Institutional factors influencing the performance of local governments in monitoring the implementation of decentralisation

The case of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Implementing decentralisation policy reforms by local governments (LGs) in Uganda have been assigned an important role in the implementation of the policy. One such role is the monitoring of decentralisation programmes to ensure that they are efficiently and effectively implemented. In their efforts to execute their monitoring role, a number of institutional factors influence their performance. This article examines the institutional factors affecting the monitoring role of LGs in implementing this policy in Uganda.[1] It is demonstrated that the institutional factors including the degree of LGs' autonomy in exercising decentralised powers; the capacity building extended to LGs; and the working relationship among inter-governmental organs. The collaboration between LGs and civil society organisations have significantly limited the efficiency and effectiveness of LGs' efforts in executing their monitoring role. The research is based on legislation other policy documents related to local government. And an empirical research in selected local governments. The article is presented from a public administrative point of view. It is argued that both central government and local governments will have to introduce deliberate initiatives to address the problems that are associated with the institutional factors if LGs are to effectively and efficiently execute their monitoring role that will give effect to successful implementation of the decentralisation policy.

INTRODUCTION

In various countries, local governments (LGs) play an important role in the policy reforms such as in the implementation of a decentralisation policy. One such role is monitoring the

implementation of the policy. In Uganda, the decentralisation policy framework empowers local governments to monitor the implementation of the policy's programmes. Under the Local Governments Act, 1997 as amended in 2008 various local government organs are mandated to monitor the development and service delivery programmes initiated by LGs themselves. The central government and non-governmental organisations also has to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the programmes required to give effect to the policy. However, in executing their monitoring role, a number of institutional factors influence their performance. In this article, the institutional factors influencing the monitoring role of LGs in implementing the decentralisation policy in Uganda is examined. The institutional factors include: the degree of local governments' autonomy in exercising decentralised powers; the capacity building extended to local governments; the working relationship among inter-governmental organs; and the collaboration between LGs and civil society organisations. The article is based on a literature review of sources relating to decentralisation and policy implementation as well as empirical research into selected local governments in Uganda.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' AUTONOMY IN EXERCISING DECENTRALISED POWERS

In order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in provision of services in the public sector, national government decentralises its powers by transferring some of its functions to authorities at the sub-national/regional and local level. Decentralised power could be political, administrative and fiscal in dimension (United Nations 2000:22). The degree of autonomy in exercising the decentralised powers by authorities at the respective levels influences the effectiveness of the authorities in performing its functions. In the case of Uganda's, decentralisation policy, local governments (Sections 30, 35, 38, 55 and 84 of the LG Act, 1997 as amended in 2008) are given political, administrative and fiscal powers to enable them to execute their role in monitoring and implementation of decentralisation programmes. The challenge is to establish the degree of the LGs' autonomy in exercising the decentralised powers influencing their performance.

Political autonomy

Political autonomy implies that LGs have substantial independence in making political decisions regarding their devolved roles and responsibilities. Such decisions concern matters of local political governance; and LGs' determination of their development priorities. Issues to consider under local political governance include electing local political leaders in a free competitive environment; the autonomy of the elected leaders to mobilise citizens to participate in political decisions. Local governments require platforms for responding to people's demands and the freedom of citizens to demand accountability from LGs (Brinkerhoff and Azfar 2006:3-5). All eight of the Ugandan political leaders interviewed reported that, while LGs regularly elect their political leaders, there is a tendency for the ruling party to influence central government to frustrate LGs whose political leaders are dominated by the opposition party(ies). This impacts negatively on the performance of LGs carrying out their monitoring activities. Efforts have been made to provide some platforms for

citizens to engage their leaders in demanding accountability at community review meetings and barazas (public accountability forums). According to an overwhelming majority (17 of 18 [95%]) of the interviewed LGs political office bearers these avenues have not been effective in enhancing public accountability.

Substantial independence of LGs in determining their own development priorities means that LGs can initiate relevant agendas reflecting peoples' problems, needs and priorities. According to all 19 higher local government (HLG) officials interviewed, LGs priorities must be set within the central government guidelines. It was reported that in cases where particular LG projects do not comply with the priorities of central government, it will restrict or refuse to finance such projects. In such cases, LGs' efforts to effectively monitor such projects are constrained.

Administrative autonomy

Administrative decentralised autonomy aims at transferring decision-making powers on administrative matters to facilitate the delivery of such services in LGs. It implies that LGs can determine their own administrative structure (Brinkerhoff and Azfar 2006:3). The major administrative powers that are transferred to LGs under the LGs Act, 1997 (as amended in 2008) include powers to recruit and manage human resources including staff remuneration; and powers to appoint LG statutory bodies.

The decentralisation policy assigns the power to appoint employees in the office of the district or urban LG to the district service commissions (Constitution of Uganda, 1995: Art.200(1). The appointment of top civil servants in LGs is assigned to central government. According to all seven HLG political office bearers interviewed, this makes such civil servants accountable to the central government. The findings regarding the effects of the appointment of LG top civil servants agree with Kakumba's (2008:98) finding that the appointment of top LG civil servants by central government "makes them subservient to the central government whims that may not necessarily represent the local government priorities." The findings also support Ssewankambo, Hindson and Ssengendo (2006:7) regarding the accountability of centrally appointed officials.

