Governance nexus and service delivery in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Based on empirical research, it is apparent that frameworks of good governance exist in Uganda, i.e. effective participation observed in the decentralisation policy, accountability and transparency promoted through the establishment of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA), as well as the Inspectorate of Government (IGG), among others. However, in spite of the existence of these frameworks of good governance, service delivery tends to remain somewhat uneven, and below the citizen's expectations. This article complements the existing empirical literature on service delivery in Uganda.

The article employs a qualitative approach and data is collected through the use of literature review of public documents, academic analysis and findings on governance and service delivery in Uganda.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The concept of governance gained world prominence during the twentieth century, thus it is not a new concept. This concept originated from the belief that governance was the panacea to development challenges and to unravelling relationships between the government and the people. In Africa, the origins of the concept *governance* can be traced back to the Declaration of Popular Participation conference in Arusha, Tanzania in 1990. During this conference, it was emphasised that citizens' participation and democracy are important requisites for development. Since the conference, governance has gained great usage and has entered the international policy agenda with various stakeholders, international agencies, and scholars from different disciplines, conceptualising it as they see fit. This has lead to a wide array of inconsistent definitions of governance, making it difficult to arrive at a clearly articulated and accepted the concept of governance, as shown below.

In the context of international agencies, governance refers to "A process that involves decision making, the implementation of these decisions and can be applied in the other

contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance" (UNESCAP 2010:1). Thus governance encompasses the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a country on all levels, by which means states promote social cohesion and integration and guarantee the welfare of their population. In summary, as per this definition, governance includes the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups air their views, take action to meet their obligations, and resolve their differences (UNDP 2007:9).

Governance is a term that has been used to refer to the exercise of authority within a given sphere (Hewitt de Alcantara 2008:105). It is often used as a synonym for efficient management, thus governance can be used in modern corporations as corporate governance. Kaufman and Kraay (2008:4) define governance as the traditions by which, and institutions in which, authority in a country is exercised.

For the purpose of this article, the UNDP definition of governance is adopted as it focuses not only on the state, but also extends to include other actors such as civil society, political society, economic society and   the bureaucracy (public servants), as well as the roles they play in the administration of the state. In light of the above definitions it is clear that governance is not only a contested concept, but an adaptable one, in that it refers not only to the state, but also the external environment in which the state operates. According to *The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting* (CIPFA) (2007:1) proper governance has a significant role to play in effective service delivery in public institutions.

Although Uganda decentralised service delivery institutions under the *Local Government Act*, 1997, existing literature reveals that service delivery still faces a range of challenges, such as inadequate local financial resources and over-reliance on conditional central government grants, inability to attract and retain sufficient trained and experienced staff, corruption, and nepotism (Bashaasha *et al.* 2011). The *Local Government Act*, 1997 decentralised service delivery institutions and their governance to improve access to services for the rural poor. With regard to the specific services, Universal Primary Education (UPE) services are credited due to the dramatic increase in primary school enrolment. Bashaasha *et al.* (2011) note that, although there has been dramatic enrolment, public primary education services are still pitiable due to concerns over financing, equity, quality, and the need for curriculum reform. This article focuses on service delivery in the education, health, water, and sanitation sectors. A review of the service delivery in the other sectors is beyond the scope of this article.

TYPES OF GOVERNANCE

Following the existing literature, governance does not only explore the capacity of the state in decision making, but also explores the governing arrangements, which refers to more than the institutions of government (Kelly 2006:607). As a result, various types of governance and interpretations have increased over the years namely good governance, corporate governance, collaborative governance, e-governance and urban governance. However, for the purpose of this article the following section will only focus on good governance and collaborative governance.

Good Governance

Good governance has lately been referred to as the ideal type of governance to correct societal ills, founded on structural attributes such as the rule of law, transparency, citizen participation, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, especially in a manner that is free from corruption (Matembe 2010). According to the Asia- Pacific MDG study series (2007:32) good governance primarily refers to the high quality of processes by which decisions affecting public affairs are reached and implemented, with due consideration of the poor and other disadvantaged groups. This implies that the poor and the disadvantaged have the means to do the following:

- influence the direction of development in particular issues that affects their lives; and
- make contributions to development, have these contributions recognised, and share the benefits of development in order to improve their lives and livelihoods.

