

# ENHANCING LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CASE FOR EXTERNAL CONTROL AGENCIES IN UGANDA

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## ABSTRACT

The rationale for control and accountability in public administration and management is to ensure efficient and effective resource utilisation to foster public service provision, good governance and development. Thus, any movement towards more professional ethos in public sector management demands improved prudence in resource utilisation, increased responsiveness to the citizenry, transparency and, generally accountability. This paper presents and discusses the findings of a research study conducted to examine how the external control agencies of the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG) have enhanced local government systems and processes towards accountability in Uganda. It is demonstrated that local government systemic problems are complex and diverse, and that the accountability deficiency is more ingrained in the inherently weak systems and processes prevalent in local governments (LGs). It is argued that the mere crackdown on those who abuse public authority and misuse public resources do not necessarily improve accountability and public sector effectiveness. Instead, identifying the organisational-structural deficiencies and possible system reforms would be more appropriate to alleviate the problem. Commitment should thus, be put to undertaking system studies geared at improving systems and processes rather than mere inspections and monitoring exercises that encourage *administrative tourism*.

# Article

## INTRODUCTION

**A**ccountability has become the cornerstone of public administration and management because, it constitutes the principle that informs the processes in which those who hold and exercise public authority can be held responsible or answerable for their actions or inactions (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000: 45). The underlying principle for public accountability is that power, authority and resources entrusted to public officials are used efficiently and effectively in the larger citizens' interest. Whereas a public institution can be assumed to have a perfect policy, according to Roux *et al.*, (1997: 155), it cannot be assumed that its policy objectives would be achieved. To ensure the achievement of objectives, control mechanisms become very paramount. Control as a managerial activity and process endeavours to ensure the elimination of waste, the effective use of human and material resources, and the protection of employee interest and general welfare in organisations. In this case, the control function aptly feeds the requirements for accountability in public management.

Public accountability can be examined through a prism of institutions established to serve as a check on the executive arm of government and through such agencies established to monitor the efficiency, probity and fidelity in respect to performance of the public sector (Muthien, 2000: 70). In Uganda the office of Auditor-General (OAG) and the Inspectorate of Government (IG) are external organisational arrangements, charged with a duty of ensuring accountability, effective and efficient performance in public sector agencies, including local government (Constitution of Uganda, 1995: Art. 163 and Art. 225).

The point of departure in this paper is that the predicaments of accountability and performance in LGs do not only represent poor internal systems, but also signify capacity deficits in the external control mechanisms; and thus, external agencies' contribution must be evaluated in terms of how far they foster internal systems and processes. The subsequent presentation in this paper provides the findings of a study conducted to examine how the external control agencies of the OAG and the IG have enhanced local government systems and processes towards accountability in Uganda. The paper first provides highlights on systems and processes within the framework of organisation theory and management. It then, reviews the systemic weaknesses prevalent in local governments in Uganda, providing the basis for evaluating the significance of the external control agencies' interventions.

## SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

**W**weak systems and processes are harbingers of poor accountability and public institutional decadence. Weak systems are associated with organisational structures that do not offer clear description of responsibilities, lines of authority, communication and accountability. Similarly, the employment systems are associated with poor working conditions, appointments based on irregular considerations like nepotism and political allegiance, as opposed to merit and professional competence. This renders public institutions weak and incapable of effectively implementing accountability and ethical virtues.

The systems of *pro-ethics and accountability* regime includes *employment and organisational systems* on the one hand and the *financial management system* on the other hand (Pauw *et al.*, 2002: 343):

- *employment systems* (human resource management) – involve procedures which employ only individuals with requisite job qualifications, establishing clear job description, work standards and suitable conditions of employment, codes of conduct, training and development;
- *organisational systems* – which involve the establishment of an efficient and effective organisational structure with allocation of clear lines of authority, responsibility, communication and accountability, and
- *financial management systems* – involve building sub-systems/ processes of accounting, budgeting, cash flow, stock control, procurement, auditing, and reporting.

## SYSTEMIC WEAKNESSES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (LGS) IN UGANDA

The challenges in implementing the decentralisation policy in Uganda's LGs were identified to include problems related to poor local revenue generation; co-ordination and supervision mechanisms; harmonisation of policy guidelines; citizen participation; relations between implementers and policy makers; institutional capacity and collaboration; service delivery; budgeting and planning process; and reporting. (JARD, 2006: 18). All these aspects are associated with weak systems and processes, and have a bearing on the successful implementation of control.

