

From centralised local administration to local governance and universal citizen participation: A historical analysis of local government systems in Uganda

Michael Galukande-Kiganda

Uganda Management Institute, Kampala, Uganda

Abstract -The paper presents a historical analysis of the trends in local governance in Uganda. Initially, it starts by analyzing the traditional pre-colonial forms of local administration in several kingdoms and chiefdoms in the country that included Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole, Bukedi, Bugisu, Teso, Karamajong, Acholi, Langi, Kakwa, the Lugbara and the Madi communities. Then the paper analyses how sub-national regions were governed under the colonial rule, and lastly how the same was exercised during the post-colonial regimes. The paper concentrates at analysing local governance under the current administration under the National Resistance Movement government. The analysis was purely qualitative based on literature review and analysis of past reports and publications on the subject matter. The methods used were key informant interviews and group discussions that were conducted amongst peers in local government sector in the country. Findings revealed a trend of transition from highly centralised local administration systems to more decentralised local governance offering opportunities for universal citizen participation.

Key Words: *Local Administration, Local Governance, Uganda*

1.INTRODUCTION (*Size 11, Times New roman*)

The administrative and political structures of local governments offer the framework within which local public policy is managed (Havenga, 2002). Most of the everyday activities of the general public are affected by the services rendered by local governments (Zealand, 2006). Globally, there is no political system deemed complete and democratic without a system of local government. This paper includes an overview on the meaning, nature, and scope of local governments. It addresses pre-colonial local government systems in Uganda; local governance under the colonial era; post-independence local government in Uganda; and local governance under President Idi Amin. It also discusses local governance under president Obote II regime; local governance under President Okello Lutwa; and decentralised local governance under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) regime.

Meaning, nature and scope of local governments: an overview

Local governments are important structures of promoting well-being of local people (Halfani, 1992; Shah, 2006; Zealand, 2006). Many everyday activities of the common people depend on services provided by local governments. Therefore, the importance of local governments cannot be underestimated considering the range of services they deliver to the common people and the various functions which local governments perform (Gomme, 1987; Government et al., n.d.).

Local governments are premised on the principles of division of labour between local authorities and the central government; local authorities shoulder government functions that would be difficult to perform in local areas (Golding, 1947).

Local governments are difficult to define because of the multi-functions they serve (Charlick, 1992). However, they can be described as governments comprising universally elected councils with political, executive and administrative duties and responsibilities of matters concerning people of a certain locality together with those responsibilities that parliament deems necessary to be administered by local authorities (Venkata, 1965). Similarly, they can be described as authorities with powers to make ordinances and bye-laws within a restricted geographical area inside a state.

Local government is a public sector management model characterised by democratic governance (Avenhaus & Kyriakopoulos, 2010). The paradigm shift from local administration to local governance has developed because of the "extension of state duties and functions, and in order to fuse citizens' rights to participate in the management of their matters" (Avenhaus & Kyriakopoulos, 2010). In local governance, citizens conduct their local affairs by themselves within an administratively and geographically demarcated local authority, thus creating local governments that separate responsibilities and powers with the central government. Local governments are characterised by autonomy, by having elected leaders within a geographically demarcated region who are in better position to handle local affairs. Local government systems are based on participation and involvement of local citizens through elected local councils. Local councils give a chance to educate the local community on modern public policy management methods and good governance.

Based on the principle that local problems are better solved by people within that locality than the central governments, the terminology local government factually means the management of local concerns by local people (Mawood,

1983; Leftwitch, 1994; Warren, 1952). This running of local affairs is usually entrusted to indigenous political councils which are regularly voted by the people in that particular locality (Mill, 1965). The central government usually prescribes the limits in which local governments operate although local governments are granted powers, responsibilities and some degree of discretion in exercising their functions (Stone, 1963).

Some of the most important powers of local governments include raising revenues through taxation and spending the same to finance local services (Lockard, 1984). Therefore, local governments are public organisations with powers to manage a range of public policies in a small administrative territory. Humes and Martin (1961: 24) posit that "Local Governments enjoy mainly the following attributes: a clearly defined area, a population, capacity to sue and be sued in their names, contractual obligations, perpetual continuity, authority and power to undertake and conduct public activities and the duty and responsibility to collect local revenue and determine a budget."

