled by the central government.

This new system where, someone from the capital Kampala control all over the country will breed corruption. This is because before someone releases the money, he or she will ask for kickbacks²⁶ from the concerned officers and this will delay access to funds. Yet we know decentralisation was intended to reduce red tape and delays caused by people who are not near the people to understand their problems and the emergencies. This is recentralisation of what was previously decentralisation, it is frustrating.

At the close of the group reflection meeting the Speaker to the council was given an opportunity to make his closing remarks. In his remarks he reiterated the importance of decentralisation and its other related programs. He said:

...if it were not for decentralisation we would possibly not be here discussing and planning for our areas. However, we need to have forums through which we can participate and discuss with politicians at district and central government level. This will help us to know why changes are being made in the policy and to also to have an input in these new changes. Series of meetings like these ones should continue since they require not sitting allowances, we can meet over a cup of tea to discuss and learn from each other and when possible, invite a facilitator.

There were several areas of reflection on the previous meeting, and the journey of the study so far. There was clear indication that there was change in the attitudes of the participants. This was seen from the way they discussed and the urge to learn and improve their knowledge though information sharing.

²⁶ An illicit payment made to someone in return for facilitating a transaction or appointment.

Participants agreed that the study had brought about a collective understanding of what it require to effectively participate in decision-making and their governance roles at local subcounty level.

5.6.1 Phase Three

5.6.1.1 Replanning

At the end of the reflection session, there was a second session for replanning the way forward for the study, and to plan for the next council meeting. However, a date and program for the next reflection meeting was not set. This was because councillors were sceptical about the occurrence of another council meeting in the current financial year. It was however agreed that leaders would carry on with leadership development workshops for their community learning even after the study, and to build more networks beyond their sub-county. This was agreed upon because, as a PAR project, there should be a continuous learning process so that participants can still meet and together plan their community learning activities.

5.7 Conclusion

This data chapter has presented analysis by the researcher and co-researchers, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, and then more fact finding as PAR usually requires. There were observable signs that a more critical working team was being forged out of these members, the presentation indicated a transformative journey to the participants. There were signs of participants' liberation from fear and ignorance and conscientization through participatory learning from each other. All the above achievements will have a more vigorous evaluation regarding empowerment of the communities for LED in the analysis, evaluation recommendation and conclusion chapters.

The next chapter presents how Uganda's formal decentralised system of local government is being experienced at the grassroots level in the case study areas of Kimenyedde sub-county.

Chapter Six

Policy Practice in Kimenyedde Sub-county

6.1 Introduction

As set out in Chapter Five's introduction, this chapter sets out how the formal decentralisation policy is being operationalised in the case study area of Kimenyedde sub-county in Mukono district. It presents the PAR and community learning process, and the challenges local leaders are facing to deliver Local Economic Development (LED) and services in this sub-county. As before, the chapter presents the data as it was collected following the multiple loop PAR cycles and phases of Planning, Action/Observation, and Reflection/Replanning.

6.2 Reconnecting with the communities in Kimenyedde

Even though I had secured the necessary permission from Mukono district government to work with the local government at Kimenyedde, the Chairman as the political head of the sub-county appeared sceptical. He attempted to avoid meeting me and resorted to a game of hide and seek even though he knew me as I had been born in the Sub-county. Due to these tactics, the first survey meeting that I had arranged while still in Australia to take place on Friday 6th July 2018 did not take place until 16th July. Interestingly, and in rather stark contrast, the Sub-county Chief was very cooperative and keen to organize the first survey meeting. However, neither the Sub-county Chief nor I had the mandate to invite councillors to any kind of a meeting without the Chairman's consent. When I finally caught up with the Chairman, I explained to him what I wanted to do and how he would benefit from the study. After listening to me and understanding, he became willing and in fact expressed himself as follows:

For the first time I will have a chance to tell my story because I think we have been taken for a ride for so long. I am sure you know that I double as the Chairperson of National Resistance Movement²⁷ in Kimenyedde and the elected Chairperson of the Sub-county. Let me tell you, decentralisation is a political theatrical work of those in power. Can you imagine, recently there was a physical fight between a group of district chairmen and the Minister of Local Government? You know why? Because no one wants to listen to us just because it is not yet the election period. Go ahead and organise with my Speaker and the Sub-county Chief, I will be there. However, remember it is harvesting season, people are busy in their gardens.

²⁷Currently ruling party of the government of Uganda

Kimenyedde Sub-county is a rural area comprised of five parishes and 46 villages located in Mukono district, in the central part of Uganda. Like Najja Sub-cunty council, Kimenyedde Sub-county council is composed of the necessary councillors from the five parishes and has the legal requirement of at least a third of the councillors being female. Though it can be attended by other stakeholders, a full council meeting consists of all 13 councillors, with governmental arrangement like that of Najja Sub-county, headed by the chairman of the council (see Fig. 1.6) bellow.

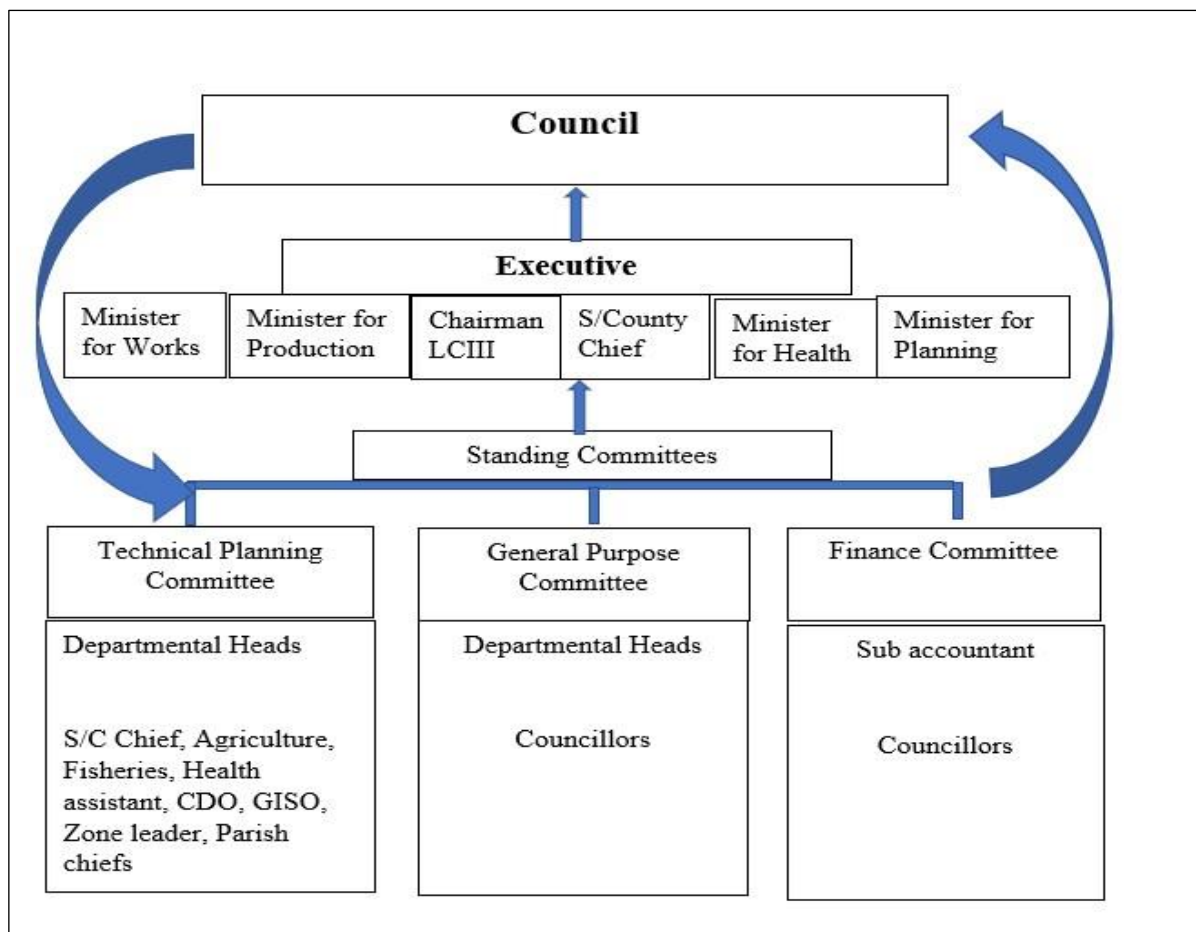


FIGURE. 6.1: KIMENYEDDE SUB-COUNTY LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAYOUT 1

6.2.1 Phase One

This phase covers the first circle which included the survey meeting, the first leadership development workshop, the first council meeting and the first reflection and replanning for phase II meeting.

I carried out a survey and Leadership Development Workshop (LDW) on the same day. This saved both my time and that of the other participants, though the session took most of the day with just a mid-morning and lunch time break.

6.2.1.1 Survey Meeting Session

The purpose of this part of the meeting was to introduce myself and the study to the participants and at the same time to invite participants to take part in the study. Like the Najja Sub-county case, the survey meeting was organised to also form a team, introduce action research, agree on an area for research and action, and outline goals among other activities. A total of 25 participants attended, composed of 11 councillors, 5 parish chiefs, 5 heads of departments, the Chairman, and the Sub-county Chief, and 2 district councillors. During this meeting, I made a presentation on my research topic, explained the research questions and the research objectives. I explained the importance and purpose of the study, how PAR works and how it can help to collectively understand and analyse the challenges of putting decentralisation into practice. I indicated that the outcome of this study was likely to improve their own political performance, ultimately improve service delivery and LED in their constituencies. After several questions from members in the meeting, the time came for the Chief and Chairman to address us. In his remarks, the Sub-county Chief, who chaired the meeting, requested:

If it is the wish of everyone, I would like to request that, my fellow technical staff and I, make a writeup in line with the research questions. We are facing a lot of challenges as administrative staff. I think, this could give us an opportunity to share with the rest of you what we think about decentralisation as a policy. We can present during the subsequent leadership development workshops or reflection sessions.

The request was accepted by the participants and this would be included in the LDW program for phase two. When the Chairman LCIII was given a chance to address us before mid-morning break, he made the following points:

Though politicians represent the people, we have received minimum opportunity, yet we are key stakeholders for the success of the decentralisation policy. This study could give us a chance to talk and document our problems and would possibly suggest solutions. The moment you sideline us as it has been the case, you miss out on our influence on the effective implementation of the policy. This is because we harness community participation in decentralisation initiatives, and we could demand for accountability from technocrats and “big” politicians.

He went ahead to explain that there was a big problem with the induction of political leaders on their roles, duty, and responsibilities upon assuming office. This was because the time spent on training them, and the quality of that training seem to put local leaders at a deliberate disadvantage. According to him, this was intended and enabled other people to benefit from the councillor’s lack of skills and awareness.

During mid-morning break, participants completed an evaluation survey form, to let me know their thoughts about the meeting and the study project.

Survey question	Respondent one	Respondent two	Respondent three
How successful has the survey meeting stimulated your thinking about empowerment in decentralisation policy and practice	I do not think there is anyone out there interested in seeing us equipped to do our work, it is all about failing and blame us for everything	It has stimulated me because before this meeting, I had not thought about empowerment as possibly a deliberate intention of the policy	It has awakened my thinking because I have been able to realise that empowerment cannot come to an individual in our circumstances, we need to work as a team to attain it
How successful has the survey meeting been in stimulating your thinking about Local Economic Development	It has stimulated me because I did not think that LED was greatly our responsibilities until today because apparently it is managed by parallel structures like that of NAADS, OWC etc	I have realised that we need to learn more about our responsibilities and make sure we participate in all government program without stopping at council meetings	I just decentralisation was somehow snatched away from us and we need to get ways of reclaiming because no one benefits amongst our people
How would you rate the contribution of decentralization in empowering you to participate in the local economic development & leadership in general?	I am yet to understand the word empowerment otherwise what I experience as a leader is being hated by my own people when they expect much from me and yet I can offer very little	We matter a lot during the election period but after that they forget about us and our people. We need to stand and demand for what the policy offer. But this can come after understanding what decentralisation all is about	We have no control because the central government works directly with the technical staff and we cannot ask for accountability from them.
How do you rate the relevance of PAR to your leadership skills & empowerment?	I think this is going to give us an opportunity to do research on what we have been doing and hope to educate ourselves and improve our leadership skills	To me this is a new idea. What we have used to is researchers coming and ask us questions and possibly make a report about us. We are respected in this study and we hope to learn much more.	I am excited about this new approach to research. We are fed up with people who come here and ask us questions of their interest and then go without us know what happen thereafter.
Would you like to participate in this study	I cannot miss this opportunity to learn and improve my skills. I just need to find time not to miss any session.	This is a one-time opportunity every one of us must take. We need to find out what went wrong	I am part of the research project and certainly we shall be different after learning from those who know.
Would you recommend other persons to join in this study?	All leaders need to be in attendance because we need to find a solution to some of the challenges, we face in leadership	Unfortunately, non-leaders are not part of us this would give them the chance to know the challenges we go through to deliver leadership	We need even those people from central government or from higher local government to be with us in this study because they could possibly answer some the questions this study wants to answer. The two district councillors are not enough.

TABLE 3 1 OVERVIEW OF KIMENYEDDE SUB-COUNTY PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION SURVEY MEETING 1

All 24 members who attended the morning session agreed to participate in the study. However, of these three dropped out and chose to attend only the council meetings without giving reasons.

Action, Reflection and Replanning Activities at Kimenyedde Sub-county

Action



Council Meeting

Reflection



Group Discussion



Replanning



Leadership Development Workshop

FIGURE 6.2: ACTION, REFLECTION AND PLANNING ACTIVITIES AT KIMENYEDDE SUB-COUNTY1

6.2.1.2 Leadership Development Workshop (Planning) Session

This LDW was a planning session for the field research and the forthcoming council meeting. The session gave members an opportunity to say what they thought about decentralisation and its related policies.

PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ABOUT THE POLICY

This session was first addressed by the chairman who was very keen to air his issues. He narrated how decentralisation was a promising policy because of the power it had given to them but that, over time, central government had started to gradually take back this same power. He emphasized that it is now common knowledge that decentralisation is failing, and it had failed to serve the people. He emphasised that this is because central government gave power with one hand and took it away with the other. He gave the following example:

We recommend people for appointment as managers/administrators of our Local Government managed institutions e.g., health centres at our local government level. But when we try to influence the termination of their engagement when they fail to perform, we face a resistance. In many cases, we successfully go through a long legal process, but because of political patronage the higher local and central government officials come up and stop the process.

He further explained that in such a case the leaders and the wider community lost interest in the leadership and the leaders were no longer accountable to the people. There was a need to have a clear way of terminating contracts of those who fail to serve. He gave an example of when the council summoned the leader of Nakifuma health centre because of continued complaints about the poor services at that health centre.

When we tried to reprimand him, we realised that the person who proposed his name to the council for appointment had his own interests. He is more connected to powerful people in central government, and he is more powerful than the council. This government official is one where the health official pays his allegiance, and in this case, we are rendered powerless.

The Sub-County Chief presented his concerns from his experience working with decentralisation. The Chief was passionate when he criticised the promise that decentralisation would empower leaders, speed up development and improve quality of life of the people through good governance and participatory leadership. “Decentralisation process stalled”, he explained that there are inadequate staffing levels and dwindling local revenues among other

problems. Central government has failed to find a solution to that. Instead, government has continued to create more districts and lower local government units in the name of bringing services closer to the people. He asserted:

I have always complained why our local government is not allowed to collect taxes in some areas of what would be our local tax jurisdiction. The reason given for the refusal is that the amount collectable has gone beyond the threshold amount that the law permits us to collect! And yet, it is our local government that has invested in developing that taxable entity.

He further gave an example of a taxi park in Nakifuma, which was developed and taxed by the Sub-county government. As soon as the tax collected hit the permitted limit, the district government took over and now the district takes 35% and the sub-county only receives 65%. He argued that this policy arrangement interfered with the Sub-county's enthusiasm to develop taxable entities and deprived it of income and development.

Another participant talked about the study and how decentralisation had failed. He expressed his happiness to be discussing the policy as he had been working with it for some time now. He asserted that the policy started well when there were councils of about 9 leaders at the village level but that now the council was in the control of one person, the Chairperson. This had occurred after the unexplained failure of the central government to organise the re-election and renewal of LC1 councils which had continued for a period of 17 years rendering the existing councils illegitimate. According to the participant, this situation had led to the disempowerment of the community and failure to manage their affairs, resulting in food, health education and water insecurity, which had led to deaths. He asserted that:

This situation further disempowered the community to demand for their rights because the closest government to the community was not functional for a very long time. This could be partly the reasons many parts of the country are today advocating for change from decentralisation to federalism.

He however, he hoped that now that village councils have been elected, there might be more progress made towards the earlier goals for decentralisation.

One participant, a district councillor, who had kept nodding her head in agreement narrated her disappointment with the policy. She said:

For me, I no longer call the policy "decentralisation" but "recentralisation" this is because, the policy is just in words but not in practice. The most important activity

we do at the district is passing the annual budget, but after that, you can never get to know what happens. There is hardly any political space or mechanism for us to follow the progress of the budget executions.

She said that it was at the end of the financial year when everyone realised that very little in the budget plan had been implemented. She also pointed to the continued bickering between the Residence District Commissioner (RDC) and the Chairman because of their personal political ambitions. She blamed this on the President, who appoint RDCs who had been defeated in an election to oversee the leader that had defeated them. It is this kind of relationship that the CAO, who coordinated the district work, would always exploit to abuse the system.

The second district councillor commended the study for giving participants a chance to study and re-examine the policy and check our individual performances and that of government. The councillor pointed out that central government was willing to give power and responsibilities in some areas of governance like planning, elections and so on, but there was one area that the central government had failed to transfer full power and that was finance. He read directly from the Local Government Act:

Section 82 article 2 says that no money shall be withdrawn from the general fund account or any other account of the district unless the withdrawal has been approved by the auditor general or his representative. Both officials are central government workers from the capital Kampala!

He gave an account of a district council meeting when one of the honourable councillors from one of the sub-counties raised an emergency that required a reallocation of money. The CAO informed the council that it had no mandate to do so unless someone from the central government was convinced of the need for this reallocation to be allowed. He reiterated:

Imagine, a person who does not know the emergency of the matter at hand is to decide the fate of the people and causing unnecessary delays. This practice takes us back to the time when we had no decentralisation, when the decisions that affected us were taken at the central level.

A councillor for disabilities pointed out his fears regarding poor performance of representatives of people with disabilities at local councils right from LCI.

This poor performance is partly because they do not know what they are supposed to be doing. At times, the leaders keep them at the periphery and not involved in

government activities. Not until we involve them is when the special interest groups that decentralisation provide for will be of any use.

After most of the participants had spoken, we agreed that after the-then pending council meeting we would meet for the reflection and re-planning workshop in a week's time. We agreed that since we were all researchers, we needed to take some notes during all sessions if we were to keep track of the progress of the study. We further agreed that afternoon meetings were appropriate because they take place after participants have lunch at their own homes and that participants then do not have to incur any costs.

The two sessions also reunited me with my old friends and introduced me to new ones, creating space for trust to be developed. Therefore, "the research process becomes demystified creating further space for further trust to be developed" MacDonald (2012, p. 40), and participants freely contributed their knowledge to this study as required by PAR. By this time, we were prepared for a research journey together, involving learning, action, reflection on our actions, and replanning accordingly.

6.2.1.3 Kimenyedde Council Meeting

The council meeting for the Thursday was announced on the Monday that week, giving attendees plenty of notice and the chief could also confirm that money was available to pay the councillor's sitting allowances. They also admitted that they were running late for the new financial year first meeting and therefore could not give the required one-week notice. As a result, I had a clash of dates and I had to make adjustment with Najja sub-county programs as the day was coinciding with a meeting in Kimenyedde, yet I had no control over Kimenyedde council meeting.

On the date of the meeting, I arrived on time and was able to read through the order paper before the meeting. I witnessed members entering the Chairman's office to greet him and make some informal reports on issues concerning areas they represent. From the Chairman's office members entered the office of the Sub-county Chief and each one was handed papers which I later learnt was the order paper.

After going through the formalities of opening of the council meeting session, the Clerk to council presented the order paper to the council. The main item as a matter of procedure was the chairman' address. However, before the address the Speaker to the council opened the meeting by welcoming the members to the new financial year and welcoming me as follows:

Members welcome to the new financial year, and I want to thank you for the leadership you provide to our people. I want to introduce Mr. Lubuulwa to this council. He is a son of this sub-county in Kiwafu parish. He is here for a study as many of you know. He requested for his attendance through the CAO, and he has been allowed by us to attend and take records of our discussions for study purposes. I wish you good deliberations and please waste less time during this meeting.

The speaker invited the Chairman to give the address, which he started by remarking on the challenge of leadership of the people in what he referred to as contemporary Uganda (Uganda ya leero). He welcomed honourable members to the meeting. He apologised for not having written a formal report on the performance of his government. He said:

I am sorry I have not formal reports, but I had a briefing with ministers on most of the performances of the different ministries for the previous year and particularly the last quarter. My government through the different ministries tried as much as it could to deliver the promises that were laid out in our budget amidst several challenges.

Without elaborating on why he did not provide the reports, the chairman went on to explain his understanding of the common citizens' experience. He said that when he was growing up, when leaders at district and sub-county level, came to visit the communities, members of communities including school children and their parents used to line up to attend and take orders from the leaders to do *bulungibwansi*²⁸, planting food and cash crops. He then claimed that:

Today, when we go as leaders to meet the communities, no one respectively come to listen. People especially the youth want us to go to where they are playing their games or gambling. They just utter out whatever comes on their mind or ask for some money. This is possibly because they have lost interest and think that we are in leadership to benefit and enrich ourselves.