Various inspections and investigations into the activities of different districts in Uganda have revealed inherent systemic weaknesses that propagate accountability problems as presented below (IG-Report, 2007; OAG, 2007; NIS, 2003; Kakumba, 2003):

- endemic mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, especially poverty alleviation funds (PAF);
- poor monitoring and supervision of projects;
- sub-standard work done by some contractors who compromise quality of work and timely completion. This normally occurs when contractor share money with the councillors or civil servants; or where the local government official is disguisedly the contractor/supplier and therefore, supervisor/supervisee;
- inadequate human resource skills in financial management and other technical areas like engineering, surveying, human and veterinary medicine, agricultural production, planning, accounting, and law;
- irregular recruitment and appointment of staff based on sectarian and political/ ideological considerations; and,
- perpetuation of irregular awarding of tenders and contracts

The above weaknesses are part and parcel of the inherent organisational, human resource and financial management systems. These facets are discussed below in relation to the study findings.

## Organisational systems

A number of inconsistencies within the local government organisational system continue to facilitate defective accountability and poor service delivery orientations. Whereas the motive of the decentralisation policy in Uganda was to reorient good political and economic governance, the economic arguments of effectiveness and efficiency have so far received less explicit attention (JARD, 2004: 3). The creation of new districts – for the sake of political expediency – many of which are not economically viable have increased the administrative costs of running LGs. Crook (2003: 10) argues that, the creation of under-financed and ineffective local authorities, is simply a matter of *spreading the jam too thinly*, which serves to undermine effective service delivery and accountability.

Recent national forums of the Joint Annual Review on Decentralisation (JARD) in Uganda, have reiterated the concern that the principles and objectives of decentralisation are still insufficiently understood by many actors, an attitude further reinforced by the observed trend of employing within LGs *sons and daughters of the soil* (JARD, 2004: 13). Moreover, relationship between elected politicians and appointed officials (public servants) have degenerated into a scramble for local influence and local power, personal ego building, and building of small *client networks*, at the expense of service delivery and accountability to the citizenry (JARD, 2006).

There is a problem of poor co-ordination of local government supervision, mentoring and inspection. Apparently, there are too many levels of control with vast accountability requirements and modes of quality standards, which include elected political executives, legislators, line ministries, local supervisors, central government inspectors, external auditing agencies, and the public. Some central government line ministries for example, have gone beyond supervision and standard setting, to establishing administrative staff structures at the local government level (JARD, 2004: 17), which structures do not only conflict with those already existing, but also confuse the accountability relations. Despite the existence of multiple accountability structures within local government, malfunctions alluding to poor accountability have continued to exist, suggesting deficiencies in organisational-structural arrangements. Commenting on the multiple accountability requirements, Romzek (2000: 22) avers that, it can constitute a big problem to public officials, as sometimes “it is unclear which of the focal points or sources of expectations constitutes the most legitimate source of authority for a given situation”.

Besides, reporting between the different communication lines within some LGs was reported to be poor, as in many cases when it happens, it mainly focuses on inputs (amounts of resources used) rather than outputs and outcomes (realisations). In addition, due to the limited literacy levels of some of the elected officials, especially at lower local council levels, the packaging of information does not favour easy internalisation and leads to the question as to the value of the contribution of these officials to the local government process (JARD, 2004: 10). This affects the reporting and communication mechanisms of horizontal accountability within local government.

Despite the anomalies above, the external control agencies of the IG and OAG often ignore the organisational-structural complexities of local government systems when

making review of LGs' performance. Yet, these organisational deficiencies make the pursuit of accountability difficult. Thus, the inability to fathom and offer support to the local government organisation system makes the role of external control agencies, rather superfluous in the enhancement of accountability.

## **Human Resource management systems**

### ***Recruitment and promotion***

Recruitment and promotion in the public sector are often alleged to be immersed in the political-clientele orientations. Given that the constituencies of public organisations tend to be political, the efficient and professional management styles, especially in poor countries, are often compromised for political expediency. Referring to the institutional dilemmas of poor nations, Kakumba and Kuye (2006: 813) point out that "it is no exaggeration that several managerial, technical and proficiently demanding appointments are made in the interest of enlarging the political base for the wielders of state power". The National Integrity Survey (NIS) conducted in 2003, indicated that only 53% of the respondents in the public sector were definite that neither political officials nor their appointees had influenced their appointment or promotion. This means that 15% of the respondents admitted that there was some influence, and 32% who claimed not to know, were on the basis of informal discussions, in fact yes responses (NIS, 2003: 96).