The above analyses of local government definitions point to two important aspects: (1) there exists a relationship between central government and local government; and (2) there is a relationship with local communities (Holm, 1989). The guiding principles for these aspects are that local governments should be smaller and closer to the people in order to be efficient (Wilson et al., 1994). When a local government is big, it loses its representation objectives; indeed, a local government should be based on local needs and priorities.

In summary, local governments are a legal entity with powers to raise public revenues; they involve community participation; have some degree of autonomy from the central government, and are public organisations (Maheshwari, 1984). Muttalib and Akbar (1982) elaborately explained the six dimensions of local governments as organised social entities; integrated in the political system of a particular country; body corporate; economically significant with administrative powers directly on their civil servants; existing in a defined geographical and demographical area; and a unique environment that results into their birth, growth and development.

The statutory provisions of local governments in Uganda are provided for under Articles 176 and 180 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as well as Section 3 of the Local Government Act.

Article 176. Local government system

(1) The system of local government in Uganda shall be based on the district as a unit under which there shall be such lower local governments and administrative units as Parliament may by law provide. The same is provided for under Section 3 of the Local Government Act.

Article 180. Local government councils

(1) A local government shall be based on a council which shall be the highest political authority

within its area of jurisdiction and which shall have legislative and executive powers to be exercised in accordance with this Constitution.

Methods and resources

This paper is arising out of a qualitative study conducted to assess the quality of local governments in Uganda. The original contents were developed as part of supporting evidence to inform the history of local governance in Uganda. The study employed literature reviewed both physically and online and a series of works were consulted especially on the historical aspects of decentralisation and local governance in Uganda. The findings are explained as below>

Pre-colonial local government systems in Uganda

The history of local governance in Uganda can be discussed right from the pre-colonial times. Although the forms and structures of local governances differed greatly in form and content, it is evident that there existed some forms of local administration in both state and stateless societies. Before Uganda was formally independent and even before it was declared a British Protectorate, there existed both state and stateless societies from which Uganda as a nation was forged (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). There were traditional forms of sharing power and division of responsibilities among the kings or paramount chiefs and the common subjects in distant regional boundaries (Crowder et al., 1981). For example, in the kingdom of Buganda there were counties (*saza*) headed by county chiefs; sub-counties (*Gombolola*) headed by Gombolola chiefs, parishes (*Muluka*) headed by Muluka chiefs, and villages headed by village chiefs (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). These four tiers of local administration exercised some forms of decentralised responsibilities (Curtin et al., 1978). Other forms of local administration existed among the kingdom states of Toro, Bunyoro, and Ankole. Even in the stateless societies, there existed paramount chiefs who delegated some of the cultural, religious political and administrative functions to tribal clan leaders.

These types of polities, which existed before the arrival of Europeans colonialists in Africa, were either centralized (state) or decentralized (stateless) political entities presided over by kings, chiefs, or military commanders (Kisangani, n.d.). The role of local administration in these regions was to facilitate the extraction of resources from different chiefdoms to the king's court. As already pointed out, there existed both state ruled societies especially in the inter-lacustrine region and the stateless societies mainly in the north. In the nomadic societies of Karamoja, local administration was built around the family system (Mamdani, 1976) while in the agricultural stateless societies in northern Uganda, local administration was premised on the clan (Bitaliwo, 2014). Some minimum level of social organisation and community administration was upheld through several cultural rites characterised by gift giving (Mamdani, 1976). This system of local administration

depended on generational linages which enjoyed administrative powers that they exercised through councils of elders. On the other hand, chiefs and clan heads, were selected by community elders (Burke, 1964; Mamdani, 1976). Therefore, noticeable differences in local administration existed between the northern and the southern parts of Uganda; the southern parts were more advanced and with fairly well time-honoured centralised local authorities than the northern societies which were organised at the level of families and clans. (Moncrieffe, 2004).

The kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda were prominent in societies that were governed by some formal state structures, although similar formal state structures existed in other kingdom societies of Ankole, and Toro also located in the interlacustrine region; all inheriting local administrative structures of the Chwezi dynasty.