In regard to the recruitment of the middle and lower level civil servants, LGs have to obtain permission from central government to fill any human resource vacancies. Granting permission depends on the central government's willingness to pay the resultant wage bill. Because of this, important positions responsible for functions such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in all 15 LGs were vacant. This has negative implications on the LGs' efforts to execute their monitoring role because, without such employees, LGs miss out on critical aspects such as technical guidance in the monitoring process and the analysis of monitoring data.

The autonomy to manage employee remuneration matters would require LGs to determine the salaries, allowances and retirement benefits of their employees. It also implies that they should be responsible for managing the payroll. However, under the decentralisation policy, LGs have limited autonomy in managing employee remuneration matters. The employee salary scales and the payroll are managed by the central government. According to all seven HLG political office bearers and all 19 HLG officials interviewed, the management of a LG's payroll by central government have created problems for LGs ranging from late payments

to omitting employees' names on the pay roll. These problems act as performance demotivators detrimentally affecting employees' morale with a concomitant negative impact on LGs' monitoring activities.

LGs are mandated to appoint members of a number of LG statutory bodies such as a District Service Commission (DSC), according to all seven HLG political office bearers interviewed, the members have to be approved by central government after subjecting them to interviews. It was revealed that LGs often failed to carry out recruitment because of the absence of a district service commission being appointed. This has had negative implications on the execution of LGs' activities including monitoring.

Fiscal autonomy

Decentralisation through the devolution of fiscal powers is intended to transfer revenue-generating authority and funds to deliver decentralised functions to LGs. Katorobo (2005:28-29), referring to Guess and Vazquez summarises (2005:28–29), fiscal autonomy for LGs using a number of tenets. These principles which are also reflected in the Local Governments Act, 1997 (as amended) include, inter alia, LGs' autonomy in determining their own areas of expenditure; mobilisation of LGs' own revenue; fair revenue sharing between central government and LGs; revenue simplicity; and revenue equity. These principles are applied in assessing the degree of LGs' fiscal autonomy in exercising decentralised powers and establishing its impact on LGs' execution of their monitoring role.

LGs do not have the autonomy to determine priority areas of expenditure even for projects that are within the central government's priorities. This is because funds received from central government are earmarked for expenditure on specific items. LGs are not authorised to reallocate it to other items. According to all 19 HLG officials and all seven HLG political office bearers interviewed, the budget for monitoring activities is not supposed to exceed a specific percentage—usually not more than 15% of an LG's budget. It was reported that the central government also specifies the percentage of the budget that should be spent on officials' and political office bearers' allowances. The respondents stated that even in allocating locally generated revenue, central government influences LGs on which objects it should be spent on. The findings imply that LGs' ability to determine their expenditure priorities which may reflect the most pressing needs in service delivery planning is compromised by central government's interference. This is especially the cases where LGs are not allowed to spend more than a specific percentage of their revenue on activities such as monitoring allowances (field visit facilitation—fuel, meals and subsistence) for politicians. Yet monitoring is a critical function for the politicians to ensure effective service delivery (Steiner 2006).

LGs are supposed to generate their own local revenue in order to substantially contribute to the financing of their programmes. An overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%]) of the interviewed LG officials and all 18 LG political office bearers reported that LGs' efforts to mobilise their own revenue are constrained by the limited powers assigned to them. It was reported that permission to exploit any new revenue source has to be obtained from central government. It was also reported that because of this limitation, LGs have not benefited from investors in their areas of jurisdiction as attempts to tax them are usually rejected by central government. This has negative implications on financing LGs' monitoring activities (Golola 2001:9–10).

LGs have limited powers of enforcement affecting tax compliance according to all three LG chief finance officers interviewed. Unlike the central government revenue body, the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) which has express powers to recover tax arrears direct from the bank accounts of tax defaulters, LGs can only use repeated demand notes. Because of limited powers of enforcement, records of tax arrears in the LGs indicate that there are many cases of tax defaulters especially in property tax. This negatively affects LGs ability to finance its monitoring activities.

Fair revenue sharing between central government and LGs as a principle of fiscal decentralisation means that LGs' revenue share from the national budget should be commensurate with the decentralised obligations for service delivery. It requires that central government should not unfairly use a large amount of scarce national resources at the expense of LGs. An unfair sharing of national resources is in operation between central government and LGs. All 18 LG political office bearers and all 37 LG officials interviewed revealed that the current LGs' percentage share (17%) of the national budget is unrealistic and is not based on fair costing of service delivery responsibilities that have been assigned to LGs. For example, it was found that while a kilometer of a murram road for central government Uganda Shillings (UGX) 70 million [US$ 28 000] is allocated. a kilometer of murram road for LGs is allocated UGX 10 million [US$ 44 000]. Similarly, a kilometer of a tarmac road for central government is allocated UGX 600 million (US$ 240 000) but a kilometer in a town council's area is allocated UGX 300 million (US$ 120 000).