The separate personnel system of decentralisation in Uganda, where each district recruits its own staff through District Service Commission (DSCs), has meant that district public servants can no longer be transferred or promoted to another district or central government Ministry<sup>1</sup>. Political influence over the DSCs resulting in discriminatory and corrupt recruitment practices that abet nepotism and appointment of *sons and daughters* of the soil (local homeboys and girls) are questioned against the possibility of attaining a quality of personnel that can foster accountability. Despite the expectations of integrity and high moral character, the DSCs' appointment arrangement makes them vulnerable to the whims of local politicians who nominate and approve their names. When the public servants were asked as to how far true is the allegation that the DSC is externally influenced in recruitment and appointment of public servants, at least 65,6% admitted that external influence exists, 6,3% were emphatic it does not exist, while 28,1% were evasive and did not want to commit themselves (Kakumba, 2003: 63).

While the law was later amended to have the top district public servants appointed by the central government, the questions on accountability remain largely unanswered. The recentralisation of the appointment, transfer and retirement of district CAOs, DCAOs, and town clerks continues to generate concerns regarding the extent to which they are responsible and accountable to the district councils – who cannot easily reprimand them since they no longer hire them (JARD, 2006: 12). Besides, career development in the LG, service continues to disillusion several public servants, because of the current structure that limits promotion to one or two levels.

The point of concern is that, the reports of external control agencies of the IG and OAG hardly evaluate these systems' anomalies *vis-à-vis* the accountability situation in LGs.

## **Remuneration and emoluments**

The gap between the actual wage bill and the funds available to LGs remains a pertinent issue undermining the effective human resource retention, employee performance, and commitment to fostering accountability. This issue has remained unresolved over the years, in spite of the fact that the wage component currently consumes almost all the monies sent to districts under the vote of unconditional grant (JARD, 2006: 11).

The salaries for local government staff are oriented towards the central governments' public service scales. Although, district authorities may determine some other emoluments for staff, but these are largely restricted by the limited financial resources available to local authorities. Respondents expressed great dissatisfaction over the public service salaries, which remain so low and have not been adjusted for a long time to take into account the rising inflation and cost of living. For example, a Senior Personnel Officer in U3 salary scale earns about Shs. 720,000/= (U\$424) as a consolidated package per month, while the Principal Personnel Officer in U2 earns about 860,000/= (U\$506) per month. The situation is worse for the lower category of public servants. The low salaries and poor motivation affects the districts' capacity to retain and effectively utilise the existing human resources.

Regarding the emolument of district councillors, it is restricted to no more than 20% of the district's locally generated revenue. This in absolute terms represent little amount of money, given the limited local revenue base, accentuated by widespread poverty, especially in rural districts. Matters have been worsened by the fact that the central government retained all the lucrative sources of revenue, and it essentially funds LGs' programmes through grants, 80% of which are conditional grants. Analysis of the budgets of several districts in 2003 revealed that they could only collect an average of 7% locally, to finance their budgets (Francis and James, 2003: 330). District chairpersons have deplored the current state of local revenue which frustrates meaningful motivation and facilitation of district officials to effectively enforce accountability. The Chairman, Mbale District reiterated this position very well (interview, 1/11/2007).

*There is declining morale due to inadequate remuneration and facilitation. Government must review the 20% limitation on remuneration of councillors; otherwise, the devolved political responsibilities do not match with the accompanying resources. And it is causing a lot of audit queries from the Auditor-General and unnecessary conflict between the councils and the district staff.*

The poor remuneration of district councillors (who are people's representatives) has a possible impact on their continued loss of vigilance on monitoring the progress of local projects and enforcing accountability from the public servants. This could also be the reason why councillors in almost all districts have previously been involved in tender controversies, where they influenced awarding of such tenders to their relatives and proxy companies in which they had pecuniary interests.

## ***Performance evaluation***

Performance evaluation is critical in human resource management, as it helps to establish how well individuals and groups utilise energies and resources at their disposal to achieve predetermined goals and objectives. Performance evaluation provides the basis for future planning, promotion, and organisational development in the form of implementing training and support programmes. But above all, it is a tool for extracting accountability from those entrusted with the organisation's authority and resources.