Kakumba (2009:66) states that good governance aims to achieve various objectives such as enhancement of the welfare of its citizens, promotion of economic growth, political stability of its citizens, ensuring that democracy prevails and ensuring overall accountability for actions, as well as monitoring of government actions in society.

Collaborative governance

According to Ansell and Gash (2007:544), collaborative governance is defined as an understanding where various public agencies openly engage non-state stakeholders in a formal, consensus oriented, and deliberative collective decision making process, with an aim to make or implement public policy, or even manage public programmes or assets. Collaborative governance emphasises the formation of a forum by public agencies, encourages a shift from mere consultation of the public to practical participation and direct engagement in decision-making, encourages inclusion of non-state actors, and a shift from public management as an activity to the management of public policy collaboratively with non-state organisations.

Collaborative governance is a broad process that extends beyond the conventional focus of the formal public sector, captures joint government and hybrid arrangements such as public-private and private-social partnerships, as well as co-management regimes (Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh 2011:2). It includes community based collaborations, inter-governmental collaborations between the state and official government representatives, and inter-agency collaborations to pursue a public goal that could not otherwise be accomplished.

O'Flynn and Wanna (2008:9) concur, in that collaborative governance brings the *public and the private actors, public agencies and none state stakeholder*, and *government agencies and concerned citizens* together to work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes to establish laws and regulations for the betterment of service delivery, thereby leading to various advantages, for example:

- Collaborative governance is not merely a consultative process, but involves face to face dialogue, communication, and influence between agencies and stakeholders, providing stakeholders with an opportunity to communicate. Collaborative governance opens up the policy process to wider ideas and suggestions before implementation, to improve policy solutions, which have greater acceptance in the community.

- Collaborative governance paves the way for non-government stakeholders to clearly understand the thinking and practices of the government, and to exert some influence on policy amendments.
- Collaborative governance makes governments conscious of the real value-for-money issues involved in delivering policy effectively, given that it entails specifying outputs, prices and reporting requirements (O'Flynn and Wanna 2008:9-10).

LINK BETWEEN GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

In order to comprehend the link between service delivery and governance, it is prudent to clarify what service delivery entails. According to the former *South African Management Development Institute* (SAMDI) (2002:5) service delivery is the systematic arrangement for satisfactory fulfilment of the various demands for services, by undertaking purposeful activities with optimum resource use to delivering effective, efficient, and economic services resulting in measurable and acceptable benefits of the customer. Thus, service delivery entails the activities of public officials, that is, activities that require public officials to establish exactly what the public wants, and how best to fulfil these needs.

It is worthwhile to note that various aspects contribute to the wellbeing of citizens (De la Harpe *et al.* 2008:8). These include aspects such as access to basic education, health services, infrastructure, as well as water and sanitation, under which principles of good governance play an important role. For example, basic education is a fundamental human right whereby every individual is entitled to education, especially at the fundamental stages. The major concern of this article is how this service, along with other basic services, is provided in order to reach those that need them most. In order to acquire such basic services, De la Harpe *et al.* (2008:8) assert that good governance principles must exist. Therefore, this article makes an assessment of the link between governance and service delivery from a broader perspective, based on globally identifiable principles of governance notably:
- inclusiveness and equity;
- participation;
- transparency and accountability;
- adherence to the rule of law; and
- efficiency and effectiveness as they hold the flag if one is to speak of governance (De la Harpe *et al.* 2008:6).

Participation

Participation has been conceptualised as the manner in which citizens are involved in the formulation and implementation of decisions pertaining to their wellbeing, regardless of race, gender, political affiliation, or tribe in the political and administrative process of decision-making and implementation of matters regarding the citizens themselves (UNESCAP 2010:1; Odi 2010). Participation is regarded as the core principle upon which good governance is formed, and thus plays a critical role in service delivery. Participation can be considered as key to solving service delivery issues given that it acknowledges the differences in society, regardless of how it is measured.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to note that different groups in society may participate with different visions about what makes *good* service delivery. For instance, clients (parents) in the education sector may participate in anticipation of low-cost accessibility to schools, safety, and sanitation, as well as quality education that improves their children's life chances. Policymakers, who happen to be the political leaders, may be motivated by their wish to deliver social benefits at low cost, whilst the service providers (the teachers and head teachers) participation may be aimed at focusing on the technical side such as the development of sound curricula, high salaries, respect and safety (OECD/DAC 2008:16).