The principle of simplicity dictates that revenue sharing between central government and LGs should be simple and transparent. This will enable LGs and citizens to understand what amount of money is expected and when it will be released. While the LGs try to communicate budget releases to stakeholders, there are uncertainties and late releases of funds. According to the majority (14 of 18 [78%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers and the overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%] of LG officials, experience uncertainty and the late release of the funds as major challenges which have negative consequences on planning and implementing their monitoring activities. It was reported by the interviewees that unexpected budget cuts result in LGs receiving less than what was budgeted for. This implies that all planned monitoring activities cannot be undertaken. Because of the late release of funds the monitoring activities which are carried out on a quarterly basis have been negatively affected.

The principle of equity requires central government to carefully consider revenue allocations in relation to the unique needs of LGs. Records on funds released to LGs indicate that central government provides equalisation grants based on unique needs of LGs. The funds allocated are based on the degree to which a specific LG is lagging behind the national standards for particular services. However, according to senior central government officials interviewed,[1] service delivery levels in such LGs are still below the level of others. This implies that the grants have been inadequate in enabling the LGs to effectively implement and monitor decentralised service delivery programmes.

CAPACITY BUILDING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Capacity building through which individuals, groups, institutions and societies develop their abilities, individually and collectively to perform functions, solve problems and set

and achieve goals and objectives (UNDP 1997:2), is important in public administration to deliver services effectively and efficiently. According to the World Bank (2005:7) public sector capacity building in Africa needs to address three dimensions: human capacity – for equipping individuals with skills to analyse development needs, design and implement policies, deliver services and monitor results; organisational capacity – for enhancing the capacity of groups of individuals with clear goals and objectives, staffing and other resources to achieve them; and institutional capacity for enhancing the formal rules and informal norms that provide the regulatory framework within which organisations and employees operate. The capacity building framework for LGs under decentralisation aims at the identification and development of management skills necessary to enhance the ability of LGs to effectively carry out their mandate including monitoring and evaluating programme outcomes to guide future activities (MoLG 2005:3–4). The nature and effectiveness of the capacity building programme impact on the LGs' performance of their monitoring role. Areas that are used as analytical constructs to assess the capacity building in LGs include capacity building needs assessment procedures; capabilities of the providers; comprehensiveness of capacity building; frequency, duration and attendance of the capacity building training programmes; accessibility and utiliSation of capacity building tool kits; and mechanisms for evaluation.

Capacity building needs assessment procedures

Capacity needs assessment is a structured analytical process designed to assess the various dimensions of capacity within an institution. It focuses on the ability and capability of individuals and systems to perform the required tasks. It is intended to establish existing capacity gaps before an appropriate capacity building programme is implemented. A successful capacity assessment exercise, as the United Nations Development Programme (1997:2) observes, requires the full involvement of the stakeholders in a consultative process. In the case of LGs, according to all three LG officials in charge of capacity building, while needs assessment forms are usually distributed to stakeholders, there is a delay and or failure to submit the training needs forms. This results in stakeholders needs not being included in the capacity building plans. The delay or failure to submit the forms is mainly associated with the attitude towards the assessment exercise. An overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%]) of the interviewed LG officials and all 18 LG political office bearers indicated that there is a negative attitude among the stakeholders who complain that they submit their training needs, but they are not considered for training. The exercise has come to be seen as waste of time as the specific identified knowledge gaps regarding decentralisation are not addressed.

Capabilities of the capacity building providers

The capabilities of capacity building service providers influence the effectiveness of the capacity building programme in every organisation including LGs. Capability implies the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individuals, separately or as a group and their competence to undertake the responsibilities assigned to them (Stephen and Triraganon 2009:2). The implementation of capacity building programme involves selection of capable capacity building service providers through tendering to effectively deliver the capacity

building expertise. Tendering creates competition among service provider organisations that improves the quality of service (Rohdewohld and Poppe 2005:66,71). According to the majority (28 of 37 [75%]) of the interviewed LG officials, there have been frustrations among LGs about the capability of firms to effectively deliver the capacity building training. The firms are blamed for using a theoretical approach in their training that is out of touch with the practical needs of LGs. With consultancy firms which do not effectively deliver the capacity building training, it implies that even where training has been conducted, it has not enhanced the capacity of local governments to effectively execute their monitoring role in the implementation of decentralisation programmes.

Comprehensiveness of the capacity building programmes

Comprehensive capacity building for an institution addresses both the technical capacity in the context of specific functional areas; and the organisational culture and values. The ultimate goal is to improve the organisation's overall performance and its ability to adapt itself to a changing environment (Simister ans Smith 2010:5). In the case of LGs, the capacity building training has been limited in both depth and training area coverage. All three LG officials in charge of capacity building investigated, revealed that most of the identified skills requirements in their capacity building plans have not been covered. Even those areas that have been covered, the trainers, according to the officials, have not addressed the areas in detail to enable participants to understand the topics.

