External control systems in the enhancement of accountability in local government: The case of Uganda

by

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my late parents, Hajj Hamdan K. Musisi and Rehmah Nakkungu Namusisi, whose departure from this world in 2002 and 1979, respectively, reduced the meaning of life and made it never to be the same again. May Allah lighten their burden and honour them in Jannah.
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of two cardinal external control agencies, the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG) in the enhancement of accountability in Uganda’s local government (LG). In Uganda, local governments’ accountability failures are relentlessly blamed on the weak internal systems of control, despite the existence of external controls. This study departs from the premise that, the institutional predicaments of LGs do not only represent poor internal systems, but also signify deficits in the external control mechanisms. The evaluation of external control agencies was based on four main fronts: their institutional capacity to enhance accountability; how they have promoted the operationalisation of legislation and regulatory framework pertaining to accountability; how they have enhanced LG systems and processes towards accountability; and, how far they have helped to strengthen the potential of civil society in fostering accountability in LGs. A largely qualitative research approach was employed, but with some elements quantitative data. Interviews, documents review and direct observation were used as instruments of data collection.

The study established that the IG and the OAG exhibit mixed fortunes of institutional capacity, punctuated by financial and human resources limitations; deficiencies in the enabling legislation; and poor support from various stakeholders. The study revealed a stupendous effort by the IG and the OAG in operationalising legislation, but they perform dismally in enhancing local government systems and processes; and in strengthening civil society capacity towards accountability. There is lack of a harmonised policy and coordinated mechanisms to support supervision, mentoring and inspection of LGs by the external control framework.

The thesis argues that, reforming local government requires changes in the approach of individual and organisational culture. The mere crackdown and reprimands meted out on those that abuse public trust do not necessarily improve accountability. Thus, commitment should be put on identifying the organisational-structural deficiencies and possible system reforms, rather than mere inspections and monitoring exercises that encourage mediocrity. Hence, those who inspect, audit and review local governments should be able to recognise the inherent system
challenges, but also appreciate the constraints under which the public servants operate, or where they have little or no control. In the end, improved performance and accountability depend on the extent to which people appreciate them as legitimate goals, both within the administration and within the external control agency system.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Auditor General</td>
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<tr>
<td>CADP</td>
<td>Corporate and Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAO</td>
<td>Chief Administrative Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFO</td>
<td>Chief Finance Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Central Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>CID</td>
<td>Criminal Investigations Department</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DENIVA</td>
<td>Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIGG</td>
<td>Deputy Inspector General of Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>Director of Public Prosecutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSC</td>
<td>District Service Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>HLG</td>
<td>Higher Local Government (District, City and Municipal Councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Integrated Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFMS</td>
<td>Integrated Financial Management Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td>Inspectorate of Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGG</td>
<td>Inspector General of Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>JARD</td>
<td>Joint Annual Review of Decentralisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Governments Act</td>
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<td>LGDP</td>
<td>Local Government Development Programme</td>
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<td>LGFAR</td>
<td>Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulations</td>
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<td>LGPAC</td>
<td>Local Government Public Accounts Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGUs</td>
<td>Local Government Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLG</td>
<td>Lower Local Government (Sub-county, Town and Divisional Councils)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoFPED</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development</td>
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<td>MoLG</td>
<td>Ministry of Local Government</td>
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<td>MoPS</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIS</td>
<td>National Integrity Survey</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>National Resistance Movement</td>
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<td>OAG</td>
<td>Office of the Auditor General</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Public Accounts Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAF</td>
<td>Poverty Alleviation Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEAP</td>
<td>Poverty Eradication Action Plan</td>
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<td>PFAA</td>
<td>Public Finance and Accountability Act</td>
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<td>PPDA</td>
<td>Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public private partnership</td>
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<td>PSC</td>
<td>Public Service Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFG</td>
<td>School Facilitation Grant</td>
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<td>Shs</td>
<td>Ugandan Shilling (One U$ Dollar equals 1700 Uganda Shs; April 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAP</td>
<td>Sector-Wide Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDN</td>
<td>Uganda Debt Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFM</td>
<td>Value for Money Audit</td>
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