Inclusiveness and equity

To a greater extent, inclusiveness and equity can be achieved through participation by various stakeholders within society. This sets in motion a process of empowerment that goes far beyond the provision of basic services towards enabling the poor to become agents of their own development, in turn leading to better service delivery (Asia-Pacific MDG study series 2007:33).

Transparency and Accountability

Accountability is the extent to which service providers are answerable to the public and institutional stakeholders for their actions and the means by which awareness is manifested. Transparency refers to the level of free flow of information to those concerned in a manner they understand (Graham, Amos & Plumptre 2003:3). Accountability and transparency are interrelated concepts and the one complements the other. For instance, without transparency there cannot be effective accountability.

Additionally, accountability among members of society and their leaders is a critical asset to all governments if they are to deliver services effectively. Thus, the link between service delivery and accountability lies in how citizens and their political leaders exercise their roles and responsibilities. That is, citizens elect leaders who are assessed, based on their political mandates towards the delivery of services. It is the same people who decide on what services are needed, where they are needed, how they are delivered and when they are delivered. This pattern of questions is important to service delivery as they highlight who is accountable to whom (OECD/DAC 2008:16).

It follows from the above that accountability is also linked to service delivery in such a way that, where effective and efficient measures of promoting accountability exist, corruption through outright bribery, theft of public property or embezzlement, patronage, and the bestowing of favours to relatives and friends would be minimised. According to Pauw *et al.* (2002) this is currently the leading cause of poor service delivery.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The efficiency and effectiveness principle demands that processes, institutions, and stakeholders produce results that meet the needs of the people, by means of minimum use of the resources at their disposal without unnecessary waste, delay, or corruption, whilst taking the environment into consideration (UNESCAP, 2010; Matembe 2010:9; Odi 2010). This

principle of governance can be linked to service delivery through the two types of efficiency, namely allocative efficiency and productive efficiency. Allocative efficiency considers matching the need with the service, while productive efficiency entails a match between the provision of the service and the costs involved, improved accountability, and minimal red tape (Muriisa 2008:88). In contrast, given that effectiveness measures the extent to which the original policy objective is achieved; lack of effectiveness will impact on the provision of the service.

Adherence to the rule of law

According to Narayan (2003:11) Rule of Law refers to the existence of a legal system where laws are acknowledged, clear in meaning, are applied equally without any attributions, and are adhered to by the society. This principle of governance is linked to service delivery in the way the rules and regulations are structured and amended. Thus, the Rule of law in a country extends to include how rules are subject to collective stewardship, especially in countries characterised by multiple cultures or nationalities, clearly indicating a shift from the government realm to the people. This is indicative of the rules (formal and informal) government puts in place to meet popular expectations of freedom from fear, and the desire that no other institution but government has ultimate responsibility. That is, making decisions that at times contrary to other people's interests, but justified as necessary in order to protect what members view as of national interest. An illustration of the aforementioned is amendments that recognise the needs of the society and economy that make it easier for the poor to claim their rights and for service providers to reach out to the poor (Hayden *et al.* 2003:3).

Although there is a clear link between governance and service delivery as seen from the above, the question is what type or form of governance is ideal to improve service delivery in Uganda?

GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS IN UGANDA

Governance, especially good governance, is not a new concept in Uganda given the country's historical background and continued dependency on donations from the West, among other international agencies, who dictate pre-conditions for good governance. Such agencies include the World Bank, USAID, as well as the United Nations and its related agencies. Trails of good governance in Uganda date back to the very initiation of decentralisation, when markets were liberalised. Market liberalisation included opening up the economy to external trade, the liberalisation of input markets, and the liberalisation of export markets in agricultural produce and other goods and services. During this period democratic elections were accepted and the multiparty system was born. These practices were part of the driving forces for good governance, as was required by donor countries and agencies at the time. However, as the time to facilitate good governance passed by, Uganda adopted various good governance frameworks as discussed below.