Due to lack of a comprehensive approach, the capacity building in LGs have been ineffective in equipping participants with technical knowledge and skills to monitor programmes. The findings regarding the failure of capacity building to equip participants with technical knowledge and skills concur with Bashasha, Mangeni and Nkonya (2011:5-6) who observe that LG officials continue to exhibit shortages of skills and experience; and lack of professional and technical expertise to effectively deliver public services.

Frequency and attendance of the capacity building programmes

Frequency and attendance constitute important aspects of capacity building that impact on the effectiveness of any capacity building programme. Assessing these aspects involves, the number of participants and engagement duration; and how often the capacity building programmes are undertaken. Issues to address include defining the categories and number of participants that are targeted and how many of them attend and complete the training successfully (Connolly ans York 2002:35). In terms of frequency, the capacity building training is usually offered once in every financial year while the engagement usually takes two days. Both the frequency and the participants' engagement were inadequate according to overwhelming majority (17 of18 [94%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers. Regarding the attendance and completion of training, the informants revealed that some participants especially councillors who are unable to follow the training proceedings mainly due to the language barrier[2] usually attend only part of the programme.

For career development which is part of the capacity building programme in local governments, all three LG officials responsible for capacity building reported that it is the most adversely affected by funding constraints. The dilemma is that both the areas of training

and the number of people that need to be trained cannot be accommodated within the available capacity building funding provided for this purpose.

In practice, there has been limited accessibility to the capacity building training by those who need it and limited benefits in terms of additional skills and competencies for those who have attended the training. This implies that the capacity building programme has not been effective in bridging the knowledge and skills gaps in LGs. Consequently it has not enhanced LGs' capacity to effectively execute their monitoring role in the implementation of the decentralised programmes.

Availability and utilisation of capacity building guides/tool kits

Capacity building guides or toolkits are necessary to provide practical, easy to read information and resources that guide users in execution of their assignments. Such tool kits with particular regard to LGs, would provide reference for the stakeholders involved in the monitoring process. All 37 LG officials interviewed reported that there are no specific toolkits to assist employees to understand the topics taught under the capacity building training programme. They revealed that whereas the Ministry of Local Government has developed manuals on various training modules, these manuals are not available for LG employees. It was also reported that while in some cases the trainers provide reading materials (as handouts), the handouts are not prepared in a simple language. The findings suggest that LGs have had limited access and utilisation of capacity building guides that can provide easy to read information whether in the form of manuals, prepared text or handouts. This implies that they have not effectively used any reference material to guide them in executing their monitoring activities.

Capacity building evaluation

Capacity building evaluation can usually be conducted on many levels from short-term outcomes to long-term impact. At a basic level, the number, the duration and the satisfaction levels can be established. Beyond this, what participants have learned how they applied the knowledge and how they changed their behaviour can be determined. Ultimately, the long-term impact of capacity building on the organisation and the community can be established (Connolly and York 2002:34 &36). According to all three LG officials in charge of capacity building interviewed, efforts are made to record those that have attended the capacity building programmes, the number of times and the courses they have attended. Assessing their satisfaction is done together with participants' rating of the quality of the training received. According to the majority (14 of 19 [74%]) of the interviewed HLG officials, the participants award scores without critical consideration of the quality of training they have received.

Other than the regular employee performance appraisal which may provide some indications about the impact of training on those who have attended, no other established mechanisms have been used to evaluate the impact of the capacity building programme. An overwhelming majority (34 of 37 [92%]) of the interviewed LG officials reported that there are no formal effective mechanisms for capacity building impact assessment in local governments.

The absence of effective capacity building evaluation mechanisms implies that it has been impossible to ascertain the level of participants' satisfaction, the quality of capacity building training and the impact of the capacity building on the performance of beneficiaries.

Without establishing the impact of the capacity building, it appears that it is impossible to effectively establish the existing knowledge and skills requirements in LGs to guide the design of an appropriate capacity building approach to bridge the gaps. It also implies that the capacity building approach in LGs has not been properly guided to achieve its purpose.

WORKING RELATIONSHIP AMONG INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANS

Effective working relationships among intergovernmental organs are a crucial ingredient for successful implementation of the decentralisation policy. The effectiveness of the working relationships among intergovernmental organs influence the performance of LGs in executing their monitoring role. Promoting effective working relationships among intergovernmental organs (see OECD 2009:2-4) requires a deliberate effort to address a number of issues such as roles and responsibilities among levels of government; harmonisation of goals; co-ordination mechanisms; conflict resolution mechanisms; and power relations. Regarding the working relationship among the intergovernmental organs involved in monitoring the implementation of decentralisation programmes in Uganda, these issues are the critical analytical constructs for assessing the nature of the existing working relationship.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities

Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of intergovernmental organs are essential for effective working relationship. In the case of monitoring the implementation of decentralisation programmes, there are no specified roles and responsibilities assigned to LG technical officials and the political office bearers involved in the monitoring process. All 18 LG political office bearers and all 37(100%) LG officials interviewed cited lack of clarification of roles and responsibilities between LG technical officials and the political office bearers in the execution of their monitoring activities as a problem affecting the effectiveness of their efforts. According to all 26 (100%) HLG respondents and all 29 lower local government (LLG) respondents, there is also lack of definition, clarification and demarcation of monitoring roles between higher and lower local governments. It was reported that though the LLGs are in many cases invited by the districts (HLGs) to attend project inauguration, there are no specific guidelines availed to them regarding their expected monitoring roles and responsibilities.