The study established that performance evaluation is done annually, but in some districts, it is done once in two or so years. Until 2003, it was based on annual confidential reports prepared by immediate senior officers or supervisors without involving those being evaluated. The new participatory system has the potential to encourage transparency and accountability, and to avoid the possibility of victimisation that normally arises when employees are denied access to allegations levelled against them in confidential reports.

Despite the apparent opportunity for self evaluation by the employees, full information on the outcomes of the assessments are still concealed by the supervisors. It was reported that employees rarely discuss with their evaluators to get a feedback on their strength, weaknesses and ways to improve. Yet the requirements for effective accountability emphasises timely feedback and responsiveness, which should be reciprocal between the individuals and the organisation. Hence the inability to provide full feedback to employees does not only inhibit the extent to which they may strive to improve on their performance, but also curtails the response on the fulfilment of accountability.

## ***Training and capacity building***

Training and capacity building for the various categories of local government staff and stakeholders are critical if the objective of enhancing accountability is to be realised. Although there have been a wide range of training and capacity building sessions for LGs over the years, the programmes are rarely co-ordinated in terms of common strategic themes, and the course contents are hardly evaluated to determine their continued practical relevance. The different central government sector ministries and local government associations are yet to come up with *HRM and HR-Development policies* earmarked for local government, which are currently inexistent. Apparently there is lack of a capacity building framework to benchmark on, while trying to track the performance of local government political and technical leaders (JAR, 2006: 12).

## ***Disciplinary process***

A fair and objective system of instituting disciplinary procedures is a core element of human resource management. While the DSC has been recognised as a prime structure for instituting discipline in districts, its generic flaws and associated allegations that it is a mechanism of *local political cliques* undermines its position and ability to administer effective disciplinary process. Respondents noted that several cases referred to the DSCs, especially by the IG and the OAG are often mismanaged, whereby, persons implicated in serious offences like financial mismanagement; sometimes walk away with written warnings. Some cases thus,

end up in courts, with processes that are rather cumbersome. While courts are good avenues in the administration of justice, they are time consuming, expensive and unreliable means of obtaining discipline to errant public officials. Courts have often set free individuals, especially in situations where incriminating evidence against them may not easily be adduced, but when there are substantial grounds and compelling reasons to show their gross impropriety.

## **Financial management systems**

The worst anomalies affecting financial management in LGs are associated with tendering and procurement processes, where large sums of money are reported to be squandered. Indirect awarding of tenders to councillors, relatives of tender board members, public servants through proxy companies have been rife; and have often been reported to be punctuated with inflated bills of quantities by technocrats (engineers) who seek to get kickbacks in return. These have led to substandard work and loss of value for money (IG-Report, 2006; OAG, 2006). A new legislative amendment to the LGA, 1997 (section 92) was passed in 2006 by Parliament, to abolish the district tender boards and replace them with contract committees composed of public servants. This differs from the earlier arrangement, where the district councillors (politicians) would appoint people, allegedly basing on considerations such as political and business acquaintances.

Nonetheless, the LG public officials interviewed, expressed concern that the external control agencies of the IG and the OAG are obsessed with fault-finding, sometimes overshadowing their objective analysis and reporting, and it rather, obstructs their positive contribution to strengthening financial management systems in LGs.

This exhibits the feeling of injustice against the external control agencies. Yet such watchdog agencies must have credibility and exhibit objectivity in the eyes of the public and to the administrators affected by their decisions, if they are to function successfully (Gregory and Giddings, 2000). The aura of fairness and objectivity becomes a standard requirement for the watchdog agencies because, just like in the principles of jurisprudence, exercising justice, must not only be done, but must be seen to be done. A watchdog agency must thus, strive to be above reproach and win public credibility if it is to advance its capacity building role towards public organisation systems and processes.

Having presented and discussed the above facets of Uganda's local government systems and processes, it is imperative to look at the different interventions that the external control agencies of the IG and the OAG have made in helping to alleviate the different systemic problems that frustrate effective accountability in local government.

## **EXTERNAL CONTROL AGENCIES' INTERVENTION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES**

**T**he *Inspectorate of Government Act* 2002 (s8 [1]) mandates the IG to take the necessary measures for the detection and prevention of corruption in public offices, but in particular; to examine the practice and procedures of those offices in order to facilitate the discovery of corrupt practices and to secure the revision of methods of work



procedures, which may facilitate improvement; and, to advise those offices on ways and means of preventing corrupt practices and on methods of work procedures conducive for effective performance. In essence, the IG is supposed to procure measures to strengthen systems and processes.