In terms of participation, Uganda adopted the decentralisation policy as depicted in the *Local Government Act*, 1997, and the *Constitution of the Republic*, 1995, aimed at involving people in decision-making and planning for local needs. Additionally, the goals

of decentralisation were achieved, and can currently be observed in the administration of various sectors. In the education sector for instance, decentralisation has been witnessed in the implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy, which calls for the strong involvement of local government. This policy is supported by the *Local Government Act*, 1997, thereby giving authority to districts to formulate, approve and execute their own development plans, register UPE children, and distribute textbooks. Additionally, the Local Government Act also stipulates that monthly remittance for schools from central government should be channelled through the district administration officers (Ministry of Education and Sports 2004:12; Nakabugo *et al.* 2008:60)

Participation has also been observed in other policies that have allowed involvement of local communities such as the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK). This is a programme that entails the extension of UPE to the pastoral semi-nomadic communities of Karamoja, situated in the North Eastern part of Uganda, made up of Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripit. There has also been increased citizen participation through the advocacy of Civil Society Organisations, and their actual involvement in the implementation of policies as observed in the education and health sectors respectively (Kakumba 2009:193). This is justified by the findings of DENIVA (2006: 1), which asserts that Uganda's civil society has a strong structure with an estimated score of 1,8 analysed in terms of human resources, organisational and economic features, extent and depth of citizen participation, diversity of civil society participants, level of organisation, inter-relations, and civil society resources.

Pursuing accountability as a principle of good governance, the government of Uganda has put in place various expenditure tracking and reporting systems (Matembe 2010:4) such as the following:

- the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament with the mandate to audit government accounts;
- the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) responsible for regulating the procurement and disposal of public assets; and
- Inspectorate of Government (IGG), an independent constitutional body tasked with eliminating corruption and abuse of office. Notably, this body is referred to as the ombudsman in other countries.

With reference to the Rule of Law, Uganda is a democratic state responsible for ensuring a basic framework of legality, rights and freedom. The country is characterised by multi-party elections with a significant opposition vote, *de facto* opposition power, a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections, justice for all, and prevalence of the freedom of speech, among others (Odonga 2010:28). In light of the above, it is clear that Uganda has operational frameworks of governance, and good governance in particular.

CURRENT NATURE OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN UGANDA

Arguably, the above initiatives indicate that good governance has been a priority in Uganda. However, despite the existence of frameworks of good governance, service delivery in Uganda remains in disarray (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2010; 2004;

2003). Service delivery is characterised by *inter alia* a high level of corruption, inequality, inadequate capacity for effective accountability of financial resources, persistent shortages in infrastructure implementation, inadequate community support, and limited communication amongst stakeholders (Ministry of Education and Sports 2009: viii; UBOS 2004:19). In terms of education, for instance, UBOS (2010:9) states that provision of adequate infrastructure for the children enrolled in primary schools is a key requirement, and remains a challenge to the education sector, revealing that approximately one in every three pupils enrolled in primary schools do not have adequate seating and writing space.

Additionally, it is important to note that the education sector is still constrained by inequality depicted in the high dropout rates of students in the rural areas, such as the dropout rate in Northern Uganda which stands at 83%. This high dropout rate is attributed to the fact that children forego schooling to undertake piece jobs in order to support their families. UBOS (2008:20) further attributes the dropout rate to the long distance students must travel between home and school. On average, 79% of the students travel approximately 3 km to reach school daily.

The service delivery situation under the water and sanitation sector is also alarming within the Ugandan population, especially among children. Many children still perish in the country due, to a great extent, to diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene (UBOS 2010:33-57). On average, access to potable water is estimated at as low as 9% in some districts, while an estimated 19% of the improved water supply system is not functioning. According to the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) (2010:VIII) this estimate has not improved for approximately six years. Many people are still dependent on spring water, while only 21% of the population have access to hand washing facilities after visiting the toilet. The Ministry of Water and Environment (2010:IX) states that access to hand washing facilities is estimated at a ratio of 208:1 in community schools (that is, 208 students share one hand washing facility within community schools). As a result, according to the Ministry of Health, 10 528 cases of hepatitis E - a disease transmitted by human waste and oral contamination with drinking water - were reported in the Kitgum district in 2010 alone, with 168 deaths registered. In addition, during the 2009/2010 financial year 3 048 cases of cholera were registered, 205 of which died (approximately 7%). Within the same year, 36 cases of bacillary dysentery were recorded resulting in two deaths, 974 cases of Typhoid were reported resulting in 29 deaths, while Viral Hemorrhagic fever claimed 38% of the 13 cases that were reported (UBOS,2010:33-57).