He further asserted that:

I want to say that monetarizing and politicising of every activity, has made leadership very difficult. For that matter, mobilization of masses for development programs has been very challenging in the previous financial year.

He went on to describe what his government had managed to do and where it had failed. He thanked members for their work and encouraged them to get involved in activities that

²⁸ A practice of communal work like community roads maintenance and cleaning sources of water points.

enhanced learning and improved leadership performance. Among many challenges, the Chairman chose to emphasise one of the policy requirements:

... my government is not allowed to go into a contract with anybody to do government work above a certain contract amount of money. It frustrates me when I have contractors who are willing to do the same work at a lower cost to save money for other needs. This contradicts the power and responsibilities that decentralisation is said to give us.

The other challenges the Chairman talked about related to the lack of clear procedures through which councillors can monitor government projects and programs in their areas. He said that this, coupled with insufficient information and lack of confidence caused by insufficient training on the side of the councillors, made it worse. An example he gave was a water project in Bukasa parish, with technical advice that the water pump should operate for two days to ascertain the site's capacity to sustain water supply before proceeding with the project. Unfortunately, he said, the pumps were switched off just after one hour and when the area councillor asked why, he was told that the person who contracted the workers had ordered them to stop pumping. When the project was finally completed, it was realised too late that the site did not have enough water. He advised that:

... technical staff can help us in paperwork but when it comes to deciding who should do the job, we should participate prominently. We are responsible for the development in our areas, we must therefore be part of the implementing team, so that we can monitor with authority.

Concerning the Education Department, the Chairman reported about the on-going classroom construction at Ndwaddemutwe primary school. He, however, informed the meeting about the recent communication that stated that this financial year the educational fund would no longer devolve to the sub-county level but would stop at the district level. He wondered what would happen with the construction and the work plan which was included in the 5-year development plan and which had been made through a bottom-up planning process. He exclaimed that:

Our construction plan is now in jeopardy without any proper explanation to us. The district is at liberty to invest the money anywhere in the district without necessarily considering our programs even if they are expected to be in the district plan.

On the budget, the chairman reported under-performance. He blamed this on the fact that tax collection had been taken over by the central and district governments without warning; and on

the new arrangement where collected taxes had to first be remitted to the central government before trickling back to local government at times after a long delay. He said:

...even then, we receive the money late and so, never utilised it but returned to the consolidated fund because we fail to absorb it in that limited time. When such money is “taken back”, the next quarter they release only what is for that quarter without considering what was taken back in the previous quarter, it is typical drama!

The Chairman went on to elaborate on the people’s concern and zeal to hold all governments accountable and taking responsibilities as a citizenry. He urged that people no longer care for collective and community work. The responsibility of paying a tax, for example, is long dead, and he claimed people blatantly refuse to pay. He further stated that to invite the ordinary people to a meeting to discuss the challenges leadership face would immediately be followed by an inquiry about how much money in the form of sitting allowances was being offered for them to attend.

Currently all governance issues are communicated to the communities during funeral ceremonies which are not as formal, and by the way, attended by “Tom, Dick and Harry” from all over the country. People do not take that kind of communication in such a forum seriously because you seem to be superimposing yourself on someone’s funeral.

The chairman went on to explain what his government had been able to accomplish, which included repairing five boreholes, repairing two feeder roads, and constructing two classrooms through LGDP for the whole financial year. He warned about the continued withdrawal of lower local government responsibilities back to the district and central government and wondered what it all meant.

In reaction to his presentation, honourable councillors did not seem to have much to debate. However, a councillor stood up to enquire:

Why a pit latrine²⁹ at Kisoga primary school has not been repaired since I reported last year! School children have resorted to using school neighbours’ pit latrines and bushes around the school. Neighbours are now guarding the latrines with canes, chasing the children away in fear that they will fill them up. Some of these latrines are dangerous to the children as they are just covered with rotting pieces of wood.

In his reply the chairman said:

²⁹ Also known as pit toilet is a toilet that collects human faeces in a hole in the ground.

That case was forwarded as an emergency to the district because we did not have finances for a new pit latrine. Right now, we are waiting for the district to do something about it, what we can do is to wait for now.

Another councillor raised concerns about the unexplained death of goats and sheep in the area. He claimed to have reported these deaths to the veterinary officer for an assessment that did not occur and feared that the disease might spread more widely. “We need to sensitise our people about it by explaining the cause of this epidemic”. He further explained the desperate options taken by the local people in the absence of the government services.

Up to now we have not received the veterinary officer to assess the situation. My people have now resorted to desperate measures thinking that it is witchcraft. Most of them have invited witch doctors³⁰ to handle the “bad spirit” that is killing the animals. These witch doctors are very costly because they do not only take money but even animals themselves.

The Minister for Production in his reaction said that he had never received any report concerning this incident. He challenged the councillor to inform the Council of the person he had reported it to. To this, the concerned councillor said that he gave a verbal communication to the person he found in the office of the Sub-county Chief who noted it down.

Another male councillor asked for an explanation why a mother had died three months ago while giving birth at the hands of an unregistered traditional birth attendant (TBA) in Girinya even though she had attended her antenatal clinic at Kimenyedde Health Centre II.

The chairman, who seemed to have been aware of this fatal occurrence, tried to explain to the meeting what he thought could have happened. He said that being night-time, there was no ready transport for the mother to travel to the clinic:

This happened at night, possibly because of proximity to the TBA she could not travel to the clinic which by that time would most likely be closed. Rumours has it that, the only midwife we have is very unfriendly to women giving birth. The midwife has complained about lack of facilities and the most pronounced problem is lack of lighting system at night. But I hear that there are investigations going on about this could-be avoided loss of life.

Several other discussions took place before the meeting was adjourned, and then every councillor scrambled to enter the Sub-county Chief’s office to receive their sitting allowances.

³⁰ A magician usually among tribal people with powers of healing, divination, and protection against the magic of others.

My general observation at the meeting was that the councillors had no documents to refer to and no female councillors reacted to any of the issues raised. The male councillors who were debating were mostly Muslims who appeared to be financially better off even though they were not the majority in the council. In general, there was a low rate of participation in the meeting, and this seemed to reflect a low level of participation in the general management of development in the Subcounty. This was shown by the surprises at the grim news presented by the Chairman on the previous year's performance.

6.2.1.4 Reflection/ Replanning

This session reflected on the progress of the study and how the council meeting was conducted, assessing its success by the participants. The replanning session also gave participants an opportunity to discuss government programs that enhance LED and the possible available empowering practices and recommendations. We looked for a way forward and how best to prepare for and conduct ourselves at the next council meeting. But as earlier mentioned, the messiness that comes with PAR, co-researchers easily meandered from the questions set and brought in what they had on their minds. Though this helps in the democratization of the knowledge and changes power relations in terms of who holds knowledge between the researcher and participants, it also made it challenging to direct and steer the research process itself.

6.2.1.5 Reflection Session

As earlier mentioned, this was a session to reflect on what had worked well and what had not at the previous Action (Council meeting) to gain any relevant insights into the process. This reflection was partly guided by the program made by the participants and the focus group interview schedule previously made by the researcher.

At the start of the reflection, the Sub-county Chief commented on the progress of the study. He commended that the study had progressed well and educated participants about their responsibilities. He was of the view that this could reduce conflicts caused by councillors interfering with the work of the technical staff. He considered that this was caused by councillors not knowing their limits, which resulted in delays and affected service delivery. The Chief admitted that there had never been an opportunity to discuss government policy in an open discussion in a group of political and administrative leaders. He said,

This study has given us chance to openly discuss the challenges we face in leadership and find solutions as a government. We as technical staff, do not have a platform to discuss the policy and its related practices, this to us is a no-go area, we only execute what is given to us. Remember, during the council meeting we are

barred by law from discussing unless called upon to answer technical queries. So far so good for this study.

Another participant also admitted that there are many councillors who had never studied any part of the Local government Act for all the years they have been leaders, yet it is the guiding book. He was however quick to admit further that even those who can have access to the Act can fail to interpret it correctly. He appreciated the study and said:

During this study we have been helped by the technical staff and some councillors who can. We have been able to realise that we can be better than what we are now. We need more study of the same and the Rules of Procedure booklet.

Another participant reflected on the previous meeting by pointing out that like most council meetings, there was clear indication that people are lacking in ways of conducting meetings. He argued that there is therefore a need for more learning sessions outside the formal council meetings. He said:

Remember, because of lack of money to facilitate council meetings we meet a few times a year. In some sub-counties, they have situations where seven months pass without a council meeting and that means having only two meetings a year. This gives far less exposure and experience to the councillors. I hope this study will cause a positive change because all of us who are experiencing the challenges are here learning. I wish we can have the same thing taking place in the neighbouring sub counties.

Another councillor reflected on the empowering mechanisms within the practice of decentralisation leadership. He gave an example of issuing and receiving the order paper without any related documents, making it difficult for council members to deliberate during a council meeting:

When there is an audit query caused by say technical staff doing a job different from what is in the work plan, councillors have no knowledge about it. This is because we never get a copy of the approved budget for monitoring. When the auditors come, we can never know the outcome of their visits because they only work with the technical staff. This is seen when we realise that there was a change in what was planned, when you complain about it, you are told that the budget you know was just a draft, but the final one is different!

I wanted to know why female councillors did not say anything during the council even when there were issues which seemed to be directly affecting the mothers in the sub-county. In reaction to my question, a participant clarified by first asking if I had seen many of the women

speak even in the on-going meeting. The participant supposed that they are timid and are not capable of speaking amongst men. He claimed further that:

Sometimes, they explain their issues after the meeting to fellow women or to those men they can confide in. The female youth councillor used to speak up before she got married. Right now, we do not know what happened, she changed for the worse.

Currently, the youth female councillor was nervously giggling in acceptance of the facts, raising a broader cultural issue along with other culturally established forms of difference. Yet we know that women take one third or more of the council membership - without considering other special interest groups. This also raised the typical challenge in action research where researchers must engage with ways of mitigating the typical silences of women and young people, creating the tension as to whose local voices are foregrounded in the research. The research however, provided the opportunity for such minority groups to voice their concerns as the study progressed.

Concluding on the success of meetings, a participant noted:

When councillors are not provided with a copy of the budget for example, it is difficult when councillors are not aware of how the previous budget was executed to inform the formation of the new plan. In our case here at Kimenyedde, it was only the executive committee that did some monitoring but there is no written report in that respect either.

This session successfully reflected on the previous meeting, and the progress of the study with a few recommended changes in areas of documents to study. There were recommendations for more learning sessions to improve members' performance during council meetings.

6.2.2. Phase Two

6.2.2.1 Replanning Session

Having had the findings from the previous action fed back to participants and reflected on them, more discussion occurred during this re-planning session on the success and failures of the policy and to draw up plans on how to improve councillors' performance in the council meetings and their general leadership. The session further replanned how to best create more knowledge and simultaneously create and mobilise for better actions during the council meetings.

THE SUB-COUNTY CHIEF'S PRESENTATION

The Sub-county Chief was given the opportunity to present a writeup of his views, which he had promised during the previous LDW. He gave a brief on the different areas of

decentralisation practices in the Sub-county. This included the budget process and taxation arrangements and he explained that when they plan and send their plans to higher level governments, they have no policy mechanisms for follow up, and must await the outcome. He added that the collection of taxes has been interfered with by central government, putting local governments to a disadvantage.

We do not have a proper channel or office through which we can demand to know what happens with our proposals and this in a way make us disempowered. Budgeting is done and passed but that must be supported by the tax collections. For sure, we have good sources of taxes like the tax from the mobile phone masts in our area of jurisdictions and the building plan fees, these would give us good money for great development project. To our disappointment, all these taxes are now collected by the central government. Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) collects all the taxes from such telecommunication companies, and we are left with nothing, yet we have a budget to finance.

The Sub-county Chief went on to explain that previously, the Sub-county government used to raise revenue from a tax on Land Registration Titles within the Sub-county, which would generate 25,000 shillings each. However, the central government decided to collect that tax without proper explanation and had not provided any alternative revenues to local government to finance their budgets. He explained further that:

Small scale fishing was previously taxed by the local government but soon the government took over all collection of the tax and nothing is given to the local governments. Besides, we do not have a forum for the local government leaders to address their concern. In any case, everything is referred to the president.

He talked about the new practice that the central government had recently introduced: a system to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in local government called Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS). According to him, this system had instead made it more difficult to deliver services. He explained that the system was now an excuse to delay the release of finances and cited persistent network failures. He blamed the failure of such new systems on the lack of involvement of local stakeholders during its formulation and introduction. He said:

What makes such new systems a problem to performance, is that local stake holders are not involved in the design and or at least discussions prior to the introduction of new systems. At some point councillors ask with frustration who that person called “network” is, who is failing the release of finances and paralyse the entire system.

He advised that decentralisation should keep training local leaders about the new and important systems so that they understood them. A lack of training was one of the reasons why most of the councillors completed their 5-year terms of office without fully understanding the system in which they are expected to serve their voters. And this had resulted in a loss of interest and confidence in the policy. For that reason, most of the leaders thought that the policy should be abolished even though they originally voted for it.

The Sub-county Chief also explained how the money that is given to run their responsibilities is very little, giving an example of parish chiefs who receive 20.000 per month as facilitation to collect tax revenue and other responsibilities. According to him, this money was not enough as most of the parishes in Kimenyedde are composed of 8 to 10 village units. Another example given was the councillor for the youth to the sub-county, who represented the whole Sub-county but received only 50.000 shillings. Moreover, this money is received only when there is a council sitting, which comes 3 times a year at most. He further expressed his view that local governments should be given full power to manage their finances and that the restrictions that limited the sub-county government to enter into contract agreement exceeding 1 million shillings be removed. He said that this restriction could be removed because the Sub-county government had paid technically qualified people who could determine what people needed and could manage projects beyond a million shillings, and that such autonomy was the essence of decentralisation.

The Chief explained the need to have modern equipment in the health centres. He said that it was so frustrating for the health centre and political leaders when medicines and medical equipment were supplied on a quarterly basis and at the same time in very little quantities. In most cases, the supply lasted for only 1 month. He also questioned what happened when patients were turned away for the next 2 months:

Workers are never enough in our local government. For example, we have a parish in Kimenyedde without a parish chief for now 5 years. Local leaders should be able to hire such people instead of waiting for the district while work is not going on well. We the workers of government and the political leaders need to make the needs assessments not someone from the district or central government.

The Chief advised his political counterparts that they should use the policy to elect good leaders with the capacity to learn and lead if decentralisation policy was to deliver goods and services to the communities. He challenged the entire leadership to have plans and budgets passed and sent in time so that there would be no excuses for the delayed release of funds. He finally advised

the executive committees to make sure that there was transparency in their work so that the alleged corruption could be reduced.

A participant talked about the disempowering and frustration leaders experienced due to laws that limited local governments from diverting funds to finance emergencies.

The process of relocating finances is so long and, in many cases failed by the CAO for his own reasons. I suggest that in case of an emergency, a council's or executive's decision should take precedence to avoid undermining decentralisation. The rest can be formalised later through audit after an emergency has been handled.

Another participant talked about LED and grants from central government. Concerning LED, he said that while they are given the chance to identify development projects, instead, central government invested in something else. Regarding government grants he said:

I suggest that central government reduces conditional grants and invest more in unconditional grants. This is because, it gives us a chance to think for our areas, we are given very little to facilitate our work, our budget needs to be increased. There is no value for money in OWC when people are supplied with maize seeds and when they harvest maize there is no market. I suggest central government can find market in the international market, why not?

Another participant made known his concerns about the election process and the money politics involved. He said that candidates right from the President to members of parliament give a lot of money to voters during the campaign and this triggers the same behaviour in local government elections.

Buying of votes promotes corruption and political patronage, and with this, representative democracy loses meaning. We should have our local government elections in a different electoral season from that of central government to avoid the spill over. Due to vote buying there is a lot of corruption and so many local leaders are languishing in prisons for corruption. Leadership has lost focus for service delivery for personal gain!

One district councillor participant brought in health sector concerns and narrated her frustration when she and the district team visited Nakifuma Health Centre for monitoring. She said that they found that there was one register for all patients' records: name, their health problem, age, and a lot more information. The team thought that such information would be used to plan for what kind drugs and equipment and in what amount should be supplied at the health centre by the national medical stores. She said:

To our surprise however, we found that supplies of basic medicine run out of stock within a week or two, yet supplies are on a quarterly basis. Surprisingly, medicines that are in much supply are not required at the health centre and therefore not used! Patients are turned away or just given the prescriptions and told to go and buy from private medical stores. Soon you watch from television when unused and expired drugs are being destroyed, an exercise that costs a lot of government money.

When the 2nd District Councillor was given his chance, he quoted the previous law which had given the district service commission the power to appoint and supervise the district CAO. He claimed that today the CAO is appointed by the Central government for fear that local government would be in control to the disadvantage of the central government. He said:

Under such circumstances you cannot boast of bottom-up planning. Today, most CAOs are at loggerheads with the political leaders at the district level. This is because there are always disagreements between the two parties over priority setting. The CAO should be appointed and terminated by DSC though supervised in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government.

The CAO is aware that we have no control over him, even when we try to use the law to influence his transfer, the procedure is so long that in many cases we dare not trying. Taking the CAO back into public service requires a lot of legal manoeuvres where in many cases, he wins and compensated with a lot of money that must be costed to the district account.

The Chief re-echoed the challenge that every project that involves bigger sums of money is never given to the Sub-county to manage yet they have all the necessary departments with qualified personnel just as they do at the central government.

The above amused the Chairman, who told us of his frustration with the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) program, which he said was good at the start but then went off the rails. His ordeal started when he tried to follow up the program to the national level. He did this because the President has always said that every sub-county gets 84 million shillings every year. He contacted the honourable councillor who was at the same time chairperson for Farm Forum³¹ in this sub-county. He asked for the accountability and to his shock and he found out the following: Out of the 84 million, the 32,860 people who resided in Kimenyedde sub-county at the time received only 31,860,000 shillings in the form of farming inputs and implements. The rest of the money was paid to only three NAADS workers as their remuneration for the year. He went to meet the regional NAADS coordinator after learning that the sub-county was receiving one to two cows a year under NAADS programme, yet the veterinary officer who was

³¹ Organisation for local farmers at the district level.

employed gets a salary package of over 9 million shillings a year. The main disappointment according to the Chairman was that, whenever a cow was sick, the NAADS-employed veterinary officer would only advise that the cow was sick and referred the case to the poorly remunerated sub-county veterinary officer for proper examination and treatment. So, he advised that the hiring of a NAADS veterinary officer when at the same time the Sub-county had a government-paid veterinary officer was a duplication of positions. He suggested that money spent on the NAADS veterinary officer be used to buy more cows or support those who receive the cows to run their projects. This was how he was advised by the regional coordinator:

The regional coordinator replied in clear terms that, the sub-county has the political power to terminate NAADS veterinary doctor but not to transfer funds. The money you want to save will remain with the central government because that is what NAADS policy stipulates. Anyway, that is how decentralisation has gradually lost its meaning to us the leaders and the people we represent.

Another participant claimed that he was interrupted with his encounter with the NAADS officials who asked him to make an illegal contribution of 160,000 Shillings to be given piglets for farming. He did not have the money and missed out. He said:

Many people are asked for a bribe to access these projects and when they do not have the money they miss out. How then can OWC/NAADS improve our lives? Remember pigs feed on the same foodstuff as humans, so, if there is no proper planning and food ran out many of us sell them off.

As the session was close to the end, suggestions were made on items that needed to be given to council members prior to the next council meeting. We all agreed on the items, and the reason was to see the effect this would have on the performance of members during the meeting. The Chairman gave a closing statement based on his long experience as a chairman:

When this very government come to power in 1986, came with their system of Resistance Councils (RC) from the bush war and they imposed it on us without any choice. Because of trust for the bush-war fighters, citizens participated in the RC system. Immediately after, central government started an aggressive campaign for decentralisation even when they knew that many people were interested in the federal system of governance. This was later proved when a bigger percentage asked for federal system at regional level than decentralisation at the district level in the Odoki Constitution³² review report.

The Chairman wondered how they can carry out their daily duties when they are not permitted by law to handle a dispute involving US\$2 million, or more. He reminded the meeting that one

³² A constitution review report by the constitution review commission headed by Chief Justice of Uganda Benjamin Josses Odoki in 1995

cow is valued at USh2 million and more, and even some pigs are valued at more than USh2 million let alone the highly valued land transactions. These are daily transaction occurrences where local leaders are expected to participate and help the community to thrive and progress.

The Chairman explained that this fails the essence of decentralisation when leaders cannot handle these issues that affect people on their everyday life, yet they are issues of development. He further explained that regarding the village council councils which were recently elected, the central government had already passed orders on what they could and could not do. He claimed central government was already limiting their power and responsibilities.

The session ended with raised awareness of the theoretical divisions between politics, administration, and the structures responsible for LED programs. It signalled a problem with integration between the financial, administrative, technical, and political arms at the different levels of government. The session also signalled a fear of what might happen if decentralisation were permitted to work legitimately and if more people had more local power. Further, it highlighted how bureaucratic control was able to prevent empowerment when rules stymied simple and sensible solutions.

6.2.2. 2 Action and observation

The purpose of this council meeting was to discuss the government's performance of the previous quarter and to tackle some of the unresolved issues and projects. Different departments were expected to present their reports to the different ministers if necessary. However, in Kimenyedde, the Chairman gives a brief on every departments' performance and the relevant minister is expected to answer questions on any details the Chairman is unable to handle. In some cases, the Sub-county Chief can be summoned to explain very technical matters.