A lack of definition and clarification of monitoring roles exist for LGs and central government personnel involved in the monitoring process. According to an overwhelming majority (8 of 9 [89%]) of the interviewed central government personnel and all 55 LGs' personnel, lack of clarified roles for the central government personnel and LGs employees have negatively affected the monitoring of programmes. It has resulted in duplication, wastage of resources and adoption of conflicting monitoring approaches and lack of unity of purpose.

The lack of defined and clarified monitoring roles and responsibilities for the intergovernmental organs and the resultant duplication, lack of unity of purpose, employing of different approaches and the *To Whom It May Concern* attitude (implying that *if it is everybody's job, then it is nobody's job*) have had negative implications on monitoring the implementation of decentralised programmes.

Harmonisation of monitoring goals

Harmonisation of goals and objectives are intended to ensure that the intergovernmental organs involved in the monitoring process share common goals and objectives. The majority (30 of 37 [81%] of the interviewed LG officials indicated that in many cases, LG officials and the politicians, do not have shared monitoring goals which often result in conflict. One of the politicians' monitoring goals on which they experience conflict with the technical officials is their apparent focus on appeasing their constituents as they target the next elections. The majority (14 of 18 [78%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers argued that since they were elected on the basis of their political manifestos, they want the electorate to experience that the manifestoes are being implemented. The findings in this case are in support of Kakumba (2003:93) who contends that in many instances, the LG politicians would endeavour to please their constituents to keep political support while on the contrary; the civil servants are concerned about the efficiency of resource utilisation and the adequacy of process in the implementation of decentralised programmes.

Access to monitoring allowances is a monitoring goal for politicians which they do not share with the technical officials. An overwhelming majority (36 of 37 [97%]) of the interviewed LG officials indicated that politicians consider monitoring as an opportunity to access allowances. An overwhelming majority (16 of 18 [89%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers acknowledged that monitoring allowances were of major interest to politicians. In a sub county council meeting attended by the researcher as a non-participant observer,[3] councillors complained that they had not been paid their previous monitoring allowances which had been passed by the council. They were not willing to carry out any monitoring activity or provide reports until they are paid. This attitude militates against successful monitoring of decentralisation programmes.

The majority (13 of 18 [72%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers reported that another area where the technical officials and the politicians do not have shared monitoring goals concern cases where politicians want to scrutinise the quality of particular projects being executed in order to ensure that there is value for money before payment is done. The technical officials however, are interested in paying the contractors once the work is declared to have been completed. In such cases, the technical officials argue that the politicians are unnecessarily inconveniencing the contractors.

The research attested to the fact that the central government's resident personnel particularly the resident district commissioner (RDC)'s office personnel often have conflicting monitoring goals with LGs. An overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%]) of the interviewed LGs officials reported that the central government officials who represent the President's office in LGs tend to create an impression that government is doing its part by initiating projects and allocating resources, but the technical officials are not ensuring effective service delivery.

The existing lack of harmonised monitoring goals among the intergovernmental organs involved in the monitoring process has negative effects on the input (in terms of time and effort) into the monitoring exercises especially by the joint monitoring teams; results into clash of interests; leads to disagreement concerning monitoring recommendations; and creates conflict and disharmony. Consequently, these negatively impact on local governments' efforts to effectively monitor the implementation of decentralisation programmes.

Co-ordination mechanisms

When multiple actors pursue goals that a single actor would not achieve alone, they need to establish mechanisms to ensure effective management of the interdependence among their activities. The process of managing the interdependences is what constitutes co-ordination. For co-ordination to be effective, it requires effective information sharing structures, consultative decision making processes and consensus on tasks (Malone 1988:5-6). In regard to the intergovernmental organs involved in monitoring the decentralisation programmes, there is a lack of co-ordination between the technical officials and politicians in the execution of their monitoring activities. The majority (14 of 18 [78%]) of the interviewed LG political office bearers and an overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%]) of LG officials indicated that because of lack of consultation and information sharing, it has not been possible to establish each party's monitoring activity schedule to enable them to plan how to use the same resources, particularly vehicles. This negatively affects the efficiency of resource utilisation in the monitoring process . (cf. (Kebba and Ntanda 2005:19).

Ineffective co-ordination exists between the central government personnel and the LG monitoring organs. According to an overwhelming majority (34 of 37 [92%]) of the interviewed LG officials, the central government personnel carry out parallel monitoring activities and often they neither consult nor share information with local government monitoring teams. Similarly, there is lack of effective co-ordination between the two levels of government in the execution of their respective monitoring activities. According to all HLGs personnel and an overwhelming majority (27 of 29 [93%]) of LLG personnel interviewed, lack of co-ordination between the higher and lower LGs has negatively affected monitoring activities in LGs.