In the kingdom of Bunyoro Kitara, local administrative was enhanced by social and religious cohesion as well as military dominance (Southall, 1972). The Chwezi dynasty that had practically created a caste system in this region, gradually crumbled to the Luo invasion (Bitaliwo, 2014). The Luo form of local administration was characterised by both cohesion and integration of religious, cultural and language backgrounds among themselves and the native agricultural communities. However, Bunyoro Kitara's central authority was extended to satellite states who sought its protection (Karugire, 1980). Local chiefs were appointed and granted extensive local administrative powers over their territories that led to institutionalised disobedience to the central authority and local infighting.

However, there were noticeable distinctions across kingdoms within the interlacustrine region (Moncrieffe, 2004). For example, the kingdom of Ankole was class-based with the Bahima ruling class controlling local administration using violence and economic ownership of cattle. The royal kraal of minority Bahima pastoralists administered the majority Bairu (cultivators) and local administration radiated to territorial administration of chiefs and revenue collectors (**Bakungu**) (Steinhart, 1999).

Bitaliwo (2014: 42-43) explained the evolution of Buganda's local government system to having been premised on three factors: "(1) the existence of a settled agronomic society, whose leadership advanced policies that tried to mediate the disputes that categorised such societies. (ii) the initial leadership was territorially scattered in terms of hierarchy with orderly clan heads (**Bataka**) who enjoyed dual religious and political functions within their clans. (iii) The clan heads were later subject to the hegemonic institution of the Kingship (**Kabaka**)". For about 550 years the kingship had to initiate policies that consolidated Kabaka's role, and controlled and at times accommodated the challenging power interests of the numerous **Bataka chiefs** and the society at large. In so doing, the Kabaka exercised supreme power over Buganda kingdom through numerous institutions and administrative apparatuses.

The Buganda society was patriarchal and the reigning Kabaka identified with his mother's clan but remaining the

overall head of all clan heads (**Sabataka**). There were local chiefs (**Bataka**) with geographical, political and religious powers who translated into a hierarchically ordered but appointed chiefs (**Bakungu**); these were appointed based on loyalty and merit to effect local governance. The tenure of the Bakungu was determined by the Kabaka and sometimes included non-Baganda although members of the loyal family were excluded from local administration appointments (Kaggwa, 1953; Moncrieffe, 2004). There was a head of the Bakungu (**Katikilo**) who was a chief minister who also administered the kingdom's day-to-day governance.

In the eastern parts of current day Uganda, there were various tribes in varying sizes of chiefdoms. There was a hierarchical nature and functionality of these chiefdoms through which local administration was exercised. This hierarchy was in such a way that the chief was the head and assisted by either a council of elders or clan heads depending on the polity (Wakabi, 2008).

In Bukedi, Bugisu and Teso, the chiefdoms constituted small polities, which hardly existed beyond a village. The same societal arrangement existed among the Samia-Bagwe where the **Nalundiho**, the traditional chief, exercised local administration functions in a geographical area almost equivalent to that of a village head (Wakabi, 2008).

Among the Iteso and the Karamajong, local administration functions involved political and military activities that were organised around the "**age set-system**" where political and administrative decisions were made by a council of elders, chosen in age cohorts (Wakabi, 2008).

In the northern parts of Uganda, the people were also organized in small chiefdoms. For example, among the Alur and the Jonam, the political head, the **Rwoth** also known as **Ubino** or **Rwot** among the Acholi, was the centre of local administration. Among the Langi, the political head as **Won-nyaci** and exercised similar local administration functions.

Needless to mention that the political as well as cultural leaders in eastern and northern Uganda did not enjoy absolute powers and authority over their subordinates like the kings of the southern kingdoms. These were leaders among equal social groups whose political decisions were subject to enquiry by the elders' council (Gingyera-Pinyewa, 1992).

Local administration among the Kakwa, the Lugbara and the Madi were based on lineage. The political head, **Opi**, enjoyed religious powers and administered local matters with the assistance of a local council thus organizing the society in some form of order that constituted local administration (Wakabi, 2008).