Going through the meeting's formalities was smooth on the surface but I sensed significant tension underneath that I was yet to know the reasons for. When I accessed the order paper, I saw there was an item requiring the chief to give a technical explanation concerning a budget query. This item was the result of the circulation of reports from some departments prior to the start of the meeting. After the anthems, the prayer and adopting the order paper, the Clerk to council read the minutes in Luganda and I observed that each of the councillors also had a copy that had been translated in Luganda. I was able to see that some of the members had marked up the minutes of the previous meeting as well as some of the reports they had been circulated.

The Chairman's presentation was the next agenda item, and he made the following statement:

Honourable members, on the budget performance in the last quarter, we did less on what we had planned. There was late release of money on most programs and the season was preoccupied with politics for LC I elections. There was a lot of changes in our budget that the council passed, and we have no opportunity to call you back for an explanation. It is my prayer that the Chief can thoroughly explain these changes to this council. We were able to receive most of the reports from the committees and distributed to you though a little late. Please peruse through so that you may ask questions as the meeting proceeds.

In his report, the Chairman reported that on issues of development, a few projects were implemented through the different departments. However, he said that very little was done in areas of economic development in relations to OWC, NAADS and other related central government initiatives. According to him this was due to the sidelining of local government structures when it came to these programs. He pointed out that OWC was a program financed heavily by the central government that was expected to generate local economic development as it was being managed by the president's brother, a retired military general, and supervised by military men up to the district local government levels all over the country. This, according to the Chairman, had disempowered local governments since such people got their orders from elsewhere. He said that therefore the meeting should not expect him to confidently answer questions about local development initiatives. On another government initiative, he said:

We have not received any money for youth livelihood initiative since the first group received years back. This is because the group failed to pay back money received and as leaders we do not know why. However, we are aware that no other group of youth can access these funds before the first group can pay back.

The Chairman explained the failure to pay by such groups to a poor choice of groups and to them mistaking the money for political donations. He said that the choice of which groups benefit was done by people outside the local government system and that it was a central government weakness at times to try to please every voter and to end up pleasing no one.

Regarding education, the Chairman reported that the Sub-county had three secondary schools under Universal Secondary Education (USE) and eight primary schools under Universal Primary Education (UPE). All reports indicated that there the quality of education in these schools was poor. The difficulty, according to his report, was partly due to the low involvement of local leaders. He gave an example that when a headmaster asked for a recruitment of a teacher he needed; the government sent the teacher they had available. In this case, the headmaster kept quiet and accepted the government's decision because they had no power to recruit a teacher of their choice. His general comment on UPE and USE programs was as follows:

These were good government programmes but the power to manage these teachers who participate in the program was taken back to the centre. This is because local government and headteachers of these schools have no say on the teachers' pay and performance. The central government just deposit teachers' salary year in year out without any consultation with the local governments where the schools are located.

The Chairman continued with his report and I later learned that his reports were almost always on the same issues of concern.

The next item on the agenda saw the Sub-county Chief invited to give an explanation about the budget query. He started by explaining about tax collection in the Sub-county where he emphasised that if they were to finance their budget and work according to the budget wishes, all taxes within the Sub-county should be collected by this local government. He explained what he termed as 'unfortunate reality':

What we see is that big tax checks are paid to the central government or district and small ones are paid to us! How then do you expect this government to independently execute its budgets? And how do we support development of businesses when we fear that we shall lose out on the tax collections when they grow big and pay big taxes?

He further elaborated on a recent verbal communication from the CAO informing them that the central government is now planning to take over all tax collection powers from local governments. He explained that though he had not yet received formal communication, but usually when CAO communicated with him, be it verbal or written, it normally signalled a new change in the policy. The unfortunate thing about this change in policy was, he noted, that central government had not consulted with local governments. He added:

More recentralisation momentum started with Integrated Management Information System. This resulted into a situation where the district has money on its bank account but cannot directly access that money. The district will first inform officials in the central government begging for money say for council sitting. These are part of the reasons why on many occasions when councillors come for their meeting, they are informed that the money is not available for their allowances due to network failure.

To explain the poor budget performance, he provided a detailed explanation of the budget process. He said that when they drew up a budget it was based on the ideas collected from the council members and the different departments, which were then costed within the indicative figures³³ provided by the district CAO. After making the budget, they send it to the COA for crosschecking to ensure the budget accorded with the instructions. "At times we table the

³³ Financial figures limits provided to budget makers for guidance.

budget for the council approval before CAO providing backstopping³⁴ which advise us on the mistakes made in the budget by way of over or under estimations.” In many cases, there were more changes required due to different late advice from district officials. He gave examples:

For example, procurement department can advise that we quoted little money for such and such an item. In works and construction, the engineer at the time of making bill of quantities (BOQ) can advise that the money in the budget was not enough.

The budget therefore keeps changing and we cannot come back to you to let you know every other change. At this level it is between me and the CAO to coordinate these changes, that is why according to the structures, I represent the CAO, and to emphasise that, my title lately changed to Senior Assistant CAO. It is through those provisions that money was moved from construction of ten water boreholes to just three as advised by the CAO.

After the Chief's and Chairman's presentation, members were given the opportunity to deliberate on the issues. I observed a charged atmosphere at the meeting as members questioned the Chief about how they would monitor programs different from what they had passed in their budget. The Chief's advice was that:

The CAO represents central government which provide most of the money that finances our budgets. The district provides most of the technical staff like the district engineers. These are the people who advise the lower-level government budgets, and we cannot do otherwise.

One female councillor made what I later learnt was her maiden speech when she questioned the delay in the release of the money to buy a bicycle for the youth councillor to use for mobilisation of youth in the Sub-county. The meeting continued with a lot of enthusiasm mixed with frustration to the time of adjournment when, as usual, members lined up to get their allowances to spend on groceries for Christmas celebrations (as most members conversed about it).

6.2.2.3 Reflection

This reflection meeting was guided by semi-structured interview questions that had been agreed upon by participants at the previous meeting. During the session, participants were encouraged to talk about their feelings about the study project in terms of improving their participation in leadership.

³⁴ Resource use guidance to provide for special political missions that play important role in development and peace maintenance.

This session was attended by six councillors, one district councillor speaker, the Chairman, and the Sub-county Chief.

Observable Effect According to Participants

The success of the meeting was captured by the Speaker to the Council when he said:

For the first time I felt I was overwhelmed by the councillors' enthusiasm in knowing what was happening with the budget. Usually in the second quarter meeting councillors are interested in getting their allowances to secure money for Christmas spending. In most cases, their minds concentrate on knowing if they are going to get their full allowances instead of attending to the meeting. Providing reports and translating the minutes drew a lot of confidence in the councillors. Most of them thought that it was a privilege to have access to these documents not considering that it is their right. It was amazing to see women speaking up and trying to make sense of what happens to our budget decisions. It was greatly a success, and we can do better.

The Chairman whom I thought sounded a little political and appeared worked up, questioned the empowerment motive and their ability to participate in development. He wondered how local governments could participate in decision making when power is being swapped away, when other people than them decide where and how much to spend. He questioned the leadership at national level and how it has lost the moral authority to fight corruption based on nepotism. He complained:

How can we participate meaningfully in development when everyone that matters in this country has lost the moral authority to fight corruption right from the president? Imagine, the first lady is the education minister just after getting her bachelor's degree from the state university. The President's brother and wife oversee almost every important program in the country including OWC. We cannot have development when there is massive corruption with such impunity and where there is no respectful relationship between leaders at the different government levels.

The Chairman soon switched to criticizing the recently concluded LCI election. He said that the way the elections were conducted indicated that the central government was no longer interested in local governments and was making them irrelevant:

You can imagine after 17 years without election of these councils; elections are conducted where voters line up behind their candidate. This to me, seems to be a deliberate move by central government to make the electorate hate the exercise because it is causing unhealthy relationship among the people of the same community.

He further explained that using this method of voting, the winner and the losers get to know who did not vote for them and yet 17 years ago there was use of secret ballot paper method of voting. He wondered why there had been a change to a primitive method of voting with all its attendant problems 17 years later.

The Chairman's comment about elections caused a member to rise and give his suggestions to which most members agreed. He suggested that:

Chairmen should be elected by an electoral college, as the case with LCII and LC IV. This arrangement would reduce the amount of money being spent on campaign and political mobilisation in the entire sub-county. This can also give the poor an opportunity to compete for the sub-county chairmanship and leadership generally. Further, it reduces the power that the chairperson holds over the council, which he derives from the bigger constituency he must mobilise and converse for votes.

When I asked the Sub-county Chief about his understanding of the process of devolution of power in Uganda based on his 15 years of experience he said:

If decentralisation means continued devolution of power and responsibilities to lower-level governments, we have lost it. This is because there is deliberate recentralisation of the same with all kinds of excuses. There is no deliberate preparation of local leaders to take on more power, but there are deliberate policy changes to control power by the central government.

He explained that the final nail on decentralisation's 'coffin' was when the CAO's appointment was taken over by the central government and at the same time more power given to his office and those below him including the Senior Assistant CAOs. He argued that all taxes will soon be collected by the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), and this means that all local governments would have to sit and wait for the money to come from the central government along with instructions. He did say, however, that:

This kind of study, however, has greatly enlightened us, and would do a lot to empower the councillors, but it is against a very strong current deliberately swapping away power from local governments. I suspect that there is apparently little we can do in the short term to change the trend. Local politicians have an uphill task to sensitize communities through this kind of learning to have the numbers of informed and concerned community members needed to force those with power to relinquish it. I think this is a good start I suppose.

This session took a relatively short time to complete but it was agreed that in future, leadership development workshops should take place a few weeks before council meetings. We further agreed that the practice must continue because it provided an opportunity to learn and reflect

on the performance of leaders and policy practices, with the most important outcome of self-empowerment for a more united government.

6.3 Conclusion

Similarly, to Chapter Five, this chapter has presented qualitative data on how decentralisation is practiced and experienced in Kimenyedde Sub-county based on PAR discussions that included a leadership development workshop, observation of council meetings and in the group reflection. The data for both Chapters Five and Six will be discussed in the next chapter, which systematically evaluates the empowering journey that both communities experienced and sets out the critical findings of this research under specific themes.

Chapter Seven

Decentralisation in Uganda: Local Government Experience and Opportunity for Empowerment

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the dichotomy between the theoretical decentralisation as laid out in the official theoretical framework, and its practice as experienced by the grassroots politicians at the lower levels of government as found in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. This discussion addresses the objectives of the thesis, which seeks to critically analyse how decentralisation policy is theorised and, in the case of one country, Uganda, implemented. Also, this chapter gives evidence-based policy recommendations for the policy improvement, including for empowerment of local leaders and thus the communities. Further, the analysis is undertaken with the view that an empowered local government leadership can partly be achieved through building a council's ability to participate in the decision-making process. Good decisions backed by power and authority are the means to achieve improved services delivery and programmes for LED. This chapter identifies seven themes or challenges to empowering local leaders for LED. These themes have been generated from the analysis of the literature on decentralisation and the data obtained from the case studies in the previous two chapters. The three dominant, broad themes are linked to governance and are participation, accountability, and transparency. The four remaining themes are more specific and include integration, money politics and corruption, the financial system, and cultural orientation. While other themes can also be drawn out of the analysis, these are identified as being the most pertinent to the decentralisation process and, if the recommended changes were implemented, could further empower local leaders and their communities. The empowerment of local leaders should ultimately empower their communities since these local leaders live and work within them as elaborated in the methodology chapter.

The chapter is divided into two sections: section one analyses the decentralisation experience under the identified themes. It makes a comparison of the decentralisation ideals to its actual practice as perceived by the grassroots communities through their local leaders. Section two explores the empowering opportunities decentralisation can offer through community learning

to challenge actual practice and to bring the ideal more in line with the real as witnessed during PAR process.

7.2 The Local Government Experience

7.2.1 Participation Challenges in Policy Change and Practice

Participation is defined as “the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities” (Fox & Meyer, 1995, p. 20). These include the determination of service levels, budget priorities and the acceptability of physical construction projects. In Uganda, decentralisation is ideally based on the democratic principle of enabling active participation of the people at all local government levels in those matters that directly affect them. From this perspective people must be educated about their rights and obligations, including among others, what is involved in monitoring development interventions. Planning and budgeting therefore, must be participatory to ensure that local development programs reflect citizen input and priorities (MoLG, 2016). This theme discusses the challenge of local leaders’ participation in the leadership activities, including the planning, execution, and monitoring of government programs in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. It should be noted that although this research is particularly interested in the councillors and thus political decentralisation, the two other decentralisation concepts of administration and fiscal as practiced by the local government are also discussed.

Concerning participation in the budget process, which ideally brings together all stakeholders in a local government, this study found that local governments of Kimenyedde and Najja do not independently choose many of their priorities. Instead, they get directives about what should be in the budget from central through their district local government units through Indicative Planning Figures (IPF). It should be noted that the only control-point local political leaders and their communities have on finances is at the budget-making level. This opportunity is provided by the legal provision of the Local Government Act Cap. 243 section 82 (1), MoLG (1997, p. 5356), as pointed out by participants provides that: “No appropriation of funds by a local government shall be made out of the funds of the council unless approved in a budget by its council”. Apart from that provision, political leaders play no effective role in the budget execution process including the requisition and expenditure of the budget funds. It is therefore very important for the local communities and their leaders to prominently participate in budget formulation and approval. Besides, conditional grants form the biggest percentage of government financial support to local governments, which they have no control over. The funds from unconditional grants, equalisation fund and the local tax revenue over which they do have

control are too small to matter or pay attention to. It was found that there are therefore not enough funds at the sub-county level to enable sub-county councils to determine and execute their plans, and that it is the central and district government that determine the priority areas to invest. Participants offered above explanations for their lack of enthusiasm about the budget process and reduced participation in fiscal matters.

The reluctance to engage with the budget process was further related to the lack of duly elected and legitimate village councils for over 17 years. These are the lowest levels of the local government structure and vital to the process of bottom-up planning in generating ideas for the budget and development planning. It was said that the absence of duly elected village councils left sub-county governments disconnected from their communities. Participants said this reduced their control of local economic activities since there was no grassroot council to work with and, thus, they felt disempowered to effectively participate and lead communities to prosperity. Given the above, it is concluded that the way fiscal decentralisation operates at the budget process and development planning level in Uganda fails to support councillors to participate and execute their duties.

The literature views participation and empowerment as inseparably linked: while they are different, they depend on each other to give both meaning and purpose. Participation, for example, involves collective action such as being part of a decision-making process. Further, it involves sharing control, having an entitlement and the ability to participate, and being able to influence decisions such as those related to the allocation of resources (Claridge, 2004). This research found out, for example, that there was a struggle to strike a balance between bottom-up and top-down influences of Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan (NDP) in delivering services and LED. Vision 2040 and NDP overshadow the local government planning process, compromising participation right at the onset. In assessing these relative influences, a participant suggested regarding bottom-up planning that: “we only need one thing, politicians and the technocrats from the central government to relinquish our overdue power and responsibility to plan and do our part”.

This finding shed further light on the importance of PAR and community learning. This is because literature on participation by the disadvantaged argues it is a long-term goal that can be achieved only if people are liberated from the influence of unequal power relationships through learning and self-reflection. Further, it states that poverty, coupled with economic dependence of excluded groups on dominant groups, prevents them from enjoying autonomy

even after being elected to positions of authority. Therefore, while state-led participatory approaches in Uganda seem to provide institutions and mechanisms of participation, their effectiveness depends on the proper empowerment and understanding of local community level power structures which is often lacking. Related to this, the Chairman of Najja Sub-county said that: “Can you imagine, I must ask Sub-county Chief if he has money to facilitate my field trips to supervise his work!” (Najja-26th July 2018). He elaborated how the Chief in many cases refused to release the facilitation money for fear of being supervised, especially when there were allegations that shoddy work is being done.

On the participation challenge caused by the lack of finances, this Chairman proposed that since the Central Government has a tax that it collects directly from certain activities in the same local area, the tax collected by the Sub-county local government should entirely be retained to facilitate administration. This should replace the current arrangement where all collected tax revenues are sent to Higher Level and Central Governments and waiting until some of it trickles back with instructions. He thought that this would be useful if they are to participate meaningfully in the development of local areas since money will be received instantly and controlled locally. While this would raise questions about corruption and concerns about whether locally collected revenue would be enough to finance all administrative expenses, the Chairman seemed to believe that this would improve tax collection in the long run. He stated that if local revenue was used to supervise government projects, then there would likely be improvements in service delivery. If this occurred, it would in turn encourage local people to pay more taxes and get more interested in their local government activities and demand greater participation and accountability. According to most participants, this approach would break the vicious circle of poor participation leading to poor accountability and subsequently poor tax collection that further discouraged participation.

According to da Cruz et al. (2016), the diminishing interest that people have in participation in political and administrative life is rooted in citizens feeling distant and often excluded from the processes, with policymaking compromised by low transparency, maladministration and/or corruption. They emphasize that unless the excluded sections within a community are empowered, their productive participation cannot be ensured and sustained. This was sensed by the participants in this study, one of whom made the following observation:

Well as we are mandated to plan for our people in line with the central government, we get different programs from central government agencies who are monitoring and implementing these different programs on behalf of

the central government. The purchasing officers for the project items under OWC and NAADS for example, are not part of us (Najja-26th July 2018).

This research found out that because of limited participation, what is supplied for LED initiatives is always different from what local leaders planned and prepared the communities for. Most of the programs that are said to enhance local economic development are implemented by other government agencies yet bottom-up planning was to give locals an opportunity to participate in their development. In both sub-counties, there was a consensus that bottom-up planning, which would support participation, exists in theory but not in practice. Local leaders are not involved enough in decision making, and what is undertaken often differs from what the citizens wanted, and this gap generates distrust by citizens concerning government institutions. In such cases citizens become unreceptive to the measures implemented when these do not fit the real interests and needs of communities. This problem is aggravated when public services are delegated to private actors, as public participation and accountability is further eroded (da Cruz et al., 2016; King et al., 1998).

The National Vision 2040 clearly indicates that good governance is the backbone on which Uganda's development processes are based to ensure services are delivered to citizens and that peace reigns in the nation (MoFPED, 2013). The Vision, therefore, aims at consolidating the tenets of good governance, which include effective citizen participation in development processes, peace, defence and security of the citizens and the country. However, a participant questioned the way this operated:

.....starting with the security management system in our areas. It is so disappointing for a policeman to come from anywhere and arrest a fellow resident without contacting the local leaders and local administration police ... (Najja-27th December 2018).

The participant went on to emphasise that for decentralisation to take root, the lower local government right from the village council should be regarded as such and not to be sidelined when undertaking certain activities. It was emphasised that decentralisation requires all stakeholders to regard each other and work together all the way from the central government at the top to high local government to lower-level local governments at the bottom.

The discovery that officers of the local police, previously under the supervision of the Sub-county Chief, had been replaced by the central government police and military was greeted with concern. This was viewed as signalling a recentralisation of power, since these armed

officers get their command from central government command, and therefore, it is difficult for local leaders to participate in the security of the people (Najja-21 December 2018).

Concerning service delivery, a participant gave an example of the education services, where government just deposits teachers' salaries in their bank accounts without any consultation with the local leaders about the school/ teacher's performance. "Today, all reports indicate that there is poor quality education in these schools" (Kimenyedde-24th November 2018).

Conclusively, whereas Government of Uganda assessment reports on the performance of decentralisation indicated that the policy has yielded better participation by all the stakeholders, this thesis found that a lot remains to be done to improve stakeholder participation in these processes. Government based its conclusion on what was called improved monitoring of projects and smoothness in the procurement process. However, the low level of participation identified by this study remains a challenge to putting decentralisation into practice. The community learning that occurred through the application of the PAR approach has shown that it is possible to improve the participation of local leaders and their communities. This can be done within the existing formal and working representative structure because, at least in principle, these arrangements provide for political participation for all citizens and simply need to be put into more effective practice. The evidence for this was the positive change realised in terms of improved council participation during council meetings in a relatively short, one-year project time frame.

7.3 Transparency; A Compromised foundation of empowerment in Decentralisation Practice

7.3.1 Background

As discussed in Chapter Two, and further elaborated here, transparency, according to da Cruz et al. (2016), is the availability of information about an actor and the environment under which that actor works that allows other actors to monitor the work or performance of the first actor. Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006) assert that access to information is the foundation for empowerment and that core empowerment mechanisms reside within the state's legal and institutional structures including laws and procedures that make information available and transparent. The latter is in line with Piotrowski and Van Ryzin (2007) who also argue that access to information is a central component of governmental transparency, and governmental transparency is one tool to achieve accountability, participation and empowerment.

This thesis, accordingly, assumes that the transformative potential of transparency depends on the policy environment and on the design of disclosure policies and practices. Regarding the former, Dingwerth and Eichinger (2010) and Albert (2013) assume, however, that information disclosure can best live up to its empowerment promise when a participatory and pluralistic political culture is constructed through complex interactions between a variety of political and social actors.

7.3.2 Transparency practices

The analysis of the case studies demonstrated that the major disclosure policy and practices in decentralised governments in Uganda include Indicative Planning Figures (IPFs) and allocation of projects through the Local Government Development Programmes (LGDPs). In the first publication by the Ministry of Local Government since decentralisation, entitled *Decentralisation and Local Development in Uganda*, the example is given of how LGDP programmes can significantly contribute to an increase in the level of transparency in local government resources use. Further, the government publication argues that a decentralised participatory model of local governance can foster accountability, transparency, and openness, and create pressure for the adoption of high ethical standards in the conduct of public affairs. According to this same source, the participatory model has been enhanced through budget conferences, *barazas* and other forms of open dialogue as methods for information dissemination. While these are interesting observations, the transparency challenge analysed in this thesis is to consider the way information is disseminated: that is, its availability, timing, language, and usefulness for, mainly, the political wing of the local governments of Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. Its usefulness to the administrative dimension of governance is also to be considered.