However, the various annual reports from the IG and OAG reviewed hardly bring to mention the highlighted systemic and process anomalies associated with LGs, let alone, articulating their relative impact on the poor intergovernmental and intra-governmental relations that cause a multitude of accountability and service delivery problems. Whereas the above highlighted anomalies could be largely policy issues that are well beyond the powers and jurisdiction of the IG and OAG, there have been very little advocacy from the two institutions to spearhead improvement in LGs' organisational arrangements. Their reports to Parliament concentrate largely on a *blame-sprees* exercise that enumerates and exposes cases of corruption and abuse of office, rather than identifying the organisational-structural deficiencies and possible system cure to alleviate the problem.

Experiences from the *new* patterns of decision making associated with devolved management, attests to the fact that preventive measures are more effective than enforcement methods in combating corruption and promoting efficient and effective public sector performance (Keen and Scase, 1998: 117). While most activities of the IG and OAG are post-facto in nature, in some instances they have undertaken some preventive and proactive measures that can be depicted as bearing the potential of building local government systems and processes. The following deserve mention.

## **Policy and systems study**

Considering that institution building is a key factor in promoting fair, efficient and good governance in public offices, and pursuant to the Constitution of Uganda, 1995 (Art 225[c]), the IG has carried out research into the operations, policies, systems, procedure and legislation of various government departments and institutions with the intention of identifying weak areas that may be conducive to corruptive tendencies and to make such recommendations for remedial action. The IG has so far done policy and system studies on three central government institutions including, the National Social Security Fund, Uganda National Examinations Board, and the Land Registry (IG-Report, 2007: 69).

The local government sphere has not yet benefited from this policy and system studies arrangement, which, perhaps explains why there is continued low compliance on the requirements of accountability, a matter that is linked to the persistent contradictions in the local government systems and processes. It is hoped that when such a study is undertaken, it will be probably be the greatest contribution of external control agencies towards the enhancement of accountability in local government.

## **National integrity surveys (NIS)**

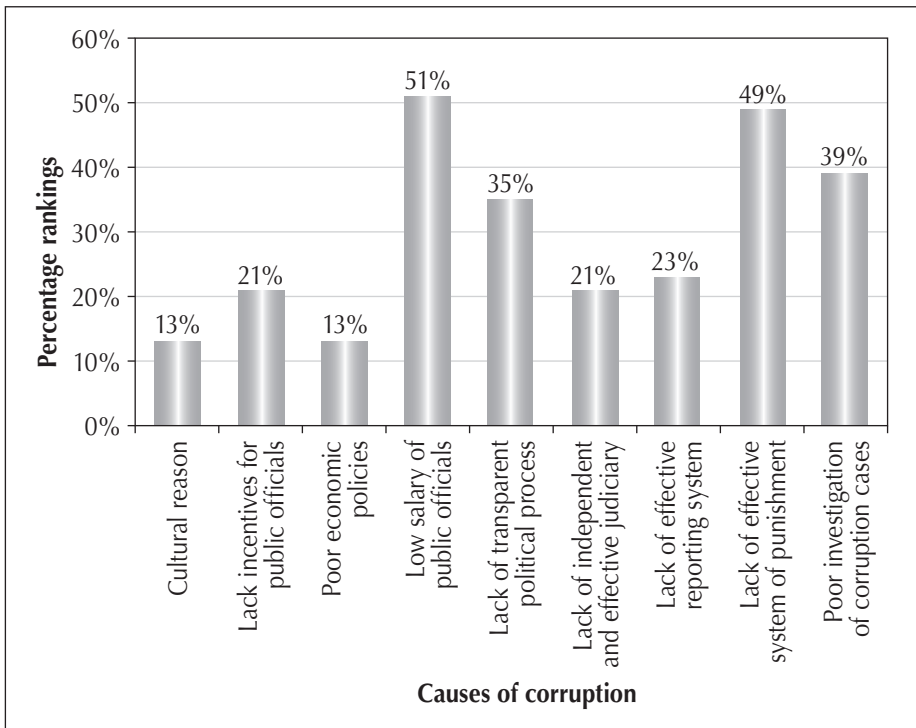
The IG has carried out national integrity surveys, which study and generate information on household and institutional perceptions and experiences on corruption related practices

that can be used by government bodies, civil society and private sector to formulate and implement policies and programmes that can improve transparency and accountability. The previous surveys were done in 1998, 2003, and 2008.