Despite the fact that primary health care services are provided within the sub-county level per district, which is a clear indication of decentralisation in the health system, service delivery has remained poor among the majority of patients requiring treatment from private hospitals. This is also reflected in the high number of maternal deaths where, on average, 9% maternal deaths are reported per hospital per year in the country (UBOS 2010:116). This is largely attributed to the dwindling access to drugs/medicines in health units, as well as the low remuneration of medical practitioners. The shortage of drugs is mainly due to inadequate financing of the health sector and poor management (governance) at health unit level. These continued challenges greatly affect the health system and jeopardize the benefits achieved as well as the capacity development efforts made thus far (UBOS 2010:172).

With regard to infrastructure and transport, community roads are the nearest type of road to the majority of households, as reported by 64% of respondents in the national service

delivery survey. In rural areas, where the majority of the country's agricultural production takes place, access to roads is very low with only 10% of community access roads noted to be in good and fair condition (Magidu *et al.* 2010:5). In the Kampala city centre alone, the road network covers approximately 1 100 km, of which only 340 km is tarred. Only 15% of the roads which are tarred are regarded to be in a suitable state, while 85% is in a dilapidated state. New Vision (2010) further indicates that out of the 89 roads in Kampala city, 73 have potholes. Thus, service delivery in the country is somewhat tainted irrespective of the presence of governance frameworks.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aforementioned discussion reveals that the existence of governance frameworks does not guarantee good service delivery. In this article it has been illustrated that even though Uganda has acceptable governance frameworks (good governance) in place, to some extent service delivery remains uneven and below the desirable citizen's expectations. The education sector experiences inequality, accountability problems, limited class buildings, and difficulty in providing adequate seating space. The health sector is adversely affected, with limited access to drugs/medicine, lack of adequate capacity and beds for patients, and meagre access to medical practitioners. Sanitation is notably poor, and the road infrastructure is hazardous.

These findings suggest that the existence of governance frameworks have not achieved service delivery objectives in the country. Therefore, drawing from the existing literature, and given the undesirable effects upon service delivery in Uganda despite the existence of governance frameworks, what Uganda really needs is genuine emphasis on collaborative governance. This refers to a form of governance that will bring the public and the private actors (public agencies, non-state stakeholders, government agencies, and concerned citizens) together to work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes to establish laws and regulations for the improvement of service delivery. This form of governance would encourage the government to move away from the process of owning, operating and producing alone, towards becoming a facilitator engaged in value chains by accepting the capacity to unite and interact with actors in order to deliver effective services. This would imply that non state stakeholders, public and private sector institution representatives, and civil society work side by side to analyse public problems and suggest solutions to these problems and co-implement the solutions (Ansell & Gash 2007:544-545).

The justification for collaborative governance could be summarised as follows:

Firstly, as in any other political policy-making arena, Uganda is experiencing a shift in the political decision making process from the authoritarian to the more inclusive democracy This results in pushing for expansion of spaces in political decision making to include institutions outside the political realm for instance NGOs, civil society groups, international agencies (such as the UN, EU, AU and the World Bank), international donor countries, opposition parties, and interest groups whose opinions and influences cannot go unnoticed.

Secondly, Uganda is culturally diverse with specific demographic trends. With a population of more than 31 million people, Uganda is home to over 40 ethnic groups all belonging to specific regions of the country. These ethnic groups include *inter alia* the Ankole, Iteso, Basoga, Bakiga, Banyarwanda, Langi, Bagisu, Acholi, and Lugbara among others, with the Baganda forming the largest group. Uganda is also home to three major indigenous groups namely the Batwa, the Benet, and the Karamojong (Marjoke 2011). None of the ethnic groups can claim authority to lead and provide the ideal solutions for the country without conflicts, thus making collaborative governance a preferred form.

Thirdly, Uganda is witnessing an increased sense of uncertainty in the government institutions and policy-makers. This is justified by the increased failure of astoundingly well structured government policies such as the UPE policy, resulting in a high level of doubt among the public towards the government, with many questioning whether the government can actually deliver. Therefore, as Emerson (2001:9) argues, "uncertainty that cannot be resolved internally drives groups to collaborate as a means to reduce, share, and defuse risk". Collaborative governance is the way forward to solve the service delivery issues in Uganda.

Lastly, there is an increased form of interdependence in the country's policy-making process, and interdependence is a broadly recognised precondition for collaborative action. This interdependent policy-making has been seen in solving the country's problems such as the previous war in the northern parts of Uganda and the improvement of the country's economic issues.

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