On the political side, it was clear during the field studies that there was little emphasis on the open dialogue, *barazas* or well-organised budget conferences at the sub-county level. Instead, it was found that only the IPFs are used, which are regularly supplied to sub-county chiefs as heads of the administrative side to aid them make a budget. In Najja Sub-county, a participant councillor reported:

We used to have local level community members participate in the budget process. These meetings stopped possibly because the central government wanted to save money, or someone misuses the money allocated for this purpose.... As I talk today, we get directives on what should be in the budget from the central and higher local government (Najja Sub-county Participant, 26 July 2018).

Without councillors participating in the budget process, the policy cannot act as an effective transparency and accountability system to ensure generated revenue is properly utilised and accounted for. As earlier reported, the other commonly used disclosure method was LGDP, whose overall principle was to provide enhanced discretionary power for local governments to plan, budget and allocate resources. According to participants, what transpired was just to display figures of the amount of money given to a project and its source on a community notice board without much detail of the project. A survey carried out some time back by the Ministry of Local Government on the performance of LGDP revealed that only 22% of respondents spontaneously revealed that they had even ever heard about the LGDP in their sub-county at that time and this research suggested little had changed (MoLG, 2007). Therefore, regarding the availability of information to councillors, Najja Sub-county, participants reported persistent lack of information.

Further emphasis of lack of transparency was made by a participant who gave an example that when the Chief is asked about the poor work done on road maintenance, his answer was always 'insufficient' funds without any further elaboration. In such a case, councillors are left to guess as to what has happened. Such informal requests for information occur because there is no platform to regularly access such information. It was also found that even when such information is provided, it can be both very technical and yet insufficient for an ordinary councillor to scrutinise. Furthermore, as the top accounting officer of a sub-county government, the Chief must implement most government projects, yet councillors have no power or control over him. Yet, according to the policy, they are supposed to monitor and supervise his work.

Participants claimed that political leaders at the sub-county local government level cannot effectively monitor central government projects because of a lack of proper information to guide them. This, they say, is partly because they are not part of the procurement process, let alone being involved in project choices. This occurs because Tender Boards and Contract Committees are constituted at the district-government level, who solicit contractors to do sub-county work. In many cases, this has compromised transparency and the bottom-up planning arrangements.

On the language challenge, this research found that most of the documents such as budgets and the minutes of council meetings are, and according to the regulations, written in English. And it is in this same language that minutes of the council and committees' meetings are taken and distributed to members. According to participants and from what was observed, these

documents are not translated into the local languages for the councillors to understand and thus be able to comprehend and follow. It was also found that the rules of procedure booklets were written in English. This was the case until it was agreed by me and the participants to have the copies of these translated and distributed to all the members in both sub-counties. Interestingly, there is no legal minimum education requirement for one to compete for a councillorship position. In the absence of such minimum requirements, most local leaders cannot make meaningful contributions in a council meeting let alone provide leadership or guidance to local people's development. The situation is complicated by their lack of education, which hampers their ability to discuss budget issues with technical staff, whose interests in the first place may differ from the wishes of the councillors. However, there are concerns about the effect a minimum education requirement could have on representation and thus participation of the communities since it would prevent many people from running for these positions. In the absence of such requirements, however, it is necessary to have continued community learning to enhance the capacity of the many leaders who lack the educational capacity to competently represent their communities.

Additional language challenges were observed during one of the actions and observation sessions where, at a council meeting, a State of Sub-county Address³⁵ was presented. The document was written in English which made it visibly difficult for the Sub-county Chairman to read. What the Chairman did after being challenged by those present to better explain what it contained was to pick out the headings and translate those into a local language. The language barrier coupled with insufficient information make it difficult for transparency to happen in decentralised local governments. At the same time lack of confidence caused by insufficient training on the side of the councillors, makes it very difficult for them to demand transparency.

Kim and Lee (2012) assert that transparency increases social capital and fosters a culture of inclusiveness and diversity in local communities that facilitates participation. However, politicians are not encouraged to adopt the most transparent practices, as reported by Alesina and Perotti (1996). The latter would explain the poor timing of information distribution, which has the appearance of being masterminded by politicians at the Central government, District and sometimes at Sub-county government level. If true, this potentially undermines political decentralisation as, at the sub-county level, this lack of timeliness prevents council chairmen from providing the necessary information to councillors preparing for meetings. I noted it took

³⁵ An annual message delivered by the Chairperson of the Sub-county Council at the start of each financial year, giving a progress report and plan for new year.

a lot of conscientization for councillors to start demanding the information and for it to be provided in time by the Executive. Though it was sometimes claimed that this delay in information release was caused by several factors including lack of financial resources, at other times it was claimed to be a deliberate action by some leaders. Nevertheless, later discussion indicated that lack of money limits the number of standing committees, including the Business Committee responsible for making and dispatching the order paper, along with the necessary information to council members prior to a council meeting. Therefore, councillors do not get to traverse their constituencies to physically see and monitor the projects to discuss from an informed point of view during the meeting. Some thoughts on this were that this does not occur because it benefits “big” politicians and the technical staff who are able to limit transparency and avoid accountability questions.

The lack of, or late, information provided by the Central, District, and sometimes Sub-county governments, affect both administrative and political decentralisation regarding bottom-up planning. A sub-county Chief claimed it was true that councillors got to know very little of what was happening in the government development plan. According to him, the information that is always and readily available to councillors is about political mobilization for votes during electoral campaigns. He also cited one explanation given by the central government and district officials for the lack of information. The explanation was the limited capacity by local governments to attract and retain competent staff who could utilize such information or effectively ensure participation and coordination of stakeholders. The Chief cited the above reason to explain the reluctance of himself or others to give information to the technical staff, who would in turn possibly pass it political councillors. The same reasons have also been used to explain the reluctance by Central governments to relinquish full power and responsibility to sub-county governments as laid out in the policy.

The lack of timely, or complete absence of, information was a big challenge in both case study sub-counties. During the first council meeting at Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties, there were no documents that councillors could refer to. In fact, one councillor cried out with surprise at the grim news presented on the previous year’s performance report in Kimenyedde stating that, “receiving the order paper without any related document makes it difficult for us to deliberate” (Kimenyedde Sub-county Participant, 15 November 2018). The issue was again raised in one of the subsequent reflection meetings, when a participant gave an example of an audit query caused when a member of the technical staff performed a job different from what was in the work plan known to the councillors. The participant linked this to a lack of access to a copy of

the approved budget for monitoring purposes. It was discovered through the analysis of the case studies that it is only when rumours about an audit query are raised, or when councillors think that what was passed in the budget is different from what is being executed, that they are told that the draft budget they have accessed is different from the final one. Besides, when the audit is done, councillors do not know the outcome of the audit until the end of a financial year. In this case, the power to monitor and supervise government service delivery and development projects by local leaders is lost, resulting in the failure of all three forms of decentralisation and their objectives.

In summary, there was a general lack of transparency in the implementation of decentralised governance in the two case study areas. It was also clear that information was not readily available to councillors at any stages of the governance process. This was especially so in the older district of Kimenyedde, where leaders and administrative staff appeared to have mastered the system and could possibly be manipulating it. Though a general improvement was observed as the study progressed, there is a critical need for a proper and more effective mechanism through which communities and their representatives can demand greater transparency from the technical staff and politicians of districts, Central Government, and broader government agencies. The lack of transparency affected the councillor's willingness and ability to invest in decision-making power and authority and contributed to the policy failing to achieve its intended goals.

7.4 Accountability; Lack of Liability and Obligation on Public Functionaries in Governments

The doctrine of accountability places a liability and an obligation on public functionaries (elected and appointed, political and administrative), to give a satisfactory explanation to the public (including tax payers) of their exercise of power, authority and the resources entrusted to them. Blair (2000) asserts that decentralized local governance is the most direct mechanism for ensuring that leaders are accountable to citizens, in the form of downward accountability. This view may be informing the objectives of Uganda's official decentralisation policy, as it claims to improve financial accountability and responsibility by establishing a clear link between the payment of taxes and the provision of the services they finance (MoLLG, 1997). Besides, among the other duties of sub-county government according to the Local Government Act 1997, is to generally monitor and supervise projects and other activities undertaken by local governments and nongovernmental organisations in their areas. And the same Act gives sub-county executive committee the function to generally monitor the administration in its area and

report to the district council. Reporting to the district council, however, seems to overshadow the obligation of public functionaries to give a satisfactory explanation to the public, and to ensure that the leaders are accountable to the citizens in the form of downward accountability. A close reading of LED national policy shows that the policy's purpose among others is to build local democratic government and community (both rural and urban) capacity to demand services and accountability. That said, Blair (2000) states that accountability goes hand in hand with participation and that these two are the major themes of a democratic decentralisation. Democratic local governance accordingly is a combination of the devolutionary form of decentralisation (in which real authority and responsibility are transferred to local bodies) with democracy at the local level. Officially, Uganda presents itself as having such a democratic and devolutionary form of decentralisation (Onyach-Olaa, 2003). This section, therefore, discusses the accountability challenge that arises in the two case studies and how it affects empowerment of local leaders and their communities.

7.4.1 Accountability at the Periphery in Local Governments

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, accountability relationships and trends that exist in Local Governments favour upward control systems, as opposed to downward accountability to the citizenry. In this case the upward accountability system operates through the administrative hierarchy of local authorities, and through a prism of organisational arrangements established by central government (Figure 6.3). This leaves the political wing of local governments on the periphery of the accountability enforcement system. This research has revealed that accountability challenges were prominent in both case studies. In Najja Sub-county, for example, the Chairman sounded frustrated when he said that the common question whispered by political heads like him to sub-county chiefs was always: "Chief, how much money did we get this quarterly release?" to which the sub-county chief leisurely answers "Something, not much, I guess" (Najja Sub-county participant, 18 August 2018). This leaves the chairperson guessing as to how much money might be available to execute government programs and what needs to be accounted for. The example showed grave lack of accountability in the system when a political head of a sub-county government lacks full information on the available resources. Indeed, the lack of a proper working accountability framework for the politicians through which to intervene makes it worse and ultimately disempowers the leaders to the disadvantage of the communities. Besides, when the Internal Auditor or Auditor General's office audit the works and books of the sub-county, they meet only with the sub-county chief to the exclusion of other political leaders. It is the Chief who is the official accounting officer, and as such, the one who

finalises the making of the budget, requisitions, bank withdrawals, and spending without proper checks and balances.

Meanwhile, political accountability, which is more people-focussed and forms the cornerstone of democratic practice where the mandates of elected officials and public administrators must reflect on the agenda and expectations of the public, is elusive. First, as indicated in the figure 7.3 and as earlier discussed, the accountability is through hierarchical administrative leadership with hardly any direct links with the people, either through consultation or through interest groups. This research found out that the *Baraza* and report card schemes (as explained in Chapter three) did not exist anymore for both sub-counties. Further, this research found that political accountability tends to be affected by neo-patrimonial acquaintances, nepotism, alleged corruption, and seclusion in the two case study areas. This was seen when a council could not ask how the chairman's company won a district tender to do road repairs in this same sub-county. This occurred during a council meeting session when the chairman wanted a transfer of funds from one vote to a road maintenance vote. Also, the failure of the council to influence termination of employment contracts of well-connected but allegedly corrupt civil servants points to the same challenge.

Section 91 of the *Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulation 2007 Act* is an instrument to foster accountability and it outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Internal Audit Department in a local government. It indicates that the external auditors are independent of the council's administration, and they are governed by auditing standards determined by the Auditor General's office. It is further stressed that the head of the internal audit department must work in harmony and cooperation with the chief executive and head of Finance. The Auditor's report on whether the systems and operations of the administration are efficient, effective, economical, and free from fraud and other malpractices are then given to the council. With this arrangement, participants wondered what happens when a chief allegedly presents forged supportive documents during an audit process, which are purported to have originated from the chairman of the council when his office has not been consulted at all during the process. How can these purported documents be proved wrong before a final report is made?

The research demonstrated that little is known by the councillors at the sub-county level regarding the accounting regulations, and that more is known by the district councillor at the district level. Unfortunately, this leaves the sub-county chief at liberty to do as he wishes. Besides, the accountability system is made in such a way that central and high district

governments use it to check the performance of the lower local government, not the other way around, even though many government projects are executed at district government level. This could be the reason decentralisation at the sub-county level was described by participants as “eyes-on hands-off policy”.

The above account resonates with Kakumba (2008)’s criticism of the accountability mechanism available in Uganda in his thesis “*External control systems in the enhancement of accountability in local government: The case of Uganda*”. He wrote that the greatest challenges or dilemmas in operationalising the accountability legislation include lack of support from stakeholders’ agencies that are supposed to partner with the Inspectorate of Government (IG) and Office of the Auditor-General (OAG). Also, there are financial and human resources limitations in the IG and OAG given their respective workload schedules and the cost of operations. Kakumba further reported that the system is challenged by resentment from “powerful” government officials, which culminates in conflicts and confrontation that weakens the watchdog institutions. Lending credence to his findings, this research discovered that when a sub-county chief was gravely suspected of being corrupt, the best the council has been able to do is to recommend his transfer to a different sub-county in the same district. In Kimenyedde, where the chairman is a member of the national ruling party, he was able to influence several transfers of sub-county chiefs due to allegations of corruption during his term of office. However, in Najja Sub-county where the chairman is not politically connected to the national ruling party, they complained of the difficulty in causing such transfers.

It was also interesting to know that sub-county chiefs try to be accountable to their local government for fear of their reputation within the same district. This is because and as noted earlier they are always transferred and rotated within the district unlike the CAO. CAOs are however said to be hardly accountable to the district leadership. This is because they are always transferred to faraway districts in cases where they disagree with the current district political leadership on the ground of their perceived corrupt tendencies. In both cases however local leaders can only cause a transfer of an officer suspected of corruption but not a successful prosecution.

Having said that, however, literature shows that a community empowerment mechanism largely depends on the available accountability mechanism. Flore (2004) and Onyach-Olaa (2003) argue that the presence and the nature of decentralised accountability relationships are significant factors in creating options and avenues for community empowerment. It was more

revealing of the accountability challenge when participants pointed out the previously given scenarios. And, when this research found out that the key signatory to the sub-county resources is the sub-county chief and the second one is the sub-accountant³⁶, both are civil servants. To this, participants suggested that the political head should be part of the signatories to the local government bank accounts so that he can know well in advance the reason for withdrawing the money. They think that this approach is better than doing a ‘post-mortem’ after money has been allegedly stolen or misappropriated. Evidence of this was provided in Kimenyedde Sub-county Bukasa parish water project, where there was advice that the water pump was to pump water for two days to ascertain the site’s capacity to sustain water supply before proceeding with the project. However, the pumps were switched off just after one hour and it was only when the project was finally completed that it was realised that the site did not have enough water to sustain supply.

The analysis of the case studies revealed that accountability, together with transparency and participation challenges, have made monitoring government programs difficult and affected LED initiatives such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and Operations Wealth Creation (OWC). Such difficulties were evident in Najja Sub-county when a councillor in charge of production gave the example of a supplier who delivered only 200 fish fillets, far less than what had been expected. Despite being the supervisor, the councillor had no control over the supplier. This was so because procurement of agricultural inputs is made and paid for by other officials elsewhere without the local government leaders’ knowledge or advice. His account was backed up by several other reports by different councillors of the mismatch between what had been planned and what was delivered by NAADS and OWC officials and with no mechanism to demand accountability.

In Kimenyedde, councillors stated that there seemed to be no clear procedures and mechanisms through which they could monitor government projects and programs, especially LED initiatives for accountability purposes in their areas. In fact, in the case of Kimenyedde, as one participant noted, it was only the executive committee that undertook some monitoring of service delivery in the sector areas of health, education and road construction, but not LED. But even then, according to participants, they provided no written reports of the process or outcomes to the council.

³⁶ A member of technical staff receiving and/or making payments on behalf of the Subcounty Chief.

The lack of motivation to monitor activities is partly caused by the parallel structures to local government that central government form and employ to implement central government programs, without a mechanism for harmonisation. These parallel structures were alleged by councillors to be a means by which central government officials practice nepotism, creating jobs for their family and friends. They explained that this would not easily happen if the outsourced organisations worked in partnership with local governments. Parallel structures were also viewed as intended to minimise any demands for accountability by local governments. Councillors further affirmed that the lack of information, coupled with absence of proper accountability mechanisms, resulted in poor performance due to poor monitoring. Besides, contributing to the making of a new budget, for example, was difficult when councillors were not informed of how the previous budget had been implemented and this alienated local government leaders at the very start of the accounting process. In most cases, the input of councillors stopped at the level of contributing ideas about what their constituencies required to be put in the budget during the budget making process. To put this in perspective, a sub-county chief complained that there was no known official channel or office through which his administration could demand to know what had happened to the proposals forwarded to the district government during the budget and development planning process. The Sub-county Chief further claimed the same happened when there was a proposal to deal with an emergency or an opportunity to have new projects during the financial year. Overall, this frustration was caused by the policy arrangements where district governments incorporated the budgets and plans of lower local governments into district development plans without any provision for reciprocation. Yet, these budgets and plans determined the activities that occurred at the sub-county government level.

A further study of the formal requirements of budgets and development plans in Uganda's decentralised governmental system showed that for district governments, the Chief Executive is obliged to make timely follow-up with the respective Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and National Planning Authority (NPA). This is done during the month of July to secure an early position on the submitted development proposals and provide feedback to key stakeholders. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the sub-county government, yet the follow up would build a foundation for future demand for accountability. In effect, the Chairman of Kimenyedde pointed to the unexplained slow progress of the development plan and yet was unable to put his finger on what went wrong. For that reason, he claimed that bottom-up planning is in theory but not in practice.

The supply of indicative planning figures from the district that guide the making of the sub-county budget further disempowers sub-county governments from demanding accountability. This is because, and as mentioned earlier, these figures which reflect the NDP do not consider the would-be priority areas of investment of the sub-county council. This research found that suppliers of resources as inputs for local economic development simply check out what is allocated in the general NDP. Considering what they have in stock, they then make a general supply to all sub-counties around the country without considering the specific request lists of each sub-county. This makes it difficult for the local leaders to demand accountability when they have no documents to cross-check regarding the supply made to the sub-county.

The other challenge in accountability is when there is a budget query. First, a budget query takes a long time to come to light. This is because the political wing rarely gets to know what has happened with the budget until the end of a financial year. This is partly because audits are normally performed at the end of the fiscal year. This approach makes the scrutiny by the council of the performance of the approved work plan and programs a form of a ‘post-mortem’. In a government arrangement that one suspects is also infected with nepotism, neo-patrimonialism, and patron-client relationships, those engaging in corruption even after being found out cannot easily be prosecuted to deter others from doing the same.

Conclusively, the lack of accountability by the different stakeholders has contributed to the failure of all the three components of decentralisation policy to empower local political leaders for service delivery and LED. This is true because the modern concept of good governance among others invoke accountability and decentralisation as the most appropriate vehicles for achieving empowerment (Onyach-Olaa, 2003). Despite all the relevant enabling laws having been made and enacted, there is still a challenge for local political leaders to demand and practice accountability for proper empowerment. The lack of political will by the Central Government and district officers to enforce accountability on their appointed civil servants coupled with undeveloped capacity of local leaders and the communities to demand for it, appears to play an important role.

Meanwhile, recommendations on accountability made by the research team during the study process were that:

- The CAO should be moved back to be an employee of the district and be appointed by the District Service Commission.
- The chairman of the council should be a signatory to the sub-county bank account.

- Local government leadership and structures should appear prominently in the management of LED initiatives including OWC, NAADS, Youth Livelihood etc.

Concerning LED initiatives, the recommendation by the participants was to have civil servants employed by the local government do the LED related technical work instead of hiring others by the central government to do the same jobs. This would avoid duplication of jobs/position, reduce costs, and help enforce accountability by local leaders. It would also ensure decentralisation promotes greater empowerment of local government and communities to participate in LED. After all, according to Local Government Act 1997 Cap 243, a local government must monitor the performance of persons employed by the Government (MollG, 1997).

7.5 Integration of Local Government and Sectoral Agencies

While the lack of integration of arms of local governments and sectoral agencies raises critical issues regarding the imperative of enhancing accountability, transparency, and participation, it is worthwhile discussing this lack of integration as a separate subtheme to obtain a better understanding of its effects. However, in this section where necessary, the connections between this theme to those above will be identified.

7.5.1 Observations about Governance Integration

In the decentralisation literature, some researchers advocate for parallel, non-local government systems to enhance service delivery and development. Yet, and as noted above, there are emerging concerns that such a parallel system can undermine the objectives of decentralisation in developing economies. Moreover, from an empirical perspective, (Fortis, 2014) notes that observation of actual governmental practices has consistently revealed that politics, administration and service delivery are fused and very difficult to disentangle. Fortis (2014) also asserts that the spheres of politics and administration are not independent at all and that any separation between politics and administration is untenable. In analysing the lack of communication, cooperation and integration between sectoral agencies and the different arms of government in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties, this section compares policy provisions with actual practices. It also assesses the critical reforms to be undertaken to significantly improve working relationships between the different arms of government and sectoral agencies.