Local government under colonial administration

There are contradictions on the underlying motives of British local government policy in Uganda. Olok-Onyango (2007) believes that colonial legislations on local government demonstrated only promoted administrative efficiency and the prevention of political challenges to the colonial government. On the other hand, Wakabi (2008) argues that the British colonial administrators concerns in the existence of local government was defended on the basis that it was a crucial aspect of the process of democratization and intensification of mass participation in the decision-making process. As it happened elsewhere in Africa, the British colonialists sought the cooperation of traditional chiefs to administer the colonies more effectively (Low 1965). Gakwandi (1992) points out that before the declaration of a British protectorate over Uganda; there were more than thirty ethnic groups with divergent political systems. However, pre-colonial institutions continued to control local administration in the post-colonial Uganda (Gennaioli, 2005).

Moncrieffe (2004, p.6) urged that British policy of local administration was in Uganda was both direct and indirect-rule and produced " radicalized state and civic societies in a tribalized rural population through decentralized dictatorship. The Baganda chiefs were contributory to 'mediating British rule's centralized form of administration that was exercised by direct-rule that excluded native establishments and practices and commanded conformity with British colonial directives."

In the period 1884 to 1962 when Uganda was under British colonial rule, colonial administrators ruled Uganda through an organised decentralised structure that was operationalized through several colonial bye-laws and ordinances (Ministry of Local Government, 2014). The Buganda Agreement of 1900 signed by Sir Harry Johnston and similar agreements with the kingdoms of Tooro, Ankole and Bunyoro became milestones in colonial local administration in Uganda. These agreements unified the loose kingdoms, chiefdoms, and territories into a unified country, Uganda, into a local administration system based on tribal districts (Karugire, 1980). Several ordinances were gradually enacted to effect local administration in the Ugandan protectorate. For example, the Native Authorities Ordinance of 1919 gave district commissioners administrative powers over appointed chiefs based at county, sub-county, parish and village levels (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012).

Similarly, the 1949 Local Government Ordinance proved to be the most effective colonial ordinance that ushered a decentralised system of local administration to the Ugandan protectorate (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). This ordinance recognised the already customary four kingdoms of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro and the eleven districts that covered the rest of the Uganda Protectorate. This ordinance also formed elected district councils that were authorized to oversee district administration in their respective areas (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). The district commissioner as well as the local chiefs remained in charge of the colonial government (Ojambo, 2012). The elections to district councils conducted in 1950s conferred responsibility of district administration on the elected councils. The Protectorate

government admired the Buganda system type of local administration and used it to spread their influence and administer all parts of Uganda on the basis of indirect rule. Baganda chiefs who were mainly tax collectors and law enforcement cadres were appointed by the British colonial administrators and assigned local administration duties in other parts of the country as "British scouts" (Turyahikayo-Rugyema, 1974). The Baganda chiefs replaced the local clan heads in the pre-colonial hierarchy who were now directly under the colonial administration. Karugire (1980) explained, "the 1949 Ordinance was the legal instrument by which tribally-oriented local governments were established in Uganda".

The system of indirect rule was described by Apkan as cited by Gakwandi (1992: 22-24), By indirect rule, I mean a system of administration which lives in existence the administrative machinery which had been created by the natives themselves; which recognizes the existence of Emirs, chiefs and native councils, native courts of justice ... as real living forces, and not as curious and interesting pageantry; by which European influence is brought to bear on the native indirectly through his chiefs, and not directly, through European officers – political policy etc., by which the European keeps himself a good deal in the background and leaves the mass of native individuals to understand that the orders which come to them emanate from their own chief than from the all-pervading white man.

The District Administration Ordinance of 1955 created local councils at district and county levels and offered them several local government functions that included collecting and spending locally collected revenues and taxes.

The Local Administration (Amendment) Ordinance of 1959 sanctioned the Governor to appoint District Chairpersons and other members of district appointed boards (Ministry of Local Government, 2014).

Post independence local governments in Uganda

Post-independence local governments enjoyed federal and semi-federal status with decentralized powers while the districts upheld the unitary affiliation with the central government (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). For example, the four kingdom states (Buganda, Bunyoro, Tooro, and Ankole) had powers to raise revenue through taxes, draw and implement budgets and provide a range of public services. However, areas that were governed under district councils continued to provide public services as they had done before independence, entirely relying on the central government for funding in the concentrated system. As in the colonial administration, the central government supervised district councils in spheres of democracy, governance and accountability (Karugire, 1980). In all, the colonial indirect rule mechanisms remained in place and were enjoyed by the independence government.