The lack of co-ordination among the intergovernmental organs involved in the monitoring process has led to fragmented efforts. This has resulted in failure to publish findings that adequately measure variables such as impact. It has created different monitoring practices, resulted in inefficient resource utilisation, conflicting recommendations, and created gaps in the acquisition and distribution of information. This has consequently negatively impacted on LGs' efforts to effectively monitor the implementation of decentralisation programmes.

Ingredients for effective working relationships

Tallia, Lanham, McDaniel and Crabtree (2006:48-50) discuss a number of ingredients required for effective working relationships. These include inter alia, trust and openness; respect; and effective communication. Mistrust exists between the LG technical officials and the political office bearers. All 18 LG political office bearers interviewed indicated that the technical officials tend to be dishonest and are not transparent. Lack of transparency according to interviewees, is mostly exhibited on financial issues such as budget details. It was also reported that the technical officials do not trust the political office bearers. According to the majority (29 of 37 [78%]) of the interviewed LG officials, the politicians tend to be insincere in executing their monitoring activities. They are considered to be interested in mistakes so that they can blame the technical officials. It was argued by the LGs officials that the politicians do not act as partners to improve the monitoring process. The same mistrust exists between LGs and central government personnel particularly the RDC's

office personnel. All seven HLG political office bearers and an overwhelming majority (18 of 19 [95%]) of HLG officials reported that the RDC's office personnel do not believe that LGs have good intentions and are objectively executing their duties.

There is an absence of regular communication among the intergovernmental organs involved in the monitoring process. The majority (6 of 9 [67%]) of the interviewed central government personnel and an overwhelming majority (52 of 55 [95%]) of LGs' personnel cited lack of effective communication among the organs as a problem affecting the execution of monitoring activities. The mistrust and lack of openness, the lack of respect and lack of effective communication which have characterised the working relationship among the intergovernmental organs, have had negative implications for an effective working relationship that is necessary to achieve monitoring goals and objectives in LGs. Poor/ineffective working relationship implies that monitoring information, findings and recommendations have not been effectively shared. Consequently, this implies that the poor working relationship among the intergovernmental organs has created lack of clear focus and unity of purpose, affected efficient resource allocation and accountability in monitoring programmes. This has had negative implications on LGs' performance of their monitoring role in implementing the decentralisation policy

Power relations

In analysing power relations, it is imperative to assess the effectiveness of exercising of power in terms of its intended objectives including obedience; improved employee conduct and performance; and stable and harmonious relations. Issues to consider, include the power hierarchy and reporting mechanisms; the mechanisms through which power is enforced and obedience achieved; and the methods of supervision (Sadan 2004:63-66). In the case of LGs, the head of LG civil servants in every LG reports to the respective political head of the LG. However, according to the majority of the interviewed LG political office bearers, the reports are delayed or not submitted especially in cases where the officials are of the opinion that the politicians will question particular issues in the reports.

All the accounting officers in LLGs report to the chief administrative officer at the district LG. However, according to all four senior officials in the office of the accounting officers at district and municipal LG levels interviewed, the reports by the LLGs are not submitted on time. This makes it difficult to provide timely feedback. The political office bearers play some supervisory role over the technical officials at the respective levels of LGs. For example through the council, they approve budgets and development plans prepared by the technical officials and attend meetings of the officials to give political direction. It was also reported that the politicians have limited powers in supervising the technical officials as they do not appraise them on performance. This, according to all 18 LG political office bearers interviewed, limits the politicians' ability to influence the promotion or demotion of the technical officials.

Authority for LGs is usually practised through the enforcement of disciplinary measures. However, an overwhelming majority of HLLG officials interviewed, revealed that enforcing disciplinary measures is affected by lack of legal guidance on rules and regulations concerning employees. This has resulted in a number of disciplinary actions being taken without following the prescribed procedure.

It can be deduced that authority has not been effectively exercised and its purposes of achieving obedience; and improved staff conduct and performance have been limited. While the reporting hierarchy is defined, in many cases those who are supposed to report to the higher authority have either not reported or reported late consistently and no disciplinary action has been taken. Because those who are instructed are not consulted, they have been reluctant to comply with the instructions. The exercising of the supervisory role has also been affected negatively as a result of limited powers particularly where the politicians have no authority to appraise technical officials on performance. Matters have not been improved by lack of legal guidance on exercising disciplinary powers.

Conflict resolution

Differences in goals, priorities, access to resources and approaches create barriers for establishing effective working relationships. Whether these conflicts get resolved effectively or lead to constant clashes and impaired working relationships will depend on the conflict resolution mechanisms that are adopted (Hill 1996:3-4). With particular reference to the intergovernmental organs involved in monitoring the implementation of decentralised programmes, the focus is on the nature of existing conflicts and the mechanisms available to resolve it. A major area of conflict between the technical officials and the political office bearers concern the allocation of resources. All political office bearers interviewed, complained that politicians were marginalised in the allocation of resources. Other common areas of conflict between the two parties according to the respondents include pay differences; monitoring goals and approaches; interpretation of the law; and procurement of service providers.