The local government and community empowerment expected and advocated for by this study connects the importance of integration of local government arms and sectoral agencies to successful decentralisation policy. Its practices by no means presuppose a linear relationship

between the two, but rather critical linkages at all the stages, including internal and external linkages. Internal linkages deal with relationships across the local government structure (between higher and lower local governments), while external linkages deal with relationships between the central government and local government. The analysis builds on the detailed analysis of the National LED policy, which reveals it to be a multi-sector undertaking involving the participation of various stakeholders including the following: central government; local governments responsible for coordinating the implementation of policy; private sector actors working with other stakeholders to ensure shared economic growth; development partners in providing resources; NGOs to reach marginalised areas; and local communities as consumers, savers and representatives who understand local needs. The Local Government Planning Guidelines of Uganda, which aim at providing a framework for the formulation of harmonized decentralized plans within local governments, also support integration. This is so because, on the one hand, the guidelines are supposed to ensure that decentralised development plans are well linked to the overall national development strategic direction as well as to the sector development goals (vertical harmony). On the other hand, the guidelines are also supposed to ensure intra- and inter-agency synergies and linkages to the local government planning framework (horizontal harmony). In this case, horizontal harmony is to ensure that there is inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination in the selection and programming of development activities within the local government: that is, coordination amongst different departments within a local government as well as between the local government departments and civil society organisations (CSOs), Faith-based organisations (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Development Partners (DPs), and Private Sector Organisations (PSOs), and so forth.

7.5.2 The “Eyes-On Hands-Off” Position of Councillors

Despite the available policy guidelines, the analysis of the case studies identified a severe lack of communication between the different sections of government in both sub-counties and this presented a big challenge to empowering local government political leaders. For example, according to the Local Government Act 1997, participants found out four main duties of civil servants (Administration) are (i) to implement lawful council decisions; (ii) to assist council in policy formulation; (iii) to suggest to council strategies for dealing with identified challenges and problems; and (iv) to provide technical guidance under the direction of the chief. However, according to participants, civil servants seem to emphasise the fourth duty of providing technical guidance, which participants claim is done only to frustrate the political wing. The

civil servants perceive themselves as mainly accountable to the chief and CAO and only very indirectly to the community.

With frustration, one of the councillors stated with more than a hint of sarcasm:

What does councillors do, policy makers or alarmists? Anyway, we are the noise makers! So, when we make noise that we want to do this or the other, that is when the technical people come in to advise, mind you they are 'very technical'. They guide us because principally, they are the technical guide, and their guidance must take precedence according to the law. Our sub-county chief acts as a counsel to the council...

This point was echoed further during the LDW. The chairman complained that, when he requests for funds to be reallocated to attend to an emergency, that is the time that a chief gives technical guidance by citing the law that prohibits the transfer of funds from one vote to another. This undermines the supposed participation and transparency empowering virtues of decentralisation. In Najja Sub-county, for example, the Chief admitted that it was true that councillors participate very little in what happens in government compared to technical staff. But he also agreed that even when they themselves participate much more in government activities, they still have no control. The Chief gave an example of a recent communication from the CAO where he had received orders from central government to change the way sub-county budgets and accounts are managed. Because the Chief is directly under the CAO, he said he would work according to the demands of the CAO, not in consultation with the politicians in the local governments (Najja Sub-county, 26 July 2018). In this case integration and working together across political and administrative lines are compromised, resulting in poor participation, transparency, and accountability.

On issues of development, when the chairman provided the Sub-county Address during a council meeting, he reported on the poor performance of the different departments. Poor performance was reported in areas of economic development in relation to OWC, NAADS, youth livelihood initiative and other related central government initiatives. The Chairman claimed this was due to the sidelining of the political arm and, in several cases, to the technical arm denying them participation. The parallel structures not only include other government agencies but also the military coordinating structure of OWC. These arrangements challenge the argument that local development merely requires strengthening existing organisations and capacities within the local space to develop more systematically linked institutional arrangements and processes. Helling et al. (2005) confirm that community-based organisations, local governments, and sectoral agencies, as well as private organisations such as firms and

NGOs, need to be linked more coherently. Done well, such arrangements support improved empowerment, governance, service provision, and private sector growth. It is the absence of such linkages that partly explain why many participants in each study area reported that they see no tangible local economic improvements and that people are becoming poorer. This even led leaders to conclude that the OWC program is worse than NAADS and to nicknaming it with considerable irony ‘Operation Poverty Creation’ (Najja Sub-county participant, 18 August 2018). This assertion has been at least partly verified in a recent government report that claimed that poverty in Uganda had risen by 8% (World Bank, 2019).

Local leaders in Kimenyedde were especially disheartened when the chairperson made the following comment during one LD Workshop:

We had the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) program which was good at the start but got off rail after some time. One day, I tried to follow up the program. This was because the president has always said that every sub-county gets 84 million shillings every year. So, I asked for accountability from the honourable councillor who was at the same time chairperson for Farm Forum³⁷ in this sub-county. To my shock this is what we found: Out of the US\$84 million, 32,860 people who resided in this sub-county at the time received 3,186,000 shillings only in form of farming inputs and implements, the rest of the money was paid to the only 3 NAADS workers as their remunerations for the year. I went to meet the regional NAADS coordinator after learning that the Sub-county was receiving one to two cows in a year under NAADS programme, yet the veterinary officer who is employed to treat them whenever they would get sick is paid over 9 million shillings a year. The other disappointment in this was that whenever the cows got sick, NAADS employed veterinary officer only advice that the cow is sick and refer to the poorly remunerated sub-county veterinary officer. So, I advised that, hiring NAADS veterinary officer when at the same time the Sub-county has a government paid veterinary officer is duplication of positions. I suggest that money spent on the NAADS veterinary officer be used to buy more cows or support those who receive the cows to run their projects. The regional coordinator replied in clear terms that, the Sub-county has the political power to suggest terminating the NAADS veterinary doctor, but not to transfer funds. The money you want to save will remain with the central government because that is what NAADS policy stipulates. Anyway, that is how decentralisation has gradually failed to achieve its intended goals (Kimenyedde- 15th November 2018).

One can conclude from the above quote that these forms of bureaucratic control and rules, without any form of working together of the different stakeholders, are preventing participation, transparency, accountability and ultimately empowerment. This is because they stymie apparently simple and sensible solutions as explained earlier. In fact, in Kimenyedde the Chairman said that when he makes a telephone call for any enquiry to the military colonel who

³⁷ Organisation for local farmers at the district level.

is coordinating OWC at the district level, the colonel no longer takes his calls. According to the chairman, the colonel ignores him as they disagree about what should be supplied to farmers.

In Najja Sub-county during one of the reflection meetings, participants registered their grave concern about what they called a continued restructuring and recentralisation of development programs. This occurs alongside the widening gap between political leaders and technical staff at lower and higher levels of local government. Reflecting this change, the Sub-county Chief said that: “At this level it is between me and the CAO to coordinate these changes, that is why according to the new structures, I represent the CAO, and to emphasise that, my title lately changed from ‘Sub-county Chief’ to ‘Senior Assistant CAO’”.

The parallel structures through which the central government is channelling development initiatives have left local leaders in the dark, not knowing how to contribute to these initiatives. One participant commented: “It is no longer a government system through which we can actively participate to serve our people”, claiming decentralisation to be an “eyes-on hands-off” policy (Najja Sub-county Participant, 10 August 2018). He emphasized that when the central government sidelines local government, their programs are destined to fail. Presidential and Statehouse initiatives give rise to conflict between leaders and communities for the President’s attention to access resources for personal benefit. The Chairman talked of his suspicion that some people might have received some money from this initiative in his area, but he was not sure. He complained regarding the OWC, a program financed heavily by the central government, that local leaders are not consulted when choosing the people to benefit from it, raising questions around participation and accountability. He also went on to say that the initiatives are duplicated across OWC, NAADS, Youth Livelihood Programme and other programmes (Najja Sub-county Participant, 18 August 2018)

The role of the district CAO, a position that could promote the integration of the different government arms by being employed by the District Service Commission and answerable to the local government leadership, has changed. The CAO is now appointed by the National Service Commission (NSC). According to the participants, this was because central government feared that if a CAO were appointed by the district leadership, local government political leaders would be in control. And with such control they would best manage service delivery and LED, which would help them win political support from the electorate. If this is true, then it signals a fear by Central government leaders about what might happen if decentralisation was permitted to work. But one still wonders if the concern underlying this assertion is legitimate and whether

Uganda would unravel politically if more people had more political power. Based on the theoretical arguments put forward for decentralisation, one might expect instead that more power in the hands of local people would help resolve the intricacies of local government. Nevertheless, it was agreed by participants that the appointment of CAO by the NSC cannot support bottom-up planning because apparently, most CAOs are at loggerheads with district political leaders over priority setting. Such disagreements have resulted in the poor performance of the 5-year development plan, the chairman claiming that very little of it had been implemented with only two years remaining.

The uncoordinated workings of the different government departments were reflected in the delivery of services. In Kimenyedde, for example, the Council reported that the on-going construction of classrooms at Ndwaddemutwe Primary School was in jeopardy. This was because a communication had been received that in the current new financial year the educational fund would no longer flow down to the sub-county level but stop at district level. There was a fear that the district would be able to put that money to work on other projects within the district rather than the school, which was only a priority of the sub-county. There was a fear that this could occur without any consultation. One councillor wondered what would happen to the current year work plan which is part of the 5-year development. This plan was made through a bottom-up planning process, but now appeared to be in jeopardy with such major financial changes without consultation.

A district councillor who attended one of the LDWs narrated a story about a surprise visit to Nakifuma Health Centre IV.³⁸ He claimed the visit revealed that supplies of basic medicines had run out of stock within a couple of weeks, yet the Centre is supplied on a quarterly basis. He also claimed that “surprisingly, the medicines that are in stock are not the ones required at the health centre and therefore are not prescribed”. Despite the fact that usage data is collected from patients attending a consultation, National Medical Stores³⁹ (NMS) decides what drugs to supply without consulting local stakeholders. The consequences are that patients are either turned away or given a prescription and told to buy from private medical stores. The uncoordinated movement and decision of different responsible departments result in more wastage of resources and difficulty in demanding for accountability. This wastage has been common in disposing of unused expired drugs, an exercise which is very expensive.

³⁸ A level of health facility that serves a county or a parliamentary constituency.

³⁹ Government-owned organisation, mandated to procure, store, and distribute human medication and health-related consumable items to government-owned health units in all districts of Uganda.

The disconnect and sidelining of lower levels government from higher-level government departments and agencies was further exemplified when participants said that they have the responsibility to plan action but not to participate in implementation. An example was given of the OWC where local leaders collect data and make a list of what people want to grow as crops but then receive different inputs that are not good to the soils and climate of the area. In addition, the planting materials arrive late for the planting season and therefore people cannot make use of these inputs. However, these supplies must be taken away from the sub-county headquarters premises for the sub-county administrators to tick the box that the distribution was successfully done. So, people are forced to take what they cannot really use. This is said to be the reason why, when one takes a tour of the community, one cannot find any gardens growing the supplied seedlings. In this case, the government loses the money that was used to buy the seedlings and at the same time the community remains poor. Research co-participants therefore recommended that the supply of agricultural inputs be given to local suppliers who know better what grows well in the local context. They also recommended that the government should become more involved in marketing as it was pointless to supply seeds without ensuring a ready market for the produce.

Further frustration from uncoordinated work was reported with regards to budget financing and tax collection. Besides grants from central government and some other sources, budgets in LLGs are supported by collecting local taxes. In Kimenyedde and Najja, however, taxes from such sources as telecommunication companies that have telephone towers in area of jurisdictions, building plan fees, land title fees, small scale fishing fees and taxes, are all now collected by the central government through URA. This shift in responsibility for local tax collection occurred without proper explanation or thought given to how local governments would finance their budgets. Local governments have not been compensated for the tax shortfall, and there is no forum for local government leaders to communicate their concern. Efforts to find out why the change occurred and what can be done about it are frustrated as all enquiries are referred the President. There is a general belief among participants that many officials surrounding the President do not let local leaders have access to him as they potentially benefit from the existing disconnected arrangements.

More frustration was expressed about the new Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS), which is said to be intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in local government. Instead, participants claimed it was worse than before. For example, network failures lead to a delay in the release of finances, which frustrates councillors who at

times travel long distances only to be told that they cannot do their duty. Such new systems perform poorly, because local leaders are not involved in their design nor in any discussion prior to their introduction. As stakeholders, local leaders need to understand and be able to explain to the people they represent about what the new systems are, why they are being introduced, and how they work. In this case, one participant advised:

It would also be beneficial to us if there are workshops, meetings, and forums through which we can discuss with other politicians at district and central government level, so that we get to know why changes are being made in the policy, so that we can also have an input. Beside there should be a channel of communication with the different levels of government because we suppose that all governments at their different levels have one purpose, and that is to serve the people of Uganda. But at times it appears like the central government is serving a different section of the people in Uganda (Kimenyedde Sub-county Participant, 15 November 2018).

The Sub-county chief narrated his experience with the Ministry of Local Government and the district government. He said:

For the last 7 to 10 years, I have served as a technical staff at the sub-county level, but on very few occasions I have seen officials from the Ministry of Local Government coming to supervise work at the sub-county. This is the Ministry and a district under which LLG operate and mandated to supervise them. The question one asks is that: if the communities are down here with us then what do the many officials in the Ministry of Local Government do when they choose to remain in their offices in the capital Kampala with all their strong vehicles? One would think that these vehicles are given to them to drive to the local government for advisory visits. Finances and human resources should be directed to change people's lives. The Ministry of Local Government officials just sit in their offices in the capital and wait for reports written by the technical people at the local governments, but I would think that reports need to be scrutinised and compared with the performance down in the field for proper monitoring and evaluation (Kimenyedde Sub-county Participant 15 November 2018).

Using the Chairman's conclusion during one of the Sub-county addresses to conclude this challenge of integration, the Chairman said that government development initiatives financed to create wealth through agricultural development as the backbone of Uganda's economy were poorly managed. The retired generals and army officers who manage OWC up to the district level, for example, have no contact person at LLG. Therefore, local government leaders have no control over these army officers. This raises the question as to why they would choose to sideline the elected leaders in these very important programs? Yet, when the Chairman tried to question the implementers of these programs, he instead found himself accused of working against government programs. It was for this reason that the Chairman, while addressing the

Council, asked members to kindly refrain from questioning him regarding the OWC since his government had no control over it. Besides, other service sectors including Health and Education are controlled by their line ministries with less involvement of local political leaders. Therefore, bottom-up planning, which was supposed to be a strong pillar in achieving participation and accountability and ultimately LED, had been let down by this uncoordinated policy practice.

By the end of the project, it came to light that a failure to work together by the different stakeholders, which is a prerequisite for achievement of the primary goals of decentralisation, poses a big challenge. Though there was seen to be some improvement in the working relationship between the technical staff and the political leaders in both sub-counties during the study process, there was very negligible improvement in the integration of this level of government with the Central HLL and other government agencies. Co-researcher participants believed that they needed to do more towards working together, as there is apparently strong resentment that decentralisation exists largely for election purposes. They think that after the election season, central government loses interest in local governments. Yet working in isolation from local leaders is in fact against the orthodox view that government agencies have two major roles to perform: providing a public service that is responsive to its clients and being proactive about finding out from them how to improve services and delivery (Islam, 2004).

7.6. Money-Politics and Allegations of Corruption

Like the lack of integration of local government arms/and agencies, money-politics and corruption raise equally important critical issues of accountability, transparency, and participation. This is because, like in many Western democracies that have become quasi-plutocracies, when politicians become accountable to those small elite groups who have money, policies do not reflect the will of the far larger number who do not. There is also a fear that decentralisation opens more opportunities for such money politics than more centralised systems. This section discusses mostly unproven allegations of corruption. It should be noted that while these corruption allegations discussed in this section were widespread, they are to be treated as unproven allegations with no actual wrongdoing imputed to any party. During the analysis of this subtheme therefore, any identified connection to the accountability participation, and transparency challenges in empowering will be highlighted for better analysis.

Corruption is defined by Rock and Bonnett (2004) as the use of public office for private gain. They further claim that numerous empirical studies demonstrate that corruption reduces

investment and/or slows growth, and this is particularly true in developing countries. Sharman and Chaikin (2009) also argue that corruption is the most important financial problem in most developing countries, and it is the greatest obstacle to economic development. This, they say, is because it determines the institutional quality by generating bureaucratic inefficiency and red tape. Corruption reports by Transparency International (CPL, 2019) indicate that Uganda ranks high in corruption and that it is persistent. The report indicated that there are too many loopholes in the existing system, and that these pave the way for politicians and senior administrators to become corrupt through the award of contracts and receipt of kickbacks. Persistent levels of alleged corruption exist in spite of the government's reported achievement of decentralisation Mutabwire et al. (2014), where it is claimed the government adopted a zero-tolerance-to-corruption policy. This policy is a stance set out in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and emphasizes both reactive and proactive approaches to fighting corruption in Uganda. According to the same report, the Government constituted a framework with a range of agencies under the Anti-corruption Inter Agency Forum, which is led by the Inspectorate of Government and coordinated by the Directorate of Ethics and Integrity. Despite these claims, the above institutions and their success was not known to the local leaders whose experience was very different. The theme discussed in this section therefore is how politics is influenced by money and corruption in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. The section describes how instances of alleged corruption are identified by leaders, how it blocks good leadership outcomes and what critical reforms can be undertaken to significantly improve financial management in local governments.

7.6.1 The Costly Electoral Process and its Effect on Leadership

The challenge of money politics and corruption is important to discuss especially in the context of developing countries where there is substantial government intervention in the economy and 'hyper presidentialism'⁴⁰ with so many resources being deployed to capture elective office. For that reason there is a clear correlation between money-politics and the potential for high level corruption (Adamu et al., 2016; Lucky, 2014). This connection was revealed by the study during one of the leadership development workshops in Kimenyedde Sub-county, when a participant alleged that "because of buying voters, there is a lot of corruption, and so many local leaders are languishing in prisons for corruption in a bid to get back their money" (Kimenyedde Sub-county Participant, 15 November 2018). It was further pointed out, however,

⁴⁰ This occurs when elected presidents try to take the law into their hands, ignore constitutional limits, supersede the parliament and the courts, and use every possible trick to prolong their stay in office.

that the greatest losers are the ordinary people, because money, not their will, becomes the determining factor in elections and policy preferences (Adamu et al., 2016; Lucky, 2014).

“Game over, wait until next elections” was reported to be the attitude of politicians after a costly electoral process. This money-politics and alleged corruption blocks good leadership outcomes according to the councillors of Najja Sub-county. This, they say, is because “leadership loses focus for service delivery for personal gain” (Najja Sub-county Participant, 10 August 2018). In their research, (Adamu et al., 2016; Lucky, 2014) suggested that corruption networks are controlled by a significant number of roving bandits who act as independent monopolists and that this is typical in many of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, extremely weak states have been sustained by multiple patron-client networks who are controlled by one or more ethnic groups with extremely short time horizons. Moreover, because those who control each corruption network expect to be replaced in a relatively short period of time, little incentive exists to invest in the public good; and simple looting and plunder come to dominate decision-making. At the sub-county local government level, the same argument holds, when a person spends considerable sums of money to buy votes to be elected a chairperson and yet will earn relatively little remuneration from occupying that office. It is suspected that this will result in corruption to try to recover the money used to buy votes before his term of office elapse. It is no surprise, then, when a councillor in Najja Sub-county gave this as a reason why educated people are not interested in taking leadership positions in local government. He said:

“....it is this reason why educated people are not interested in taking leadership positions in local government. For some of us who did not go to school our goal is to have some of these political titles for purposes of accessing other resources for our personal development...”

A councillor went on to ask those present to imagine a chairman who was the owner of a construction company who was paid very little for being a chairperson of a sub-county but who used a lot of money to win votes. This could mean that he has other vested interests and will do all that it takes to win tenders to do government projects in his sub-county. This is possibly done through corruption and patron-client relationship with the district leadership with promised kickbacks.

The awarding of job contracts, for instance, and the taking of kickbacks in the exchange of contracts awarded is a real avenue for alleged corruption. A chairman’s interest in implementing government projects was evident in one of the study area sub-counties. During a

council meeting (action/observation), members present whispered allegations that it was the chairman's company that had undertaken shoddy road repair work. It was during this meeting that councillors tried to question the chairman's request to divert funds to road construction. But despite this, a sense of fear pervaded the questioning of the chairman who appeared to be a 'godfather', a term Callahan (2005) uses in his critical view of social capital theory. In his essay, Callahan (2005, p. 502) states that "vote buying is part of the social network of village life and that canvassers are not criminals, but local leaders who achieve influence through what he calls philanthropy".⁴¹ It was in that respect that one of the participants said that candidates right from the president to members of parliament give a lot of money to voters through their campaign agents during the campaign, and that this triggers the same during local government elections. No wonder, then, that most councillors in the two sub-counties are said to be originally campaigners of the chairman LCIII or LCV or MP and who in turn are sponsored to do their campaigns. The Chairman in Kimenyedde, for example, is the Chairman of the local NRM and principally a campaign manager of NRM candidates in the Sub-county with a direct line right to the President. It is through these relationships that councillors sponsored by a chairperson are given a ministerial position in his government and thus become their own 'godfathers'. In most cases, these arrangements compromise accountability, transparency and participation and thus good governance. This is because there is no one to check on instances of alleged corruption as most councillors pay more allegiance to their sponsors than to the local people who they represent.

Regarding LED and OWC initiatives, a participant suggested that there cannot be development when massive corruption occurs with impunity and there is no respectful relationship between leaders at the different government levels.