The 1962 created the first efforts in the direction of decentralised governance in post-colonial Uganda (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). Kothari (2003) opined that the

British colonial strategy to maintain the integrity of local administration in Uganda at independence involved an intricate federal constitution. Under this constitutional arrangement, the Kabaka of Buganda, which was the largest ethnic tribe in the country, served as the president, while Apollo Milton Obote, a Nilotic, as prime minister. Under this semi-federal constitution, there were attempts to devolving powers of the central government to lower levels particularly in the functions of tax administration, rural water and roads maintenance, land management, , agricultural extension services, and basic primary education (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012).

This 1962 independence constitution also gave federal status to the kingdom of Buganda and semi federal status to Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro kingdoms as well as the territory of Busoga. The other parts of the country were administered via locally elected district councils. These areas included the districts Bugishu, West Nile, Sebei, Bukedi, Madi, Acholi, Kigezi, and Lango (Ojambo, 2012). The overall local administration structure at independence comprised of ten districts, one special district of Karamoja and the four kingdoms (Turyahikayo-Rugyema, 1974).

Local Governance after the 1966 crisis

The 1962 constitution was repealed and replaced by the Republic Constitution of 1967 that re-centralised nearly all the local government functions formally granted by the 1962 independence constitution. Particularly, the Local Government Ordinance of 1962 was repealed and the 1964 Urban Authorities Act as well as the 1967 Local Administration Act were later passed into law. These new legislations acts re-centralised all the functions granted to local governments and the powers of local governments were vested in an appointed minister responsible for local administration, who was directly under the control of the head of state (Nsibambi, 1988).

Under the 1967 constitution the kingdoms of Uganda, Bunyoro, Tooro, and Ankole kingdoms were sub-divided into districts and all districts in the former kingdoms had the same relationship with the central government with levelled powers as other districts in the country (Republic of Uganda, 1967). Accordingly, the 1967 Local Administration Act was passed and rendered district councils' agents of the central government. The term "local government" was replaced by "local administration" to emphasise the recentralisation objectives of the 1967 constitution and the consequent usurped powers of local authorities (Akampurira, 2011; Mutibwa, 1992; Sabiti Makara, 2009). Key local government functions, including passing of budgets and designing of development plans had to be approved by the central government minister responsible for local administration (Villadsen & Lubanga, 1996).

Local Governance under President Idi Amin

From 1971 to 1979, the country was under the reign of president Iddi Amin. In his tenure in office, President Amin dissolved parliament and the constitution, and suspended the

rule of law; and instead administered the country by military decrees. Although districts councils and urban councils were dissolved, in 1974, the total number of districts were increased to 38 and grouped into ten provinces that were headed by royal military generals honoured as governors (Hamilton, 2005). In this period of time, there was total breakdown of all government institutions including not to mention all local government structures, the economy, and even security (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). In 1970s, an attempt was made to name districts following certain criteria that based on social, economic and political grounds. Each district was divided into counties, sub-counties, parishes and villages as was the case during the colonial period.

The period following the overthrow of Iddi Amin's military government was characterised by pint-sized efforts to re-instate local governance. When the 1981 general elections were, there was no provision for holding local council elections were. However, the 1976 Local Administration Act which had been repealed by President Iddi Amin was re-instated and district commissioners were re-appointed and posted to all districts by president Milton Obote. The restored district commissioners were appointed basis on their loyalty to the ruling Uganda People's Congress political party. Local government staff were recruited by the central government public service commission and deconcentrated to any district. Posting instructions and transfers were conducted by the Ministry of Public Service.

During this period, there were limited efforts to re-establishing district administration councils and to hold local elections. This state of affairs culminated in a popular requests to re-establish democratic local governance and to re-instate peace and security in many parts in the country. Most regions especially in central Uganda were under the Luwero civil war that resulted the National Resistance Movement - NRM capture state power in 1986.