The 2003 NIS in Uganda ranked LGs in *fourth* position among the leading public institutions in proliferating corruption and office abuse, while the recent IG report (2007) ranked them in *first* position among the government institutions that the public complains against frequently. Low salaries and delay in their payment were the main causes of corruption, coupled with the need for politicians to recoup election expenses when they get into power. There is a prevailing climate of tolerance towards corruption, reinforced by an attitude of sympathy towards those who augment meagre wages with small bribes, and those who see misuse of official resources such as vehicles for private purposes as a norm, rather than a breach of regulations (NIS, 2003: 19).

Combating public sector malfunction requires that plans and strategies take cognisance of the relative root causes. The causes of corruption (figure 1), can provide a basis for reorganising systems and processes as a strategy for enhancing accountability and efficient resource utilisation. In this case, the IG intervention through the institutional perception survey can be regarded as mechanisms of enhancing systems and processes.

**Figure 1: Causes of corruption ranked as very important**



Source: National Integrity Survey (NIS, 2003)

The survey findings by the IG therefore, provide sound interventions that could spearhead improvement towards public institutional systems and processes. However, the local government sphere requires a specific and more elaborate institutional survey that can desegregate findings by level of political and socio-economic arrangements, employment and financial management systems within the districts. This hasn't yet been done.

## **Sensitisation programmes**

Sensitisation workshops have been conducted to educate district leaders on the virtues of enhancing good governance through accountability and transparency. In 2006, the IG conducted workshops in the districts of Mityana, Mubende, Mpigi, Wakiso, Jinja, Iganga, Mukono, Masaka, Kamuli, Mbale, Sironko, Mayuge, Bugiri and Kampala (IG-Report, 2007). The OAG in a similar fashion has held regional workshops to sensitise district officials on effective financial management and accountability (OAG, 2007). However, some local government staff echoed their displeasure that many workshops restrict participation to only the top district leaders, leaving out majority lower ranks. This is a drawback on building local institutional capacity, since corruption is a plague on the entire local government system, irrespective of rank and level.

## **Field inspections, monitoring and evaluation**

Inspection is a critical control management tool that involves monitoring on the progress of agency and individual activities to ensure that they are in line with the pre-conceived objectives of the organisation. Through monitoring and inspection of the *Poverty Alleviation Fund* (PAF) related activities like feeder roads maintenance, primary health care, water and sanitation, the IG and OAG have been able to uncover loopholes in the local government monitoring and evaluation formation. For example, the mismanagement of PAF projects in districts is attributed to inadequate monitoring and supervision by mandated officers due to lack of technical capacity, poor co-ordination or sheer fraud, where payment is made for substandard or no work done. The IG in particular found that the funds meant for monitoring and supervision were used for purchasing and servicing of computers, office furniture, and others were diverted to run day to day office operations in total disregard of PAF guidelines (IG-Report, 2007: 11). The IG and OAG have, thus recommended sanctions to those implicated in the mismanagement of PAF projects, but in addition, it stipulated a variety of vital mechanisms to improve the monitoring and evaluation processes in the districts. Recent reports from the districts indicate that PAF utilisation has improved tremendously as a result of these IG interventions.

## **Financial management reforms**

Financial management reforms have been undertaken in some districts, arising out of the OAG audit reports that stimulate improved systems and processes. Through auditing

of final accounts of LGs, the OAG often issues a *management letter* to the respective district CAOs, which offer details on the opinion regarding the accounting standards of a particular district. The management letter offer an assessment on whether the district has improved from the previous year or not, and assists in identifying the gaps in systems. This information strengthens internal controls by redirecting proper financial management.

The OAG has made some input to the nation-wide financial management reforms, with a potential to improving local government systems and processes. The value-for-money (VFM) audits undertaken by the OAG and their associated recommendations, have strongly enriched government’s *Financial Management and Accountability Project* (FINMAP), which aims at deepening and consolidating public financial management to maximise the impact towards the *Poverty Eradication Action Plan* (PEAP). The FINMAP particularly targets improved local government financial management systems to enhance the capacity of local projects in agriculture and production, health, water and education to contribute towards poverty reduction.