The higher and lower LGs come into conflict with one another concerning the control of resources. The overwhelming majority of the interviewed LLG political officer bearers and the majority of LLG officials reported that the district LG allocates, to itself, a major part of the revenue. Access to resources was also a major area of conflict between LGs and central government resident officials particularly the resident commissioner's office employees. The employees argue that they should have unlimited access to LG resources.

No effective mechanisms exist to resolve conflict. All 26 HLG personnel interviewed, cited lack of regular meetings or mediation mechanisms to resolve conflict among the organs. The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms among the intergovernmental organs have resulted in situations where unresolved conflict has increased, resulting in a lack of co-operation, poor communication, loss of focus on tasks and goals, wastage of time and delay of operations and activities in the monitoring process.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Collaboration between the public sector and the non-public sector plays a critical role in delivering public goods and services. Development and service delivery projects considered as co-operative ventures whose success depends on effective collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders (Künzel and Welscher 2011:5). Under decentralisation, through collaboration

with civil society organisations (CSOs), LGs endeavour to utilise creativity, skills and knowledge to achieve enhanced effectiveness. In evaluating the existing collaboration between LGs and CSOs in monitoring the implementation of decentralisation in Uganda, the analytical themes that are critical are clarity of roles and responsibilities of the collaborating partners; existing co-ordination mechanisms; existing managerial and technical capacities of LGs and CSOs to execute their obligations; existing level of openness and mutual trust between the partners; and mechanisms for resolving conflict between the partners.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities

Effective collaboratiion between LGs and CSOs require operating guidelines to establish the parameters within which LGs and CSOs should operate in the implementation and monitoring of decentralisation programmes. According to an overwhelming majority (35 of 37 [95%]) of the interviewed LG officials, there is a lack of clarification of roles and responsibilities for CSOs and LGs in the monitoring process. This has resulted in the adoption of non standardised and conflicting monitoring practices, procedures and approaches. According all five CSO officials interviewed, there is a tendency for CSOs' monitoring personnel to omit the LGs' projects in their monitoring. The findings attest that lack of clarified roles and responsibilities between the CSOs and LGs have had negative effects on the monitoring of programmes in LGs. With both partners tending to ignore each other's initiated projects, the monitoring efforts have been ineffective and thus negatively affecting the monitoring of decentralisation programmes.

Co-ordination mechanisms

Effective co-ordination requires effective information sharing structure, consultative decision making processes and consensus on tasks. In regard to the co-ordination between LGs and CSOs in monitoring decentralisation programmes, LGs are expected to develop mechanisms to facilitate communication and consultation with the CSOs and to utilise the latter's expertise in areas such as planning and monitoring. Local governments are also expected to ensure that CSOs integrate their plans and budgets with the local governments' plans and budgets to ensure joint planning, monitoring and evaluation (see OPM 2008:28–31).

Although LGs are supposed to integrate the work plans of CSOs, all 19 HLG officials and all five CSO officials interviewed, stated that the existing practice is that each party plans its project activities independent of the other. The findings imply that it is difficult for the collaborating partners to ascertain each partner's planned monitoring activities and the targeted project results and impact without joint planning.

All five CSO officials and all 55 LG respondents interviewed, reported lack of effective mechanisms for sharing monitoring findings between local governments and civil society organisations as a problem affecting their collaborative efforts to monitor the implementation of decentralisation programmes. It could be deduced that two major co-ordination problems exist i.e. lack of consultative planning and lack of information sharing due to the absence of consultation processes and lack of defined reporting mechanisms (Walera, Wamai and Wamai 1997). Given the lack of consultative planning, lack of a forum for discussing the partners' monitoring findings and lack of sharing of monitoring reports, the collaborating partners seem

to have been ineffectively informed about the project implementation process in LGs. This in effect implies that the collaborative partnership's monitoring efforts have not improved LGs' execution of their monitoring role in implementing decentralisation programmes.

Capacity of LGs and CSOs to execute their obligations

Effective collaborative partnerships require availability of human resources with the required knowledge, technical skills and competences to plan and implement collaborative activities. Partnership outcomes depend on the provision of funds, enabling legal framework and training opportunities to CSOs (Chandler 2004:5). Cognizant of the existing inadequacies in the human resource base both in LGs and the CSOs, government is expected to strengthen the performance of LGs through adequate and relevant staffing and training. Government is also expected to provide facilitation, training and support to the CSOs (OPM 2008:21). However, it was found that training of LGs and CSOs as collaborating partners to enhance their capacity to understand their obligations and execute their roles effectively have been limited and less effective. According to all three LG officials interviewed in charge of capacity building in the LGs, some LGs personnel have had some training in a number of areas. However, there has been no training on collaborative relationships. The CSOs, have not accessed any of the training that has been extended to LG personnel. There are limited facilitation and support programmes extended to CSOs by LGs. For example, according to all five CSO officials interviewed, councillors do not give adequate support to CSOs in mobilising the community. These findings disagree with Kwagala (1998:122) who found that LGs were supportive of the SCOs in community mobilisation efforts.