In his own explanation of rampant corruption, Weyland (1998) suggested that politicians who appeal to the masses via television as a campaign tactic provide a crucial base of support for current neo-populism. He says that such personalistic leaders have sought to bypass established political parties and interest groups to reach the voters through direct appeal and aim at building up a loyal following from scratch. However, because the method is costly, it creates higher incentives to resort to corruption. Likewise, in Uganda, at the time of the non-party "movement" political system 1986-2000, candidates were voted in based on individual merit, which posed its own challenges. Today, even after a constitutional change to a multiparty system, there are

⁴¹ The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money.

still several personal-merit politicians and independent candidates. Even those sponsored by a political party do not get much financial support from their parties, at least at local government level. This means that they must use personal resources to finance their political campaign and attain a political position. It is this kind of vote buying that compromises the voters who are never able to hold their leaders accountable. Voters understand that leaders must get back the money, since they used to buy the votes and yet the allowances they receive as leaders are minimal. In such a system, voters lose the moral authority and responsibility to fight alleged instances of corruption in their government. It is widely known in Uganda at all levels of leadership that the first political term of any leader is for personal financial rehabilitation and to obtain money to pay back bank loans and money from private money lenders incurred during elections. For that reason, every activity at the sub-county is influenced by money gains. It is not surprising, therefore, when during one of the leadership developments workshops, the Chairman said that if you invite the community to a meeting to discuss with them leadership, they will ask how much money you are offering them to attend a community meeting. The chairman elaborated that "...this is because they have lost interest and think that we are in leadership to benefit and enrich ourselves...."

Rampant alleged corruption makes the community think that their leaders are there to profit from the position they hold. For that matter, mobilization of masses for development has remained a challenge as the chairman reported. One councillor narrated how earlier in the day she met community members on the way as she walked to the meeting. She reported them as saying: "So you are going for a meeting to plan on how to steal our money, please spare some of it for at least the roads which are apparently impassable".

Following the realisation of the challenges of money politics and alleged corruption through the cycles of PAR, participants suggested that local government elections should be carried out in a different electoral season to avoid the momentum of vote-buying that builds from presidential and parliamentary elections. They also suggested as follows:

Chairmen should be elected by the councillors among themselves, a system close to what happens with LCII and LC IV councils. This arrangement would reduce the amount of money being spent on campaign and political mobilisation in the entire sub-county. This can also give the poor an opportunity to compete for the sub-county chairmanship and leadership generally. Further, it reduces the power that the chairperson holds over the council, which he derives from the bigger constituency he must mobilise for votes.

Summarising this section, the conclusion can be drawn that money politics and alleged corruption has contributed greatly to the compromise of any accountability transparency and participation the virtues that are very important for empowerment that decentralisation promise. Money politics and alleged corruption has further made decentralisation at sub-county government to largely remain political mobilisation institutions during electoral seasons than service provision and LED.

7.7 Financial Systems

To facilitate decentralisation, a financial system should ensure that local governments have significant input into the resources they receive and appropriate. The financial system's framework and the practices required to operationalise it are therefore important to supporting accountability, transparency, and participation for empowerment. Under this subtheme, an analysis of the structure and operation of the financial systems employed in Najja and Kimenyedde sub-counties is undertaken to evaluate how they support the empowerment of local leaders and their communities.

It should be noted that public sector and not-for-profit organizations both aim at the provision of services that improve the general wellbeing of the citizenry. For a government to achieve its objectives, as well as enhance the socio-economic development of a country, there is a need to source finance economically and utilize it efficiently and effectively. Finance, therefore, is the lifeblood of governance institutions, be they private or public. Hamid (2011) however suggests that even though finance is an essential prerequisite for the effective function of every organization, it may on its own be incapable of accelerating the pace of economic growth and development. Finance and financial control frameworks and processes therefore dictate the socio-economic developmental trends of a nation and the quality of lives of the citizenry (Hamid, 2011).

In Uganda's decentralisation model of governance, local governments have planning and budgeting powers that require them to prepare a comprehensive and integrated development plan that incorporates the plans of lower-level local governments. For that reason, local governments have "financial power to mobilise and manage certain own revenues" (MoILG (1997, pp. 145-151). This power, which is provided for in the Local Governments (Financial and Accounting) Regulations, stipulates that the function of a council among others, is to: exercise general control over the public revenue of the council in accordance with the Act;

approve all annual plans and budgets for local government expenditures; approve votes on account and supplementary estimates. The function of an executive committee in relation to financial management is to exercise general supervision and control over the council's finances and ensure that the regulations are observed on government conditional grants. There are, therefore, legal instruments that give local governments leeway to manage their own finances: that is, their locally collected, donations, and grants from the central government.

7.7.1 When District and Central Government Block Empowerment of Sub-county Governments

The findings from this research, however, indicate that in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties, political leaders lacked the practical capacity and fiscal space to effectively regulate finances despite the provisions for this in the 2007 Regulations. When this research examined the procedures for payments and commitments it was found that political leaders are not prominently involved in these procedures. For example, to implement the procedures, the Heads of Departments (HoD) prepare annual department cash requests by quarter for approval of the CEO. Besides procurement of supplies, services or works are initiated by the vote controller by a written request to a chief. On being satisfied that the funds are available and there is a need for goods and services requested, the Head of Finance can then either recommend or modify the written request for approval by a chief, which when signed enables the vote controller to raise a local purchase order (LPO). The LPO must be signed by a HoD as the vote controller, the chief, and Head of Finance. The political leaders participate up to the level of the budget process, and on recommendations and appointments of the above office holders, they do not feature prominently in the above procedures. This creates a situation where local politicians lack proper control over finances and yet are supposedly politically accountable for what transpires when this is revealed at the end of year financial audit.

In the event of a need to reallocate funds, the procedures provide for an application to be made by the relevant vote controller to the chief who must consult with the head of finance and then submit it to the executive committee. The HoD and chairperson of standing committees concerned should attend the executive committee meeting to explain the reasons for reallocation. After this, the Chief Executive is permitted to issue a reallocation warrant to the vote controllers concerned, with copies being sent to the head of finance, head of internal audit and auditor general. Though the overall procedure requires the approval of the executive committee, this research found that, to the contrary, it defaults to whoever holds the final power. This was observed by one of the participants, a sub-county councillor to the district, who read

out Section 82, Article 2 of the *Local Government Act*. He noted that this Article provides that no money can be withdrawn from the general fund account or any other account of the local government unless the withdrawal has been approved by the auditor general or his representative. This means that the ultimate controller of the finances is not the executive committee on behalf of the council, where the chairman is the political head. The controller is one of the mentioned civil servants because they have the prerogative not to approve the application. At the same time, this creates an environment where the top officials, including the political head especially at the district level may be able to connive, compromise, and settle for deals that benefit themselves. At times, the process of reallocation of funds is very long and convoluted and, in many cases, it fails to get approval at the level of the CAO for a personal reason. The chairman recommended more participation in financial matters of their Local Governments in the following statement.

.... I am not saying that the political head should be the one to spend the money, no. What I am saying is that, when the money is changing hands, we should appear prominently in authorising it than just stopping at planning level.... (Najja Sub-county participant, 18 August 2018).

According to one of the district councillors, the prolonged procedures for money acquisition and relocation in many cases resulted in a situation where local government has money in its bank account but cannot directly access it. He explained that the procedure requires that local government official will first inform and seek permission from officials in the central government, who in most cases take a long time to allow or refuse the commitment of funds. The refusal is usually done without proper explanation and this sometime occurs when such funds are meant for council sittings or emergencies. It was said that the council has no absolute mandate to relocate finances. "...we had no mandate to do so, some official from the central government must be convinced about it for this reallocation to be allowed" (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant 27 July 2018). In such a situation, participants realised that the council cannot force the chief to process resource reallocations as may be directed by the council resolution. This limits their participation and, in the long run, their accountability. In fact, another district councillor said that "... there is hardly any political space or mechanism for us to follow the progress of the budget executions" (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 27 July 2018).

A financial power to mobilise and manage certain own revenues was also questioned during the study. A participant asked why sub-county governments are not allowed to collect taxes in some areas of their local tax jurisdiction and questioned the explanation; "... that just because

the amount collectable has gone beyond the threshold amount that the law permits us to collect” (Kimenyedde Sub-county, 27 July 2018). Many councillors considered the threshold too low for the collection of a sizable tax revenue. At that same time the chairman asked, “How much tax revenue do we collect, and how much do we retain at this government level?” (Najja Sub-county participant, 26 July 2018). The redistribution criteria leaves Sub-county governments with very little money for development and supervisory activities. The limited resource therefore affects participation of the political leaders in leadership and development activities.

This research found, as reported by the Kimenyedde Sub-county Chief, that central government has continued to recentralise tax collection and that it is expected that soon all taxes will be collected by the Uganda Revenue Authority. He stated: “...imagine, all taxes will soon be collected by URA, then all local governments will have to wait for the money to trickle from the central government along with instructions...” (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 15 November 2018). According to participants, this meant that all local governments would have to wait for the money from the central government, along with instructions on how to use it. This will further disempower local leaders and stop participation in service and LED delivery.

The Local Governments Financial and Accounting Manual, 2007 is the official subsidiary document of the *Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulation 2007*. Further review of the Manual reveals that much of the central government funds are allocated to specific sectoral areas, which in many cases are not in line with local communities wishes. The treatment of donor and NGO funds for accounting purposes depends on the conditions, terms and regulations attached to them. Any council that receives such funds must ensure that the grants are spent solely on the objectives agreed upon by donors and central government or donors and the council. These arrangements provide little autonomy to sub-county governments to meaningfully influence the kind of investment needed.

A question also arose concerning how money is allocated for government projects at the different levels of government. It was reported that a very big difference existed between the amount of money the government allocated to the Uganda National Road Authority (UNRA) for the construction of a kilometre of a national marram road compared to what was granted to the district local government and the Sub-county (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 21 December 2018). According to participants, there was no explanation for the difference in cost because all governments were expected to provide equally good services. Sub-county governments are further frustrated when they have contractors who are willing to do the same

kind of work at lower cost. This would help to save money for other needs, but they are not allowed to bid for the contract under existing arrangements. The broader problem this signals is with the lack of integration between financial, administration and political arms of decentralised governance.

Participants suggested that local governments should be given greater practical powers to manage their finances. It was suggested that it is important to remove the restrictions that limit the sub-county government from entering into contract agreements that exceed a value of one million shillings. I raised a question whether this would not open more opportunities for corruption, given participants' perceived level of corruption in the entire system. Participants suggested in response that the democratic system (regular elections) should give them a chance to politically account for the resources they receive, instead of sharing the blame for non-performance in a system where they are powerless and participate less. It was also reported that sometimes money is released too late to be absorbed by the local government in a given financial year. For example, the last quarterly release of the year is never utilised in full, and a substantial part of it must be returned to the national consolidated account because it cannot be deployed in the limited time available.

Though Ugandan decentralisation provides for a comprehensive legal framework for financial management systems that support fiscal decentralisation, the practice has not aided empowerment of local government leaders and communities to manage their finances for service delivery and LED. It is on that basis that one councillor in Kimenyedde concluded:

... my point on decentralisation is that central government is willing to give us power and responsibilities in some areas of governance like planning, elections etc, but there is one area that the central government has failed to give us fully and that is finance....

7.8 Cultural Orientations: Does it Enhance Decentralisation?

Culture is the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by people as members of society. It is an aggregate of values and traditions which is deeply linked to the everyday life of the people. Despite the concept's complexity, it was imperative to examine this subtheme as it relates to the application of the PAR approach to the lived experience of individuals in communities as it was perceived to be exerting important effects. Given the cultural nationalism as elaborated earlier, culture was also important in raising the question as to how one can transcend at least some of its

aspects so that those silenced become willing to speak. It is also important to attempt to answer the question as to whether *local* cultural power enhances decentralisation through a range of accepted norms and practices derived from tradition, religion, ethnicity, and so forth.

It is worth noting that Freirean-based approaches to empowerment do make the connection between knowledge, power and culture in enabling more authentic community empowerment and development (Weiler, 1991). Community development writers like Eade (1997) and Huntington and Harrison (2000) have also recognised that ethnicity, gender and other cultural identities shape people's capacities to participate in changing their lives and societies. In relation to that, Uganda's decentralisation structures provide for special interest groups as described in chapter three. Councillors for these special interest group are drawn from the wider communities, which in turn are shaped by the culture of their different religious, gender, education, ethnicity, economic and political affiliations. The purpose of this provision of special interest groups in local government was, according to Mutabwire et al. (2014), to allow these marginalised and vulnerable categories of people to represent themselves and participate in the decision-making process in areas where they live.

7.8.1 The Hindering Culture and Culture of Segregation

It should be noted that cultural differences are not confined to these marginalised and vulnerable people and define the kind of individual councillors and their capacity to comprehend, contribute and influence decisions during council and/or committee meetings. In fact, the report by the Australian Productivity Commission, on *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, showed that the extent to which people feel that they have a say on important community issues is a proxy for personal autonomy-control over decisions that affect them, and a feeling that their ideas and input are valued by the community (Austrian Productivity Commission, 2016).

It is also true that most cultures and cultural institutions in Uganda, as analysed by The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (2010), women, for example, are often absent as front benchers, although their influence may be exercised in a less apparent fashion. It was against this background that Uganda, through the National Vision 2040, chose to develop and popularize a national value system based on a shared national vision to guide the behaviour and culture of the Ugandan people. This was after discovering that Uganda lacked a national culture, a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours. This is said to have created divergence in

perceptions, mindsets and attitudes given the diverse nature of Ugandan people, and was also addressed in Chapter Two in relation to the country's colonial foundations (MoFPED, 2013).

It was therefore not a surprise during the study to see most women remaining quiet during a council meeting, and only be used by their male counterpart to support their ideas by raising their hands. During a reflection meeting a participant pointed at this challenge by asking about how many women had spoken during that meeting. A participant said that women are timid and not capable of speaking amongst men. He went on to say: "female youth councillor used to speak up before she got married. Right now, we do not know what happened, she changed for the worse" (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 15 November 2018).

However, as indicated in both sub-counties women councillors gradually started speaking up. An example of speaking up occurred during a council meeting (Action and Observation) at Kimenyedde Sub-County when a female councillor made what participants said was her maiden speech and questioned the delay in the release of the money to buy a bicycle for the youth councillor. The improvement in participation of women councillors was again observed by the speaker when he said "... it was amazing to see women speaking up and trying to make sense of what happens to our budget decisions, it was greatly a success, and we can do better".

Furthermore, male councillors became more tolerant to female councillors as they also became more assertive after conscience raising. Hajji, who was feared especially by the female councillors, suggested that members should always feel free to oppose him and that it is good for them to speak out about what they think is right for the meeting. Hajji further explained that, at times, he takes a hard stand on issues to save time. When members of the council had an opportunity to amend the order paper as presented by the executive committee, female councillors began to oppose or propose changes. This was a positive development because at the start of the project female councillors were simply pre-picked by the chairman to move motions without questioning. The female councillors were gradually being empowered and empowering themselves and their numbers and participation was giving a voice to the communities they represented.

On the empowerment of the youth, a report by United Nation indicated that,

"...young people are marginalized in formal governance and political systems as voters, candidates, and members of local or national government. This marginalization is partly due a lack of social capital such as trust and respect because of their age; and to political systems that are reflections of the larger societies in which they are situated and are therefore permeated by the same gerontocratic orientation" (United Nations (2017, p. 37).

In line with the above, this research found out that youth participation in leadership and LED in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties were also challenged by being marginalised through lack of resources for their mobilization. Their constituency is not considered important as they are culturally looked at as young boys and girls. This was realised when the youth councillor reported that he was given 50,000 shillings as a sitting allowance, maximumly three times a year, to mobilise the youth in the entire sub-county. It was also found out that the youth are not participating in choosing which group of youth should be given money through the Youth Livelihood Initiative, let alone their position in the council, as most of them are most times silent listeners.

A male councillor for disabilities on the other hand pointed out his fears when he said,

Representation of people with disabilities at local councils right from village council, do not work well. This is partly because they do not know what they are supposed to be doing. And at times leaders keep them at the periphery, and not involved in government activities. Until we involve them is when the special interest groups that decentralisation provide for will be of any use (Najja Sub-county participant, 27 July 2018).

The possible explanation for this is that, even though the 1995 Constitution recognises the rights of persons with disabilities to attain full mental and physical potential, and as well as the 2006 National Policy on Disability and other laws advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, culturally families still hide children with disabilities. According to Rohwerder (2018), a lack of understanding and awareness regarding the causes of disabilities and their resulting characteristics in developing countries is a key factor in the stigma experienced by the people with disabilities. Therefore, misconceptions about the cause of disabilities often results from cultural or religious beliefs. Rohwerder (2018) further asserts that disability is often blamed on such things as misdeeds of ancestors, misdeeds of parents, misdeeds of the person with disabilities, supernatural forces, and so forth. Therefore, as a result people with disabilities may be thought to be not quite human or a source of shame, which has a serious consequence for how they are then treated.

The above may explain why most councillors representing people with disabilities were illiterate, as they are excluded from schools mostly by their own families and the unfriendly environment in school. Because of this, they were not able not develop capacities to freely contribute to their communities. Besides, at Najja and Kimenyedde sub-county headquarters, the meeting hall and the toilet facilities did not have facilities to support people with disabilities to access them, which made it even more difficult for them to participate in leadership.

This research found that most special/vulnerable groups find it difficult to contribute to debate and participate in decision making, which is a challenge that many African cultures contribute to and/or cause. It is therefore imperative for Uganda to gradually develop a national value system based on a shared national vision to guide the behaviour and culture of the Ugandan people. This will possibly help in empowering every member of the community to be able to make their contribution through the decentralised government system. It should be noted that in many African government systems, the election guidelines provide for the inclusion and election of the vulnerable groups of people and a lot of government resources for economic development are channelled into initiatives organized based on these special groups. However, if such groups are not empowered to utilise such resources and positions, then the intended goals might never be achieved.

7.8.2 Need for Participatory Learning

In summary, this research could not use the change attribute of PAR to change the culture of the participants in this rather short time to achieve full participation, accountability, and transparency of local leaders and thus the communities. However, it did cause some observable changes and was able to sensitise and create consciousness that these are challenges to empowering of the individual councillors and worthy of working on. And that if they are not tackled through participatory learning, they will continue to hinder empowerment and development. Furthermore, considering the challenges decentralisation faces in Africa and the broader developing world, local leaders and their communities need just to be triggered into systematic participatory action learning to improve their own practices. This improvement will in turn enhance their working environment and that of other stakeholders to bring about change in specific contexts of decentralisation in Uganda and Africa. It was therefore in the interest of this research not only to study the phenomena, but also to try through community learning to create consciousness in the communities through their local leaders of the challenges they face in implementing the policy.

7.9 The Empowering Journey of Participatory Action Research.

This section discusses the empowering journey as experienced by the co-researchers in both case study areas and its effects on them. PAR in policy-related studies have effectively supported change in several PAR studies in Africa as well as other parts of the developing world. Such change is achieved by answering the following questions: how can our research bring about change? What action is needed, and who is to be targeted? Research can be used to

articulate how a policy is intended to operate, and to test empirically whether, and if so, how it achieves its intended objectives (Bolton et al., 2018).

7.9.1 Self-discovery: Experiencing Conscientization and Transformative Practices of PAR

Given the importance of PAR as earlier discussed in this thesis, this analysis considers that this research project was an empowering journey. Its employment was partly intended to improve the co-participants' practice and confidence in their formal performance of leadership through their empowerment. With respect to this objective, the use of PAR was an imperative in this study as a research approach as explained by Elliott (1991), Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) and Stringer (2014). Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggest that PAR is effective in emancipatory projects (i.e., projects that require social change) because of its potential to build the confidence of participants through genuine collaboration. They find that this results in self-discovery and attitude change of the participants towards themselves and the policy. This section therefore discusses how empowering the journey was for co-researchers during the study. It analyses the changes in the individual members and each council's strength and competencies towards the decentralisation policy and its practices. These changes were observed during the different PAR cycles of LD workshops (Planning), Council meetings (Action/Observation) and Group discussion (Reflection) during the field study as presented in the previous Chapters 5 and 6. This empowering journey is discussed under the theme: conscientization and transformative practices of PAR.

Conscientization is a Freirean term that refers to the development of critical social consciousness in which dialogue and analysis serve as the foundation for reflection and action (Denzin et al., 2008). In almost every society, a small number of people exert domination over the masses, resulting in dominated consciousness (Freire et al., 2018; Holst, 2006). This study found out that dominated consciousness was not an exception to the leadership in the two study areas of Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. Domination in this case, though, was of Lower Local Government political leaders by Higher Local Government and Central government officials and workers, and in some cases by the policy framework itself.

Although at the start of the research, participants showed some awareness of the subjugation of their practice by the dominant group and to the formal policies, it was through group discussions (reflection) and leadership development workshops (planning), that they came to be more conscious and to critically evaluate the effects of this subjugation.

Study of the induction process, *The Local Government Council Participant's Handbook 2016*, for example, found it to be insufficient in many ways. This process, whereby government seeks to transform newly elected leaders and make them more conscious and aware of their leadership responsibilities, is done only once at every start of a political term of five years. Meanwhile, the turnover of councillors each time there is local council election was estimated to be over 75% (MoLG, 2016). This was confirmed at a Najja group discussion (18 January 2019) where the Chairman stated that most of the councillors are always new to local government leadership at the start of a new political term of office. The induction process was further criticized by one participant who suggested that “there is a content shortage in the induction process of political leader upon their assumption of office”. He claimed that a proper induction would harness councillors’ participation in decentralisation initiatives and therefore demand for accountability, transparency, and participation (Kimenyedde Subcounty participant, 24 July 2018). This assertion during a survey meeting session in Kimenyedde indicated the thirst for learning by the councillors with the aim to enhance their leadership performance.

It should be noted that the need for induction of councillors by the Ministry of Local Government is an indicator that government is aware of the critical importance of empowering leaders through learning. However, the realisation of the shortage in content and time for induction process and the suggestion by the participants to have more learning sessions by themselves was an achievement of this study. The PAR approach kick-started participant’s urge to learn and improve their performance. The appreciation of this empowering process through conscientization was further reflected at the end of the first Leadership Development Workshop (LDW) after the study of the National LED Policy together with the Local Government Act 1997. It is at this time when a participant said that they needed more such leadership development workshops to educate themselves about the policy, the laws governing them, and establish a working relationship with the technical staff. This was after realising that others could be benefiting from their bickering and unnecessary arguments and that they needed to work as a team for the effective implementation of decentralisation and its related policy.

