

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLANS.

a) A Brief History.

- In 1987, the Government of Uganda instituted a commission of inquiry into the local government (LG) system. The commission collected views from all parts of the country and recommended that Uganda should adopt a decentralisation policy.¹
- Decentralisation is defined as the transfer of administrative and political power, from central to local governments to perform certain duties, with an objective of improving service delivery, through increased citizen participation.²
- This Decentralisation strategy also followed the recommendations of the World Bank for developing countries to devolve political and administrative powers to local and autonomous levels.
- In October 1992, the president announced decentralisation, through a presidential policy statement, and the Local Governments (Resistance) Statute (1993) legally devolved certain powers and responsibilities to LGs.³
- The government promulgated a new Constitution in 1995. Constitutional provisions on decentralisation (Article 176 2(b)) necessitated repealing the 1993 LG law and replacing it with the Local Governments Act of 1997.⁴
- This delegation strategy adopted under the new Local Governments Act transferred to Local Governments, including cities, municipalities, districts, municipal divisions, town councils and sub-counties, a number of powers and functions, including specific responsibilities for service delivery.
- This strategy also streamlined powers exercisable by the Local Government, which included planning and budgetary powers, where the District Council was designated as the planning authority, with the power and duty to prepare a comprehensive and integrated development plan that incorporates plans of lower-level Local Governments, while reflecting grassroots needs.⁵

¹ Onyach, Olaa, M. (2003) 'The Challenges Of Implementing Decentralisation: Recent Experiences In Uganda' *Public Admin. Dev.* 23, 105–113 accessible at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/pad.264?casa_token=XBEALRv3d9UAAAAA%3AP26yR5UE_JSnbqSzsroyBb4aosZ77c3NHM0fy-m7c-qlFeN-CGZ

² Muriisa, R, K. (2008) 'Decentralisation in Uganda: Prospects for Improved Service Delivery' *Africa Development*, 33 (4), 83–95

³ See 1, above.

⁴ See 1, above.

⁵ See 2, above. Also, • **It should also be noted that the district and the city are the highest local government levels, while the sub-county, municipality, municipal division, and town divisions are referred to as lower local government levels. The political organ at all local levels is the council, whose members are elected in regular elections, with councillors either representing specific electoral areas or interest groups, namely**

- It is from this premise that Local Governments have the right to formulate, approve and execute their (balanced) budgets and plans, in adherence to the budget and available revenue, under the National Development Plan, for submission to the National Planning Authority.⁶

b) **The District Development Plan- A Legal Background.**

- The functioning of the District Development Plan can be ascertained from the National Objectives of the Constitution of Uganda which enshrine that:

The State shall be based on democratic principles, which empower and encourage the active participation of all citizens at all levels in their own governance... The State shall be guided by the principle of decentralization and devolution of governmental functions and powers to the people at appropriate levels where they can best manage and direct their own affairs.

- The constitution further prescribes the creation of a National Planning Authority (NPA), under Article 125; and the Local Governments Act (1997), under **Section 35 stipulate, a counterpart institution at sub-national level; the district planning authority, to discharge the planning functions of NPA as devolved.**⁷

c) **Salient Features of the District Development Plan.**

- The district technical planning committees are responsible for collecting and integrating plans of lower local governments in order to allow for bottom-up participatory planning and budgeting.⁸
- Under the District Development Plan system, District Local Governments are required to be assessed against pre-set governance criteria (minimum access conditions) and performance criteria.

women, youth, and disabled persons, per Steiner, S. (2006) 'Decentralisation in Uganda: Exploring the Constraints for Poverty Reduction' GIGA Research Programme: Transformation in the Process of Globalisation accessible at http://edoc.vifapool.de/opus/volltexte/2009/1591/pdf/wp31_steiner.pdf

⁶ Kugonza, S., Mukobi, R. (2015) 'Public participation in services delivery projects in Buikwe District Local Government Uganda' *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance* 18: 4846

⁷ The Local Governments Act (1997) accessible at <https://ulii.org/akn/ug/act/1997/5/eng%402000-12-31>

⁸ Steiner, S. (2006) 'Decentralisation in Uganda: Exploring the Constraints for Poverty Reduction' GIGA Research Programme: Transformation in the Process of Globalisation accessible at http://edoc.vifapool.de/opus/volltexte/2009/1591/pdf/wp31_steiner.pdf

- The minimum access conditions determine whether an LG is eligible to receive a local development grant, in order to empower it to fulfil its responsibilities, in addition to the taxes that the LG levies, and charges. **The performance criteria, assessed in retrospect, determine whether an LG performance should be rewarded or penalised in the allocation for the next financial year.** ⁹
- In practice, most of the financial resources available to local governments (i.e. approximately 80 per cent) can morph into conditional grants from the centre and thus predetermined for a particular use.¹⁰
- Therefore, local governments are constrained in the flexible allocation of these funds and thus can only administer them since the local governments cannot re-allocate the funds, according to local preferences.¹¹
- **This implies that despite the fundamental assumption in the decentralisation debate about the informational advantage of local governments, the central government ultimately decides how much money is transferred to and used at the local level and what for.** ¹²

⁹ See 1, above.

¹⁰ Steiner, S. (2007) Decentralisation And Poverty: Conceptual Framework And Application To Uganda'. Public Admin. Dev. 27, 175–185 accessible at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/pad.445?casa_token=kpFq69_t3G4AAAAA:VeXF6ZRRVgeAFwgPeRESOzITMXkMrq2SKzHm3zurlOqiqyBJ5C9IOkP8d_j5G38o4W6q_jKqgm3iOI

¹¹ See 10, above.

¹² See 10, above.