Local governments and civil society organisations have not been effectively equipped with the required knowledge, skills and competences, and CSOs more especially have not received effective support from LGs. This implies that both parties' capacity to execute their roles have been limited. As a result, their respective efforts in monitoring decentralisation programmes have been ineffective.

Mutual trust between the collaborating partners

Trusting relationships are often considered as the foundation of collaboration. Paradoxically, they are both the lubricant and the glue that hold the collaboration together (Bryson, Crosby and Stone 2006:47-48). The effectiveness of collaboration between government and CSOs inter alia, depends on the mutual trust between government officials and CSOs. In cases where the government has a trusting and positive attitude towards CSOs, there is a potential for strong collaboration (Lekorwe and Mpabanga 2007:6). According to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM 2008:28), in Uganda, government promotes effective collaborative relations between LGs and CSOs based on mutual trust and openness. However, in practice, the levels of trust and openness between LGs and CSOs are still low as confirmed by an overwhelming majority (52 of 55 [95%]) of the interviewed LGs' personnel and all five (100%) CSO officials.

The existing suspicion and mistrust between local governments and civil society organisations as collaborating partners in the monitoring programmes, suggest that there has been a lack of sincere exchange of opinions and information between the two parties

that would assist them to forge a common purpose in their activities. This has had negative implications on their efforts to effectively monitor programmes. Consequently, LGs' performance in executing their monitoring role in the decentralisation policy has not been improved by the collaboration.

Resolving conflict between the collaborating partners

Conflict in collaboration emerges from the partners' differing aims and expectations, ranging from strategies, methods of work and from power struggles to control the collaboration's outcomes (Bryson, Crosby and Stone 2006:48). When partners occupy different role and power positions, it can create an unequal power balance that may lead the more powerful to dictate to the less powerful (Burt 1992:67). Other conflicts are experienced over resource contribution and time devoted to the collaboration (Agranoff 2006:61).

An area of conflict between LGs and CSOs concerns CSOs' contribution of resources for monitoring programmes. When the SCOs involve LGs in monitoring activities, they provide them with field monitoring allowances in cash. However, according to all five CSO officials investigated, in cases when the CSOs reduce the allowance rates due to financial constraints, LG personnel complain and sometimes reject the new rates.

Different methods of work and monitoring timeframes have been sources of conflict between the collaborating partners. All five (100%) CSO officials interviewed, complained of the long decision making processes in the LGs' hierarchy. The problem associated with the monitoring timeframes is that CSOs' monitoring activities are based on a calendar year while LGs' activities are based on the financial year (i.e. beginning with July of a year to the 30th June of the following year). This creates conflicting timeframes for execution of monitoring activities and reporting for the collaborative partners.

There are no effective mechanisms to resolve conflict between the collaborative partners. While there have been efforts by district non-governmental organisations (NGO) boards and the office of the RDC to resolve conflict between LGs and CSOs, according to all seven of the HLG political office bearers and all eighteen HLG officials interviewed, these efforts have been ineffective.

In the absence of effective mechanisms to resolve conflict between LGs and SCOs as collaborating partners in the monitoring process, the persistent conflict weakens the spirit of partnership. It increases tension between the collaborative partners, disrupts normal channels of co-operation, blocks lines of communication and prevents the partners from focusing on tasks and goals in their monitoring efforts.

CONCLUSION

The extent to which the institutional factors have influenced the performance of local governments in executing their monitoring role was the focus of this article. It was demonstrated that the institutional factors have greatly influenced the performance of local governments in monitoring the implementation of the decentralisation policy. The factors including the LGs' degree of autonomy in exercising the decentralised powers; the nature of the capacity building in LGs; the working relationship among the inter-governmental

organs; and the nature of the existing collaboration between LGs and CSOs have principally limited the effectiveness and efficiency of LGs' performance in executing their monitoring role. LGs' inability to efficiently and effectively execute their monitoring role proves that the decentralisation policy is not effectively implemented. The central government and local governments will have to address the problems of LGs' limited autonomy, an ineffective capacity building programme, poor inter-governmental working relationship, and an ineffective collaboration between LGs and CSOs which are associated with the institutional factors if LGs are to efficiently and effectively execute their monitoring role that will give effect to successful implementation of the decentralisation policy.

NOTES

1 Interview, Gumunye Isa, Asst. Commissioner. Urban Administration, Min. of L G, 17 December 2013; Ssendawula Yassin, Asst. Commissioner, Urban Inspection, Ministry of LG., 6 January 2014.

2 Tumushabe, Mushemeza, Tamale, Lukwago and Ssemakula (2010) found that because there is no minimum academic qualification requirements for councillors in Uganda, the majority of them had very low levels of education and could not express themselves in English, especially at lower local government levels.

3 Proceedings of a sub county LG council meeting for Kibatsi Sub County held at the sub county H/quarters on 23 October 2013.

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