Again, it was said during one of the last reflection meetings that “...we have now improved the way we deliberate in our meetings; we are now faced with the challenge of having very few council meetings a year...”. This indicated awareness of the need and importance of the council meetings to deliver good governance. Participants further realised that allowance-driven meetings are denying them a chance to meet. Later during the study process, they realised that council meeting schedules can be controlled by whoever oversees the release of the council-

sitting allowances. This, however, triggered a prolonged discussion as to whether meetings are organised because of the availability of sitting allowances or the presence of pressing governance issues. It was eventually suggested and adopted by the co-researchers that it was good to meet over a cup of tea to continue learning even after the end of the research project. This is particularly important because a cup of tea can be cheaply provided and enable members to meet, talk and learn from each other in line with what Stringer (2014) suggests, rather than waiting for a rule-restricted council meeting.

Improved consciousness about the challenges faced was revealed when a participant suggested that they needed to be more educated and informed about the rules of procedures of council meetings. This was as a result of the study of *Rules of Procedures booklet* and his realisation of the several mistakes being made that caused delays in the council proceedings “I am happy for this kind of study because we are now learning about the rules of procedure and we are the same people who make such mistakes during council and committee meetings” (Najja Sub-county participant, 18 August 2018). This was after realising that meetings that took place prior to this study failed to follow the rules of procedures. During past meetings, council members would condemn the speaker, even though he was being impartial and trying to guide the meeting by ruling a councillor out of order. They had not been aware that Rule 21 (Speaking in the Council, sub-rule 9, p. 13) states “if the speaker rules any matter raised out of order, there shall be no discussion on such ruling” (Government, 2014, p. 13). Members realised that this had caused division and more conflicts among councillors, and subsequently, delayed decision making and progress.

Thus, positive change was realised when participants came to learn through the study of the *Induction of Local Government Councils: Participant's Handbook* (MoLG, 2016) that, despite being in a multiparty setting, local government operations must be cognizant of the overall need for improving service delivery and development of society. Accordingly, this is emphasised by promotion of the welfare of society, just governance of humanity, trustee of the people and faithfulness to the people. Therefore, it is important for all leaders to realise that the general interest of the citizens must prevail over the individual and party interests. In the first council meeting for the new financial year in Najja Subcounty, for example, this division was very prominent. This division could later factor into the overall performance of the council since there is no unity to demand what is due to the council. However, there was progressive improvement in the deliberation of the councillors in the subsequent council meetings as the study progressed through the cycles of PAR. In fact, in one of the meetings, a participant said

that for the first time they acted like leaders during a council meeting. They had put aside their petty differences and discussed the council issues in a mature, civil manner. They also realised that they can even perform better in future. "...we just need to work together as a council to have this policy work for us all, instead of suspecting and fighting each other, we can do this". (Najja Sub-county participant, 21 December 2019).

In a further indication of steady improvement in the councillors' deliberations in a council meeting, a participant in one of the subsequent reflection meetings said, "for the first time we held a council where we did not waste time on procedural issues, and it is why we had several resolutions reached, I am sure the district councillors had a package to take to the district council" (Najja Sub-county participant, 18 January 2019).

Participants showed more consciousness of their situation after reading and studying parts of the *Local Government Act 1997* and realising the power and responsibilities it stipulates to them. At this point a participant gave the reasons why they failed to serve the people. The reason given also preceded the utterances that "central government gave us power by one hand and took it away by the other" (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 27 July 2018). The participant gave an example of recommendation for appointment of civil servants to manage decentralised institutions like health centres and schools, and then fail to terminate their appointment contracts due to poor performance. In such cases, local leaders and the wider community lose interest in the leadership and for that matter, leaders are no longer accountable to the people. There was a suggestion of a need to have a clear way of influencing termination of contracts of those who fail to serve, with less interference from the central and or higher local government officials. This, however, pointed to the possibility that councillors did not know how to go about the labour laws governing civil servants in the local governments, of which alleged corrupt officials seem to take advantage of. Fortunately, this aroused the interest in questioning the process and procedures of engaging and disengaging civil servants at the sub-county level, which they promised to follow up.

Additional transformative instances are seen at many stages in the PAR cycles in this study. For example:

- where a councillor no longer feared opposing a 'Hajji'⁴² for fear of being disloyal to him and to be regarded as a waste of time and a self-embarrassment. In many cases it

⁴² A male Muslim who made an Islamic-religious pilgrimage to Mecca, usually physically and financially capable.

was noted that a councillor who debated against this feared hajji would be rebuked by him anyway after the meeting. Therefore, for fear of embarrassment and waste of time councillors would only debate in favour of his submission.

- when members of the council had an opportunity to amend the order paper as presented by the executive committee.
- where members now had some documents available to them before the meeting including minutes of the previous meeting, order paper, etc.
- when most councillors realised that it was their right to have access to the necessary documents, etc.

This council was greatly transformed whereby a member could question the chairman outright in such words like “Is the chairman in order to ask the council to allow him to transfer the money without knowledge of the figures he is talking about?” (Najja Sub-county participant, 21 December 2018). As a result, the speaker got the opportunity to handle this issue by demanding that the chairman produce copies of his report before the meeting could continue. Subsequently, a councillor is happy having been the one to call the chairman to order when he had not presented a finance committee report during the council meeting. The executive through clerk to council was able to distribute most of the documents that are needed for a day’s council meeting. From these documents, members quoted figures of money released for both road maintenance and classroom construction questioning the chairman’s request for the transfer of all the classroom construction money to the road repair. The council reached a level where a resolution can be reached to invite the area Member of Parliament or District chairperson to listen to the concerns pertaining the presidential/state house poverty alleviation initiatives, which are implemented by institutions parallel to local government structures. These achievements, which may seem simple, were very important research outcomes and contributed to the participants’ empowerment/emancipatory process. This was emphasised during the reflection meeting when it was mentioned that for the first time, councillors were active and participative during a council meeting and the speaker was perceived to be fairer. This was affirmed by the speaker in Kimenyedde during a reflection meeting when he said that “for the first time I felt I was overwhelmed by the councillors’ enthusiasm in knowing what was happening with the budget....”

More conscientization was echoed when the sub-county chief realised that working with the politicians was a good idea. He noted that open discussion of their challenges with the political wing would help to find solutions to policy matters.

...to us, this is a no-go area, we only execute what is given to us, and, during the council meeting we are barred by law from discussing unless called upon to answer technical queries.... (Kimenyedde Sub-county participant, 15 November 2018)

The Sub-county Chief's submission brought to light a theoretical division between 'politics' and 'administration' as earlier mentioned. This division breaks down in practice because administrators influence policy and policy makers often influence the conduct of administrators' work. Bringing both councillors and administrators together in this research was thus an appropriate decision. This is because communities and individuals cannot be empowered in isolation from those who might possibly deny them access to mutual respect and valued resources and this is something this research aimed to avoid (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

7.10 Conclusion

Whenever the participants and I met at a reflection meeting to assess the progress, analyse the data and at times replan for next cause of action and observation, we realised the challenges and changes outlined in this chapter. The realisation of the challenges and the changes were achieved due to the conscientization that was occurring through the PAR process. These transformations could not be achieved through a one-day induction seminar as carried out by the Ministry of Local Government, but through cycles of Planning, Action/Observation and Reflection/Replanning. As seen at the start of the study, many councillors had neither studied the Local Government Act, the Standard Rules of Procedure and other policy documents nor recognised their importance, for all the years they had been leaders. Yet these are critical legal and technical guiding documents. The councillors were now helped by their colleagues and the technical staff to appreciate and develop practical knowledge and to enhance learning, teaching and possibly policy making.

This research process resulted into a reasonable degree of conscientization of the participants resulting in the urge to understand issues of service delivery and LED, including budgets, asking, and providing reports and translating documents and meeting minutes. Participants developed more confidence to demand to know about OWC/NAADS and other Statehouse and Presidential development initiatives in their areas. Female councillors were now generally speaking up and trying to make sense of what happens to the budget decisions. It was amazing

to see continuing change in the attitude of participants and the making of suggestions to counter the challenges they face. Most important was the increase in the number of people from the wider communities who attended council meetings by standing outside and watching through council hall windows since in both cases there was no public gallery for members to sit. This was possibly caused by the improved publicity of the council meetings and the confidence councillors had to invite people from their constituencies to watch the proceedings of the councils. This could in a way help in countering elite capture whereby inclusiveness and participation to deepen democracy requires the active engagement in public affairs of citizens from all socioeconomic strata (Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2006). These achievements are in line with Mohan and Stokke (2000) assertion that empowerment is a collective mobilisation of marginalised groups against the disempowering activities of both the state and the market.

This chapter has analysed the dichotomy between theoretical decentralisation as laid out in the official theoretical policy framework, and its practice as experienced by the grassroots politicians/communities at the lower levels of government as found in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties. This analysis has addressed the objectives of the thesis, which seeks to critically analyse how decentralisation policy is theorised and practiced. The chapter has also analysed the research data to address the central research questions. Among other findings, the analysis reveals that decentralisation as currently practiced leads to the disempowerment of local leaders. This is due to lack of accountability, transparency, participation, financial systems practices, money-politics and alleged corruption, and deferential cultural orientations. Finally, a large gap between theories of decentralised local governance and on-the-ground practices was found that needs redressing as recommended in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

Evaluation, Recommendations and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the research undertaken for this thesis and highlights how decentralisation is working in both case studies' sub-counties. It provides an overview of the similarities and differences experienced in Kimenyedde and Najja sub-counties in the context of each district's history and degree of institutionalisation. The chapter also highlights and discusses the considerable gap that exists between decentralisation theory, the formal structures in place in Uganda to deliver it, and reports on its achievement, and the actual practices and experiences of local officials and communities on the ground. It identifies some of the shortcomings in the research methodology and how they might have affected the validity of the findings. This chapter also considers future possible linked research that builds on the current study. The last section gives a conclusion as an overall summary of the dissertation. Based on these findings, I make several recommendations that would bridge the gap, improve Ugandan governance, and secure improved economic development, security, and stability for local communities into the future.

8.2 Evaluation and Recommendations

Since 1997 several evaluations on decentralisation's general achievements in Uganda have been carried out. The most notable evaluations included the following: Hout et al. (2016), Mushemeza (2019), Mutabwire et al. (2014), Echelon (2016). The evaluation reports on political decentralisation, for example, indicate that it has been possible to have democratically elected local councils at all levels of government. Based on this, it would be expected that each community is governed by the leaders of their choice at regular elections. However, this research has found that village council elections have not been conducted for close to 17 years and that many were therefore dysfunctional. Though elections were later carried out in 2018, a lot of political, economic, and social damage was reported to have already occurred as a result. This included considerable disinterest in participation by grassroots communities in development planning, security, LED, and the general management of their affairs. Additionally, a questionable voting method requiring voters to line-up behind a candidate as opposed to a secret ballot paper system, which had been used 17 years earlier, was now used

to elect new leaders. The lining-up method raised many questions about the government's commitment to decentralised representative democracy. Participants feared the effect it had already had on communities, since it threatened to divide communities up into competing factions and undermine the performance of incoming leaders. This study also found that local government elections are characterised by credible allegations of vote-buying, resulting in corrupt political leaders.

Participants made two related recommendations on elections. These were to have (i) a separate electoral season different from that of the presidential and constituency members of parliament and (ii) an electoral college arrangement for the sub-county and district chairpersons. By adopting a separate electoral season, participants sought to reduce the vote-buying at the national level from spilling over into local government elections. By calling for an electoral college, on the other hand, participants aimed to reduce the unwavering powers of the chairpersons over the parish/sub-county councillors. The powerful chairpersons against the already disempowered councillors make it difficult for the council to demand for accountability, transparency, and participation. However, I further recommend that the above recommendations are further researched to figure out how best to minimise the impact of the current processes at the local level.

Government evaluation reports suggested that the strategic objective of administrative decentralisation is to ensure effective and efficient administration. To achieve this, the Ugandan Government amended the 1995 Constitution in 2005 to bring the appointment of the CAO and Deputy CAO under the control of the Public Service Commission. The official reason for the amendment was to make the position of the CAO more independent from local politics and to address competence and quality issues. The Government's evaluation of the success of these changes is that local government staff are now more responsive and accountable to the local governments (Echelon, 2016; Hout et al., 2016; Mushemeza, 2019). However, this study found that the gap between political leaders and administrative staff has instead widened, as technical staff now have greater allegiance to their line supervisors than to local political leaders. The revised arrangement has reduced any possible horizontal accountability, transparency, and participation, and led to allegations of more corrupt activities and loss of public resources. In their recommendations, participants wanted a return to the previous method where the CAO was appointed and supervised by the DSC. Participants, however, added that the CAO should be supervised by the DSC in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government. The additional recommendation was that suspected misconduct or corruption cases involving the CAO should

be handled expeditiously and at the expense of the central government unlike the current arrangement where local government incur all the legal costs. This measure, according to the study participants, would support accountability enforcement efforts by the central government. I would however recommend that the above recommendation should be subjected to further research to work out what the optimum arrangement would be.

The fiscal decentralisation strategy implemented by increasing fiscal autonomy, widening local participation in decision-making, and streamlining fiscal transfer modalities, was nominally designed to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness of local government programmes. Government evaluations indicate that these new decentralised arrangements have allowed local government to raise their revenue and have greater discretion in reallocating some government grants. This research found that reallocation of funds is a very long and difficult process, and not one entirely at the discretion of local government leaders. The many steps and red tape involved undermine a core feature of decentralisation as speedy and effective decision making is impossible. At the same time, the long process created venues and spaces for potential corrupt practices to occur. Meanwhile, government reports indicated an unstable local revenue performance against the anticipated local revenue stream. The research undertaken for this study confirms the report, because it was found that the local revenue base is indeed weak, and many revenue-generating projects and programs have been recentralised.

There have also been more stringent measures by central government to control local government financial resources through the newly established Integrated Financial Management Systems. This system requires that all revenue collected by local governments be sent to central government before being reallocated. The system has resulted in the disempowering of local leaders due to unexplained delays in the release of the money back to the sub-county councils and the reduced portion received. Moreover, political leaders have no clear policy space to monitor sub-county bank accounts to effectively represent their people in matters of finance. This research recommends that local government political leaders should actively manage their locally raised revenue so that, at the end of the financial year, they are able to give a comprehensive account on how they have used the finances and are politically accountable to their electors. This would operationalise fiscal decentralisation and ultimately empower the local leaders. While fears of corruption abound, it is suggested that such local leaders could be held democratically accountable through regular elections if the voters are more enlightened to demand for political accountability. This arrangement would give them a chance to disburse and account for the resources they receive instead of currently, where they

share the blame for non-performance in a system in which they are mostly spectators. It is further recommended that central government should increase the money it gives to local government in the form of grants and donations. This is preferable to the continued subdividing of existing local government units to create new and smaller local governments in a bid to bring services nearer to the people. The creation of new government units is said to increase overhead costs against the already constrained national budget.

Regarding bottom-up planning through the participatory planning process, all local governments have plans that are linked to the National Development Plan which is implemented through council-approved budgets. The plans give districts and sub-counties a single reference point for all development interventions and initiatives. As a result, government reported that there is improved coordinating and monitoring activities taking place both at the political and technical level. However, in practice this study found that planning, coordination, and monitoring are undertaken only by a few executive committee members and that there are not enough resources to finance monitoring activities. The processes for agreeing to the budget and development plan have been curtailed by a lack of funds to organise budget and planning conferences. The reported lack of proper channels through which councillors can demand to know what has happened with proposals forwarded to the central government reduces transparency and makes participation difficult. Moreover, parallel programs including the Presidential and Statehouse initiatives, which are well funded but with a parallel structure to that of local governments, create significant barriers to participation, transparency, and accountability. Such programs have had negative effects on promoting LED and poverty alleviation efforts because they undermine bottom-up planning process and ultimately disempower local government leaders.

Regarding the existence of parallel structures for central and local governments, this research recommends that these be restructured, and the available local government structures be employed. This would be possible because local governments hire and pay technical staff who can and do manage related sub-county government programs. If adopted, this would also reduce duplication of work, allocate resources to where they are needed most, and save money currently wasted in payment of salaries and overheads for duplicated positions.

LED, which aims to empower local governments and make them economic and revenue generating entities, was investigated in this study. The Ugandan Government's evaluation reports show that local governments have been transformed from an expense in the national

budget to revenue earners as job creators; and that local governments are channels to access development funding and thus of pride to local leaders. This research, however, found the contrary. Though a lot of money is channelled through LED and its related programs, local leaders have no control over it. Programs like NAADS and OWC have not been properly managed, and communities are poorer now than they were before these programs were introduced. This research recommends that local leaders or their representatives should prominently participate in the planning and execution of these programs. This is because local leaders know better the needs of the communities they serve. There was a further recommendation that central government should also invest in searching for international markets for local agricultural products. This is because central government through NAADS and OWC supply firm inputs like seedlings when there is no market for the produce.

Finally, it was the explicit intention of this research to assess whether decentralisation policy and practices were fundamentally different across sub-counties. To that end, it compared the experience of Najja Sub-county in Buikwe District, a relatively young district, with Kimenyedde Sub-county in Mukono District, which was much more well established. This research found no significant differences between the two in terms of the challenges confronting local councillors. They both faced the same challenges of putting decentralisation into practice. However, there were some observable differences in the way government business is carried in each sub-county. In Najja sub-county where the chairman had a better formal education, it resulted in better work and better representation than in the sub-county where the chairman was less-well educated. This observation has led to the recommendation that there should be a minimum educational standard at least for the chairperson of the council. It was also observed that a sub-county with a chairman from the ruling party finds it easier to influence the transfer of nonperforming technical staff, which can result into improved policy performance. In contrast, it seemed difficult for the local government where the chairman is from the opposition party to transfer nonperforming staff.

In summary, those with power in central government and higher-level local government need to recognise the inherent systematic challenges and constraints under which lower local government leaders operate. There is a need for continued efforts to generate a sustained mutual commitment by leaders of all levels and the recognition that all are linked by a common goal of improved political, social, and economic wellbeing of the communities.

8.3 Conclusion

8.3.1 Revisiting the aims of this study

The overall aim of this study was to critically analyse how decentralisation policy is theorised and implemented in poor African countries by in-depth participatory study of the case of Uganda and make evidence-based policy recommendations.

These aims were further explicated in this study through the following research questions:

1. How has the formal policy of decentralisation in Uganda been implemented in practice?
2. To what extent does Uganda's decentralisation policy and practice achieve its intended goals?
3. What reforms are required to decentralisation policy and practice to ensure it promotes greater empowerment of local government and communities to participate in LED?
4. How can communities realise decentralisation's empowerment potential and actively engage in bottom-up planning for LED?

8.3.2 How the research was carried out

To answer the above questions, the study investigated decentralisation practices as set out in the relevant literature. It took an overview on the international perspective, particularly United Kingdom devolution of power and some African countries. This exploration brought to light the continued debates over the devolution of power and the impact of political institutions, particularly the territorial sovereignty, empowerment and how it affects local economic development. The analysis also showed how governments, policy frameworks, and community representatives in these areas need to work together to make sure that their devolved system functions at least minimally to deliver a degree of community empowerment and local benefits. Broadly, this literature demonstrated that decentralisation could promote relatively autonomous administration by local governments and foster reasonably efficient and effective decision-taking at the local level and improve LED. The study later took a more focussed scrutiny of Uganda's structural/legal and theoretical model of decentralisation and related programs that are intended to empower local governments and local communities for LED. It was found that decentralisation was an ambitious policy reform of Uganda with the potential to empower local leaders and communities to improve governance in a representative local government democracy.

Using the Participatory Action Research paradigm, and basing the investigation on the local communities' experiences, field research was carried out in two case study areas in two

complete three-phased cycles of Planning, Action and Reflection. Data was presented following PAR cycles/phases as they were carried out during the different quarters of the financial year 2018/2019. Through Action Research, stakeholders explored their experience, gained greater clarity and understanding of events and activities, and used those extended understandings to construct possible solutions to the problem on which the study was focused.

As analysed earlier, at the start of the study, participants showed some awareness of the subjugation of their practice by dominant groups and formal policies. It was, however, through the PAR cycles that they came to be more conscious and to critically evaluate the effects of this subjugation through their lived, grassroot experience. Through conscientization, therefore, the study became an empowering journey, as it indeed improved the co-participants' practice and confidence in their formal performance of leadership and at the same time collected data for writing this thesis.

In that respect, seven important themes were identified across the two case studies. These themes were identified as being more pertinent to the decentralisation process and foundational to answering the research questions. They were: Participation, Accountability, Transparency, Integration, Money Politics and Corruption, Financial system, and Cultural Orientation. Several recommendations were made on how reforms to the decentralisation policy could empower local councillors and generate better LED outcomes. Moreover, the purpose of research is to develop knowledge that can be applied to emancipate communities, and in this case, to confront structural impediments that remain daunting to local councillors. This was mostly achieved through this research. This is because the research process was an education for the community and the individual in the experience of creating one's own knowledge. Therefore, the participatory action approach helped me move away from the current arrangements for knowledge creation where the established centres of power tend to have a monopoly on the production and use of knowledge. Usually, this monopoly occurs to the disadvantage of the communities in which the research takes place and can be exploitative (Reason, 1996, 1998).