Local Governance under Obote II regime

When President Milton Obote regained power through the 1980 elections, he reorganized the local government structure according to the 1967 Constitution and operationalized them under the 1967 Local Government Administration Act (Wakabi, 2008). The short-lived period of Obote II (1981-1985) was characterised by rebellion by the National Resistance Army that escalated into a civil war. This period, the local government system reverted to the situation that existed between 1967 and 1971; the 1967 constitution was re-established that highly centralized local administration. Notable among this period, was the extensive central government patronage in local administration functions. Local administration chiefs were appointed by the central government from cadres of the ruling Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) political party and chiefs who subscribed to other political parties were dismissed (Mutibwa, 1992).

Local governance under President Okello Lutwa

The Okello Lutwa coup led military government that replaced the UPC government in 1985 was too short-lived to institute any administrative changes in local governance. The 1967 Constitution and the Local administrative Act remained in place. There was insecurity in many parts of the country with emanate state capture by the National Resistance Army with whom President Okello Lutwa was preoccupied in fighting.

Decentralised local governance under the NRM

The local government system that was introduced by the NRM government in 1992 has always been regarded as exceptional in African countries in relation to the scale and scope of devolution of government functions to the local councils. Francis and James (2003: 325) commended Uganda's local government reform agenda is "one of the most far-reaching local government reform programs in the developing world". Mitchinson (2003: 241) posited that it as "one of the most radical devolution initiatives of any country at this time". (OECD (1997: 61) commended the decentralisation system to having "produced a fundamental change in the institutional arrangements through which authority has been managed and services delivered".

At the time the NRA state captured power, democratization and good governance were by this time very critical public administration requirements (Steiner, 2006). Even before seizing state power, the NRA civil war military tactics of had established grass-root community-based mobilisation strategies that were popularly known as '*Resistance Committees*'. In every locality the NRA fighters seized territory, local populations were mobilised to form these nine-member resistance committees. The objectives of these committees included to safeguard and maintenance of local security and the provision of alternative to local governance structures, which were at the time lacking because of political neglected by President Milton Obote's government (Saito, 2001). Besides local governance the resistance committees would also handle local dispute resolutions, manage environment, mobilise resources, and maintain local security. Gradually, elected members of the local resistance committees were converted into mobilisers, spies, and political cadres of NRM (Galukande-Kiganda, 2012). The civil war *Resistance Committees* were finally changed into '*Resistance Councils*' and entrenched into the local government system. By 1987, the Resistance Councils and Committees Statute was passed and it paved way to the conduct of the first ever non-political party elections based on the resistance councils' structures. The elections included those of Village /Cell Resistance Council 1; Parish / Ward Resistance Council 2, Sub- County/ Town Council/ Municipal Division Resistance Council 3, Municipalities/ County Resistance Council 4, Districts/ Cities Resistance Council 5 and the National Assembly- National Resistance Council –NRC.

A committee of experts was appointed headed by Professor. Mahmoud Mamdani was appointed to study and recommend an appropriate local government system for Uganda. After thorough research, the committee recommended the decentralisation system based on the resistance committees/ councils' structure as appropriate local government system.

In Uganda, the decentralisation local government system was launched in 1992 and in the following year (1993), the Local Government (Resistance Councils) Statute was passed by the NRC. At around the same time, the Constituent Assembly (CA) recommended decentralisation as the system of local government and the 1995 Constitution adopted devolution as the type of decentralisation. Decentralisation was operationalized in 1997 in the *Local Government Act –LGA*. Under the LGA, *Resistance Councils* were changing name to '*Local Councils*' and were granted six devolved local **government functions**, namely planning, executive/ political, budgeting, legislative, administrative, and judicial functions. (Government of Uganda, 1995).

In turn, the local government system is organised around the district as the basic unit of local government and under which are several lower local governments and administrative units (Government of Uganda, 2010). In this arrangement, the district (for rural areas) that is equivalent to the city (in urban areas), is a higher local government (HLG); while Municipal and Towns councils are lower urban local governments (LLGs) in the districts where they are located. Sub county councils are rural lower local governments as well.

There are also Local Council 1 (LC1), Local Council 2 (LC2) and Local Council 4 (LC4) (in rural and urban areas). These are administrative units of their respective local governments and do not exercise devolved government functions. In rural areas, they are the village councils (LC1), parish councils (LC2), and county councils (LC4). While in the urban settings, the village councils are known as cell councils (LC1), the parish councils known as ward councils (LC2), and there are also town board which are transitional administrative areas before being confirmed as town councils.