The OAG’s central role in auditing the *Integrated Financial Management System* (IFMS), which started in 2005 to accounting units in central and local governments is another intervention to strengthen systems and processes. The IFMS records all government financial transactions and is managed at the Treasury in the Ministry of Finance. It is an electronic system that replaced payment across the public sector by cheque. The IFMS has improved the disbursements of funds to districts, which is now said to be quicker and enables better tracking of resource expenditures than the old system.

## Action-triggered improvements

In some instances the IG and OAG actions and recommendations to various local authorities have been implemented, especially, regarding the disciplining of officials who defy regulations, and where else in making *right* the different *wrongs* committed, in form of corrective action. The table below shows some specific cases affecting different districts where the IG recommendations for remedial action have triggered improvement.

**Table 1: Some IG Action-triggered improvement to systems and processes in District Local Governments**

Case/ Findings	IG Recommendations	Action taken
Causing financial loss & flawed procurements in Mukono District	District to dismiss the Ag. CAO; and recover Shs.10 million lost in payment for a boat from DCAO, CFO, Internal Auditor, Asst Engineer	The Ag. CAO retired and money was being recovered.

Case/ Findings	IG Recommendations	Action taken
Abuse of office, causing financial loss and forgery in Mbale Municipality	The Mayor and Senior Town Clerk to be prosecuted, with a view to also recover the monies.	The Mayor was kept out of office, the Town Clerk interdicted and both prosecuted.
Mismanagement, corruption & tender irregularities in Kabwohe, Bushenyi	Dismiss the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, discipline Health Inspector, recruit a competent Engineer	Recommendations fully implemented
Misuse & diversion of funds by CAO & Chairperson of Kamuli District	Take disciplinary action against the CAO	The CAO was retired by the PSC on 15th November 2006
Irregular recruitment of staff in Mukono, Mpigi, Rakai Districts	Discipline officials who interfered in recruitment exercise. Districts were to cancel the appointments & re-do the exercise	Officials involved were warned, & positions re-advertised
Mismanagement & existence of ghost pupils/teachers at Bukwanga, Iganga	Shs.1,390,122= be recovered from Headmaster, submit him to the DSC for demotion to a classroom teacher	Implemented, the CAO instructed the CFO to deduct the monies from the H/M salary
Irregular award of tenders & contracts	Tender awards in districts of Masaka, Mbale, Mbarara, Mayuge, Kabale, flouted. Districts were to reprimand implicated officials and re-do the tendering exercise	Tender awards were revoked, some companies blacklisted & officials reprimanded

Source: Adapted from IG-Reports, 2006 and 2007

Such cases and their related actions as presented above continue to send strong signals to local government authorities to improve on their methods of operation, lest they face the wrath of punitive measures. It can thus be inferred that, such interventions by external control agencies can enhance local government systems and processes.

Nonetheless, the institutional capacity limitations of external control institutions militate against the effort of the IG and OAG to fight corruption and enforce integrity systems in LGs. The agencies are generally not well facilitated to carry out their mandated

responsibilities; have human resource capacity limitations; and sometimes, they lack vital support from other stakeholder agencies like the Police CID, DPP and LGs.

## CONCLUSIONS

The paper has demonstrated that local government systemic problems are complex and diverse. The mere crackdown on those who abuse public authority and misuse public resources not necessarily improve accountability and public sector effectiveness. It appears that the accountability deficiency is more ingrained in the inherently weak systems and processes in LGs, yet the external control agencies appear to focus on uncovering offences and having the culprits reprimanded. This is evident by their annual reports to Parliament, which concentrate on a *blame-spree* exercise that enumerates and exposes cases of corruption and abuse of office, instead of identifying the organisational-structural deficiencies and possible system reforms to alleviate their problem.

While the punitive and uncompromising measures should be aligned against corrupt tendencies, those who inspect, audit and review public service management should be able to recognise the above highlighted challenges, and also appreciate the circumstances and constraints under which public servants operate, or where they have little or no control. Commitment should thus, be put to undertaking system studies geared at improving systems and processes rather than mere inspections and monitoring exercises that encourage *administrative tourism*.

## NOTE

- 1 The exceptions to this are the positions of the District CAO, Deputy CAO, and Town Clerks who after amendment of the Constitution (Article 188) are no longer appointed by the DSC, but the PSC. The line Ministry of Local Government can transfer or interdict them.

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