8.3.3 Answering the Research Questions

Regarding the first research question on how the formal policy of decentralisation in Uganda has been implemented in practice, the study found that decentralisation as currently practiced leads to the disempowerment of local leaders as explained in chapter seven. It was further found that the local revenue base is indeed weak, and many revenue-generating projects and programs formally decentralised have been recentralised. Furthermore, a large gap was found to exist

between theories of decentralised local governance and on-the-ground practices that need to be addressed as set out in the recommendation section.

Regarding the extent to which Uganda's decentralisation policy and practice achieved its intended goals, the study found that the gap between political leaders and administrative staff has instead widened. This is so because technical staff now have greater allegiance to their line supervisors than to local political leaders. The revised arrangement has reduced any possible horizontal accountability, transparency, and participation, and led to allegations of more corrupt activities and loss of public resources. This has had negative effect to the achievement of empowerment and LED. The study suggested the following reforms to decentralisation policy and practice to ensure it promotes greater empowerment of local government and communities to participate in LED: a return to the previous method where the CAO was appointed and supervised by the DSC. Participants, however, added that the CAO should be supervised by the DSC in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government. The additional recommendation was made so that suspected misconduct or corruption cases involving the CAO would be handled expeditiously and at the expense of the central government unlike the current arrangement where local government incurs all the legal costs.

Regarding the existence of parallel structures for central and local governments, this research recommends that these be restructured, and the available local government structures be more effectively used to promote empowerment and LED.

Finally, about how communities can realise decentralisation's empowerment potential and actively engage in bottom-up planning for LED, this research recommended that local government political leaders should actively manage their locally raised revenue so that, at the end of the financial year, they are able to give a comprehensive account on how they have used the finances and are politically accountable to their electors. It was further recommended that central government should increase the financial resources it gives to local government in the form of grants and donations. This was seen as preferable to the continued subdividing of existing local government units to create new and smaller local government units, explained by central government as means to bring services nearer to the communities.

There was, finally, a recommendation for continued efforts to generate a sustained mutual commitment by leaders of all levels and the recognition that all are linked by a common goal of improved political, social, and economic wellbeing of the communities.

8.4 Potential limitations

8.4.1 Methodological limitations

Participatory action research methodology requires participants to be co-researchers of their own practice. In trying to do research, councillors as researchers cannot avoid being political and emotional. Though being political in PAR is positively important to effect change in leadership system and communities, this also made it challenging for the study to stick to its methods and techniques to remain focused on the academic research aims and objectives. It was also very challenging to draw the line between academic research and active politics of the area. This was especially true in Kimenyedde sub-county where I was born and raised; and also, in Najja, where the chairman had a different political view from most of his councillors. In my experience, meeting pure academic research standards was quite demanding for parish councillors. Throughout the research I have sought to be aware of any unconscious bias and to ensure it did not unduly impact the validity of the study and have worked closely with my supervisory team to ensure I provide as an objective an account as is possible.

4.4.2 General Study Limitations

Basing the research around the financial quarterly reimbursement council cycle made planning for the study difficult. This was because it meant that the timing of council meetings was not determined by the researcher and the participants. This had the effect of limiting the number of action and observation phases the study originally planned to undertake. However, by the end of the second cycle of PAR observable change in the participants' way of leadership had been recorded, and enough data had been collected to conduct the analysis. Unfortunately, the anticipated continued follow up of the activities have been deeply impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The meetings that were to be made over a cup of tea as agreed upon during the research process have been discontinued and it is unclear when enough Ugandans will be vaccinated to enable them to recommence these face-to-face activities. The additional feedback that they would have provided would have further enriched the study and the analysis.

8.5 Considerations for further research

The study has identified the problem of lack of intergovernmental, departmental, and private sector working relationships. This should be explored more fully with a view to identifying the precise conflict areas and how these can be mitigated to promote greater coherence in local government management. There is therefore a need to study the problem of conflict between the public policy and policy administration arms of government as these seem to be disempowering local leaders in pursuit of representative democracy. Yet, analysts seem to be refraining from engaging with this conflict, which is in many cases a source of paralysis in public policy practice and anarchy in most African developing nations.

Secondly, while this PAR study was carried out in two Ugandan communities as representative case for the developing countries, it would be useful to conduct a larger and more comprehensive study encompassing other districts in Uganda; and subsequently, if funds could be sourced, of Sub-Saharan African countries that embrace decentralisation as a strategy. This would not only assist in validating the current study but, since this study demonstrated that PAR could work with the community leaders, assist in the wider empowerment of local African government officials.

8.6 Looking towards a Hopeful Future

Uganda like most other African developing countries has chosen to undertake a devolution approach to decentralisation. Devolution requires the continued downward distribution of power, resources, and responsibility to local governments. However, the recentralisation of formally decentralised power, resources and responsibility that was found in the field research is frustrating the devolution process. The disempowerment of local leaders by the lack of accountability, transparency, participation, financial systems practices, money-politics, and alleged corruption by the different stakeholders, combined with the deferent cultural orientation, forms a fundamental challenge in the decentralisation-empowerment process. These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of confidence, ownership, and technical know-how of lower local leaders. Indeed, not knowing what is expected of local leaders was an area this research sought to address through the process of PAR.

Given the findings by this study, Uganda and many developing African countries have not yet achieved the intended goals for decentralisation. However, the underlying theoretical support for decentralisation, the long-standing tradition of cultural nationalism, ambitious reform agendas, and the more positive outcome of decentralisation in developed communities, provide

some positive experiences that given hope that decentralisation can achieve its objectives in an African context. This study tells us therefore, that political decentralisation, supported by administrative and fiscal decentralisation in Africa, if put in practice and better implemented, could promote democratic leadership and LED. This needs to be done through continued conscientization and empowerment of communities through their increasingly competent and empowered local leaders. In practice empowerment is most likely to encourage a small group of motivated community members first, before getting expanded to a broader base of citizens through outreach for constituency building, and education for conscientization.

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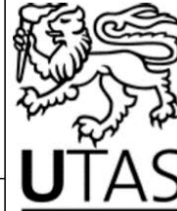
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Social Science Ethics Officer
Private Bag 01 Hobart
Tasmania 7001 Australia
Tel: (03) 6226 2763
Fax: (03) 6226 7148
Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

31 May 2018

AssocProf Fred Gale
Office of the School of Social Sciences
Private Bag 1340

Dear AssocProf Gale

Re: FULL ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: H0017270 - Putting Decentralisation policy into practice: challenges in
empowering communities for sustainable local economic development in Uganda

We are pleased to advise that the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee approved the above project on 30 May 2018.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.
2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.

A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Appendix B: Information Letter for the Participants

Dear Parish councillor,

Invitation:

You are invited to participate in a Participatory Action Research Study of Local Government Empowerment for Local Economic Development

This study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy in Society and Culture degree for Kizito Basalidde Lubuulwa under the supervision of Associate Professor Fred Gale and Dr Joanna Vince of the University of Tasmania in Australia.

The purpose of this study:

The Purpose of this study is to critically analyse how decentralisation can be implemented in Uganda to achieve Local Economic Development and to make evidence-based policy recommendations that further empower local communities to use their resources for sustainable Local Economic Development. The study will investigate how best local leaders and the community can be empowered by the new established systems to ably contribute to the community wellbeing.

Why you have been invited:

You have been invited to this study because of your expertise as a leader in your area and a stakeholder in the development of your constituency. This study will run for a period of one financial year in which your participation is voluntary. In case you decline to take part, you and your position will not in any way be affected by the decision.

For the purposes of this research, you will be identified as leader/councillor representing your constituency/parish and/or by your position on the Sub-county executive or any relevant committees.

What you will be asked to do:

In this study, you will work alongside other parish councillors in all parishes in the sub-county. You will be part of the research team and a co-researcher. You will attend Leadership Development (PL) workshops, where through focus group discussions, we will discuss the

challenges of putting decentralisation in practice and make recommendations on how it can best empower leaders and the community for Local Economic Development. We shall also explore the bottom-up planning paradigm. You will also be expected to attend your usual and mandated council meeting, which will be followed by group discussions interviews and leadership development workshops. The cycle will continue every 3 months throughout the financial year 2018/2019, amounting to 12 meetings in total.

Our group discussions and interviews will be audio recorded and we will use documents like policy documents, previous meeting minutes, rules of procedures and other document you will choose to bring in for discussion to improve empowerment of leaders and the community. However, all this will be done with your consent. **Possible benefits for the participants**

The main benefit in taking part in this study is that you will be working towards exploring new and existing empowering practices in decentralisation, which can be the turning point of our Ugandan policies. You will be working as part of the team to improve leadership and bring about positive change in your community. In addition, you will gain Participatory Action Research skills, which are very liberating for leaders and great for improving one's practice.

Possible risks:

The researchers do not foresee any potential risks to the participants. However, in the course of the study, if you feel stressed and wish to withdraw, you are free to do so.

Change of mind:

This research project would really be complemented by your expert participation but for any reason if you deem it best to withdraw after the study has commenced, you do not have to give any explanation to anyone. However, it will not be possible to remove the data already contributed. This is because in the PAR methodology, data is contributed through collaboration and teamwork where everyone is a co-researcher. This makes it extremely difficult to precisely identify individually contributed data and disentangle it from that supplied by others and thus to withdraw it.

What will happen to the information?

Hard copies of the field notes and audio files will be stored on the Launceston campus of the University of Tasmania in a locked cabinet accessible only by the researchers. Your name and other identifying information will be removed from these data files and this will be replaced

with a code. Computer files will be password protected and stored on a secure server at the School of Humanities, Launceston campus. After a period of five years from the publication of the thesis, all transcriptions and field notes will be shredded, and raw audio recordings will be deleted as well. All information will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

All the participants, including you, will be responsible for maintaining confidentiality as you shall all have access to evidence or copies of reports of raw data.

How the results of the study will be published:

After the completion of the data collection, the student researcher, with the collaboration of all the participants (also co-researchers) will produce a draft summary report of the data. The student researcher will be providing you with a final, edited copy of the summary report.

Copies of the thesis will also be available to all participating leaders upon request. Participants' information will be reported anonymously in all publications of results. Pseudonyms will be used when referring to quotes from interviews, discussions, or audio recordings.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 (3) 6226 6254 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number H17270

Professor Fred Gale

Email: fred.gale@utas.edu.au

Dr Joanna Vince

Email: Joanna.vince@utas.edu.au

Kizito Basalidde Lubuulwa

Email: Kizito.lubuulwa@utas.edu.au

Tel: +256.....

Appendix C: Consent Form for Participants

1. I agree that I will take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves parish councillors of Kimenyedde sub-county in Mukono district and Najjembe in Buikwe district and that I will attending Leadership Development workshops council meetings and group interviews and discussions. I also understand that the study will occur during the financial year 2018/2019. I understand that the study will not interfere with my duty as a councillor and my usual life.
5. I understand that my participation involves no foreseeable risks (s)
6. I understand that the study meetings and workshops will be in areas where risks to security are minimised.
7. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the Launceston Campus of the University of Tasmania premises for five years from the publication of the study results and will then be destroyed.
8. Any question that I have asked to have been answered to my satisfaction.
9. I understand that the researcher(s) will maintain confidentiality and that any information about me, and my parish will be used only for the purpose of the study. I understand that the researchers will remind participants of the importance of confidentiality but cannot guarantee that other participants who will also be co-researchers will maintain confidentiality such as when all participants are involved in a focus group discussion during the Leadership Development workshops
10. I understand that the data will be stored in a locked and secure place.
11. I understand that the data I provide will be shared with other researchers participating in the project.
12. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that my constituency and I cannot be identified as participants.
13. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect.

14. I understand that if I do decide to withdraw from the project that I will not be able to withdraw the data I have contributed up until that date.

Participant's name: -----

Participant's signature: -----

Date: -----

Student Researcher's name.....

Students researcher's signature.....

Date.....

Appendix D: Survey Meeting Program for Parish Councillors for Kimenyedde Sub-County

This was a program for the survey meeting that took place in the first planning phase of the study. The survey meeting was organised for parish councillors. The venue of this meeting was the sub-county community centre because of its location and facilities. The student researcher contacted the Sub-county Assistant Secretary for the space.

Time	Session
8:30	Registration
9:00	Keynote address by Chairman of the Sub-county, District councillor, GISO
9:30	Presentation 1. Putting Decentralisation Policy into Practice: A Participatory Action Research Study of Local Government Empowerment for Local Economic Development 2. Importance and purpose of the study 3. The dynamics and importance of PAR Kizito Lubuulwa
10:30	Morning tea Break
11: 00	Signing and receiving consent forms.
12:00	Conducting Evaluation Survey
12:30	Receiving invitations and lunch break
1;00	Group discussion to agree on the next program
1:00	Lunch and End

Appendix E: Evaluation Survey for the Phase One Survey Meeting, which Took Place at the Sub-County Community Centre

This instrument was administered to all councillors who attended the first LD workshop in the first phase of the study. The survey is intended to find out the opinion of the councillors about the student researcher's presentation and if they wished to take part in the study.

Dear councillor,

Thank you for coming for this workshop, please take a few minutes to let us know what you think of this Leadership Development (LD) workshop and in particular the topic **“Putting Decentralisation Policy into Practice: A Participatory Action Research Study of Local Government Empowerment for Local Economic Development”**. Your opinion will be valued and will be used to improve future LD workshops of the nature. Most importantly, they will help in the selection of participants/ co-researchers in the research project.

Name of the councillor-----

Please tick in the opinion box of your choice

How successful has LD workshop been in stimulating your thinking about empowerment in decentralisation policy and practice.	excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
How successful has the LD workshop been in stimulating your thinking about Local Economic Development.	excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
How successful has the LD workshop been in stimulating your thinking about challenges of decentralisation?	excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
How would you rate the contribution of decentralization in empowering you to participate in the local economic development & leadership in general?	excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
How do you rate the relevance of PAR to your leadership skills& empowerment?	excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
Is empowerment relevant to your performance as a leader?	Yes		No		Not sure			

Would you like to participate in this study?	Yes		No		Not sure			
Would you recommend other persons to join in this study?	Yes		No		Not sure			

If you wish to participate in this research as an action researcher, what ideas do you have that can make it this research a success?-----

Please write your contact details in case you wish to take part in this project.

Parish-----

Interest group you represent-----

Committee on which you are member-----

Responsibilities on the committee you are a member-----

Contact email if applicable-----

Contact phone-----

Thank you.

Appendix F: Tentative Program for Phase on Leadership Development Workshop/Planning in Phase One

This was a program for the Leadership Development (LD) workshop. This workshop took place in the first planning phase of the study. The workshop was organised for participating parish councillors. The venue of this meeting was the sub-county community centre because of its location and facilities. The student researcher contacted the Sub-county Assistant Secretary for the space.

Time	Session	Venue
8:30	Registration	
9:00	Keynote address by the District councillor	
9:30	Presentation leadership development activities; empowerment mechanisms. Access to information, inclusion/participation, accountability, local organisational capacity etc.	
10:30	Morning tea Break	
11:00	Open Session: Group discussions on current decentralisation policy and practice in line with the empowering mechanisms on. local economic development policy and the bottom–up planning paradigm (Discussing their challenges in empowering them as leaders)	
12:30	Lunch and End	

Appendix G: Observation Checklist for The Student Researcher for Council Meeting Phase One

Date of observation-----

What kind of meeting is being observed taking place?

What procedural problem is observed?-----

What documents/information do members have access to that are referred to during the meeting?

How do the members connect with the issues being discussed in terms of questions, facts, choices and resolutions-----

How much do members refer to the rules of procedure and the policy under which they are operating?-----

Is there any observable ownership of the business being discussed in the meeting by the councillors like being aware of the challenges, advantages disadvantages of the choices previously made?-----

Any observable empowering practice during the meeting?-----

Any observable challenges for members to deliberate effectively in the meeting?-----

Any visible improvement as regards to the above checklist in comparison to the previous meetings the student researcher has attended?-----

Appendix H: Group Interview Schedule for Participating Councillors

Group interviews was arranged with the participants to discuss about the previous meeting. The group discussed the challenges of decentralisation and suggest possible recommendations to the policy and practice. This was to ensure the researcher studies and understands the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects to orient government programmes towards community needs, building public support and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within the society.

Interviewer: -----

Interviewees

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Place of interview-----

Date of interview-----

Thank you for coming for this focus group interview.

- I. How successful was the previous meeting in achieving the intended goals of the meeting and decentralisation as a policy according to you?
- II. What would be the best practice for you to effectively achieve your intended goals before, during and after the meeting?
- III. How do you think the policy practices of bottom-up planning can empower you to influence the direction of Local Economic Development?
- IV. What improvements would you suggest improving your performance using the bottom-up planning paradigm?
- V. What possible recommendations do you suggest that can make decentralisation policy a better tool for you to effectively represent your people and improve their wellbeing?
- VI. Are there any other ideas concerning your contribution to the wellbeing of the community you represent you want to share with us?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix I: Leadership Development Workshop II

This was a program for the Leadership Development (LD) workshop phase two that took place as the second planning phase of the study. The workshop was organised for participating parish councillors. The venue of this meeting was the sub-county community centre because of its location and facilities. The student researcher contacted the Sub-county Assistant Secretary for the space.

Time	Session	Venue
8:30	Registration	
9:00	Keynote address by the District councillor (Regarding NAADS and Operation Wealth creation)	
9:30	Presentation leadership development activities; Challenges in putting decentralisation into practice regarding LED.	
	Student researcher	
10:30	Morning tea Break	
11:00	Open Session: Group discussions on empowering mechanisms regarding; information laws, sunshine laws, open hearing laws, public expenditure tracking surveys, citizen report cards, media reporting, advocacy campaign, civic education, participatory budgeting, citizen view boards etc. as they are used in decentralisation and “Operation Wealth Creation”.	
	(Discussing the challenges in empowering them as leaders)	
12:30	Lunch and End	

Appendix J: Phase Two Reflection: Group Interview

Focus group interviews was arranged with the participants to discuss about the previous meeting of phase two. The group discussed the challenges of decentralisation in regards LED in the view of Operation Wealth Creation and any possible recommendations to the policy and practice. This was to ensure the researcher studies and understands the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects to orient government programmes towards community needs, building public support and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within the society.

Interviewer: -----

Interviewees

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Place of interview

Date of interview

Thank you for coming for this focus group interview.

1. How successful was the previous meeting in achieving the intended goals of the meeting and decentralisation as a policy?

2. How sustainable is Operation Wealth Creation as government programme for local economic development?
3. How does Operation Wealth Creation fit into the bottom-up planning paradigm to give you a say in the local economic development of your areas?
4. What empowering mechanisms do you see in the program Operation Wealth Creation?
5. What recommendation do you wish to make to improve your participation and the program at large?
6. Do you think decentralisation has been successful in achieving its goals in line with LED?
7. Any other idea you would like to share regarding LED?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix K: Leadership Development Workshop/Planning Phase III

This was a program for the Leadership Development (LD) workshop phase three that took place as the third planning phase of the study. The planned venue of this meeting was the sub-county community centre because of its location and facilities.

Time	Session	Venue
8:30	Registration	
9:00	Keynote address by the District councillor (challenges of decentralisation)	
9:30	Presentation leadership development activities; reflecting on the topic; <i>Putting Decentralisation policy into practice: challenges in empowering communities for sustainable local economic development in Uganda.</i> Reflecting on the journey of the study so far covered Student researcher	
10:30	Morning tea Break	
11:00	Open Session: 1. participants discuss their feel about the project in terms of liberating them and improving their participation in the leadership. 2. discussing and analysis of diary notes and available documents which may include meeting minutes development plans citizen report cards etc. (Discussing the challenges in empowering them as leaders)	
12:30	Lunch and End	

Appendix L: Leadership Development Activities for the Three Leadership Development Workshops

During these sessions, the student researcher presented on how empowering mechanism can improve their leadership/empowerment. These were divided into three themes; “How empowering mechanisms work”, “Challenges of empowering mechanism with LED” and “Challenges of empowering mechanism with decentralisation”, each was presented in a different LD workshop.

	LD Workshop I	LD workshop II	LD workshop III
	How empowerment mechanisms work	Challenges of empowerment mechanism with LED	Challenge of decentralisation
	Information	Inclusion/Participation	Accountability
State-centred Arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to information law (FIOA) -Sunshine laws -Open hearings -Public expenditure tracking surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participatory budgeting -Quotas for women and minorities -Joint planning -Law on participation -Question period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizen review boards -Local councils -Elections -Litigations
Society-centred Arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizen report cards -Media reporting - Information/Advocacy Campaign -Civic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grassroots movement - “Journée’s de reflexion” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Referendums -Recalls -Watchdogs, NGOs -Observatories’

Appendix M: Permission to Carry Out Research in the Local Council

Mr. Kizito Basalidde Lubulwa
Student No. 452480
University of Tasmania
Australia.

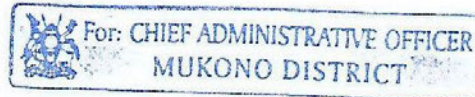
PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH.

Reference is made to your letter requesting to carryout research in **Kimenyedde Sub County.**

This communication serves to inform you that permission has been granted to enable you carry out your research on the topic, **"Putting Decentralization Policy into Practice: Challenges in empowering Communities for Sustainable Local Economic Development in Uganda. A Case of Kimenyedde Sub County in Mukono District"** for financial year 2018/2019 effective **2 July 2018 to 28 June, 2019.** The Sub County Chief Kimenyedde will be your work based supervisor.

Your attention is drawn to Section J-f of the Uganda Government ***Standing Orders and Circular Standing Instruction No. 3 of 2011***, relating to Internship Placement in the Public Service.

Wishing you the best.




Jonathan Hosea Mukose
**For. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MUKONO DISTRICT**

c.c. The Sub County Chief, Kimenyedde.
c.c. Asst. Prof. Fred Gale.
c.c. Dr. Joanna Vince