In terms of numbers, as by 1 July 2016, there are 134 districts, 249 counties, 1,403 sub counties, 7,431 parishes, and 57,842 villages that overall total to 67,060 local governments and administrative units (Ministry of Local Government, 2016). More local governments are in the offing.

Table 1: The local council structure

Local Council Level	Rural	Urban
LC 5	District	City
LC 4	County	Municipality
LC 3	Sub county	Municipal Divisions
		Town Council
LC 2	Parish	Ward
LC 1	Village	Cell

Source: Galukande-Kiganda (2024)

Directly elected local councils with the district as a unit and other lower local governments and administrative units govern local governments. The elected local councils have supreme political, executive and legislative powers over their areas of jurisdiction (Government of Uganda, 1997). Local councils are highly representative and are composed of elected

chairpersons; councillors representing electoral areas; two youth councillors, one of them female, two councillors with disability, one of them female; two elderly persons, one of them a female; and one third of the whole council should be women. The chairpersons of local women, youths, and disability councils, as well as elected leaders of higher electoral constituencies in a particular local government are *ex officio* members of council (Government of Uganda, 2000).

The district council is the supreme political organ in the district presided over by an elected chairperson who is the political head of the district with executive powers to appoint and disapprove secretaries. Every district has a district council as its legislative arm of the local council with powers to make ordinances and byelaws. District councils are required to conduct their business through the council standing committees of Production and Marketing; Health and Environment; Education and community development; Finance; and Works and Transport.

Civil servants in a district local government are headed by the Chief Administrative officer (CAO) who is the accounting officer and is responsible for the implementation of lawful council decisions and overseeing the performance of local government officials in the district. The central government appoints the CAO. The rest of the district staff are employees of the district recruited by the district service commission on guidelines issued by the central government public service commission.

Local councils are mandated to provide the basic public services to the local communities and to bring service delivery closer to the local people (Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, 2013). The *Second Schedule* of the LGA gives the functions of the central government and local governments and specific functions for districts and lower local governments in both rural and urban areas. In all, most of the operational government functions other than those of maintaining macro stability are vested in local governments. The objective of involving many stakeholders at all levels of local governments and

administrative units was to improve quality of service delivery at the grassroots level (Nsibambi, 1988).

Conclusion

From the above, it is evident that Uganda's local governance systems and structures have undergone several reforms from the pre colonial era, under colonialism, and post colonial era. What is clear is that the local government system under the NRM government brought the most far reaching reforms in local governance than the previous local governance systems. On basis of this reality, this study concentrated on evaluating the NRM local participatory governance in as far as it has improved quality of local governments.

References

- Akampurira, P. (2011). A History of local government in Uganda: A case of former Kigezi
- Districts, 1955-2005. Unpublished master's thesis, Makerere University, Uganda
- Avenhaus, R., & Kyriakopoulos, N. (1000). *Conceptual Framework, Verifying*, 13–40.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203431917>
- Bitaliwo, O. (2014). *Bureaucracy: The Case Of Uganda*, 2(3), 39–49.
- Burke F.G. (1964) — Local Government and Politics in Uganda. Syracuse University Press.
- Crawder, G., & Kearton, I. (2001). *Evaluating Democracy and Governance Assistance*, (7894).
- Retrieved from
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/R7894-FinRep.pdf Curtin et al., 1978
- Francis and James (2003: 325). Participatory Governance: From Theory to Practice. *The Oxford Handbook of Governance*, (June), 1–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199560530.013.0032>
- Halfani, M. P., McCarney, P. & Rodriguez, A.,(1994), Towards an understanding of governance: the emergence of an idea. In: R. Stren (ed.) Urban research in the developing world. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- Havenga, B. (2002). *The role and purpose of local*

- government. 2002, 50–89. Retrieved from <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/submitted/etd-06222005135528/unrestricted/03chapter3.pdf>
- Holm, M. (2005). Participatory governance in Peru: Exercising citizenship. *Environment and Urbanization*, 17(1), 219–236. <https://doi.org/10.1630/0956247053633728>
- Humes and Martin (1961). The Structure of Local Government Throughout the World. *American Political Science Review*, Volume 56, Issue 2, June 1962, pp. 434 – 435 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1952385> p. 24)
- Gakwandi. (1992) Uganda pocket facts; a companion guide to the country, its history, economy and politics. Kampala, Fountain, pp22-49
- Galukande-kiganda, M. P. (2012). *Twenty-Four Years of Decentralised Local Government in Uganda : Measuring Responsiveness , Effectiveness , and Accountability*, 91–
- Gennaioli, 2005 Gingyera-Pinyawa, (1992). Northern Uganda in National Politics. Kampala. Fountain Publishers
- Gomme, (1987). Theoretical Perspective of Local Government - Literature Review.
- Government of Uganda. (2010). *Local Government Act Cap.243*. Kampala: Uganda Law Reform Commission.
- Kaggwa, A. (1953). Book of Ganda cultures and customs; Classifications. Library of Congress.
- Published in: Kampala.
- Karugire, (1980). A Political History of Uganda. By S. R. **Karugire**. Nairobi and London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Leftwitch, (1994). Governance, the State and the Politics of Development," *Development and Change*, International Institute of Social Studies, Vol. 25, issue 2, 363-386.
- Maheshwari, S.R. (1984). Political Development in India · Rural Development in India: A Public Policy Approach. New Delhi: Concept. Vol. ix, pp 149.
- Makara, S. 2018. Decentralization and good governance in Africa: A critical review', 12(February): 22–32. Doi: 10.5897/AJPSIR2016.0973.
- Mamdani, M. (1976). Politics and Class Formation in Uganda. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, Pp. 339. 9.50.) - Volume 72 Issue 2.
- Mawood, P.N. (1983) Local Government in the Third World Countries. Wiley and Sons, New York.
- Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, (2013). Management of public resources and the delivery of services critical to Uganda's development goals. MoFPED. Kampala.
- Ministry of Local Government, (2014). The Local Governments (Amendment) Act. UPPC, Entebbe.
- Mitchinson (2003). Devolution in Uganda: An experiment in local service delivery. *Public Administration and Development*, 23(3), pp. 241-248
- Moncrieffe, J.M. (2004). Power, Relations, Inequality and Poverty: a concept paper for the World Bank. 2004.
- Muttalib and Akbar. (1982). Theory of local government. New Delhi : Sterling, p 271
- Mill, (1965). The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume II - The Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy . University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul
- Mutibwa, P.M. (1992) Uganda since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes. Africa World Press, Trenton.
- Nsibambi, (1988). Decentralisation and civil society in Uganda: The quest for good governance. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.
- OECD. (1997). *Evaluation of Programs Promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance*. Development.
- Ojambo, (2012). Decentralisation in Africa: a critical review of Uganda's experience.

Potchefstroom Electronic Law. Journal/Potchefstroomse
Elektroniese. *On-line version* ISSN 1727-378
PER vol.15 n.2 Potchefstroom Aug. 2012

Olok-Onyango (2007). Decentralisation in Africa: A Critical
Review OF Uganda's Experience.

*Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse
Elektroniese Regsblad* 15(2):69 DOI:[10.17159/1727-
3781/2012/v15i2a2479](https://doi.org/10.17159/1727-3781/2012/v15i2a2479)

Makara, S. (2009). *Electoral Democracy in Uganda:
Understanding the Institutional Processes and Outcomes of
the 2006 Multiparty Elections*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Shah, A. (2006). *Local Governance in Developing Countries.
Public sector governance and accountability series.*
<https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-6565-6> Steiner, S.
(2006). *Transformation in the Process of Globalisation
Decentralisation in Uganda : Exploring the Constraints
for Poverty Reduction*, (November).

Turyahikayo-Rugyema, (1974). The History Of The Bakiga In
Southwestern Uganda and Northern Rwanda Ca. 1500-1930.
ProQuest Dissertation No.: 7520490.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/180432>

Villadsen, S; Lubanga, F. (1996). Democratic
Decentralization in Uganda: A new approach to local
governance. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, Uganda,

Wakabi, B. M. (n.d.). *Bureaucracy in Uganda since Colonial
Period to the Present*, 4531, 103–116.

Zealand, N. (2006). *Local Government what does it do ?
Taiwhenua, Te Tari*, (The Department of Internal
Affairs).