

**STATE RESPONSIVENESS TO POVERTY: THE POLITICS OF PRO-  
POOR POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**COUNTRY REPORT: UGANDA**

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## **ACRONYMS**

CAO:	Chief Administrative Officer
DDHS:	District Director of Health Services
DDP:	District Development Plan
DFID:	Department for International Development
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GoU:	Government of Uganda
HIPC:	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HUMC:	Health Unit Management Committee
HSSP	Health Sector Strategic Plan
HSD:	Health Sub-District
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
LC:	Local Council
LGDP:	Local Government Development Programme.
MAAIF:	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MFPED:	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MHCP:	Minimum Health Care Package
MoH:	Ministry of Health
MoLG:	Ministry of Local Government
NAADS:	National Agriculture Advisory Service.
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSCG:	Non-Sectoral Conditional Grant
PEAP:	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PHC:	Primary Health Care
PMA:	Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture
PMC:	Project Management Committee
PPA:	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRSC:	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UPPAP:	Uganda Poverty Participatory Assessment Project
ODI:	Overseas Development Institute



## **1. BACKGROUND**

Arguably, Uganda demonstrates the kind of political commitment to poverty reduction that development agencies encourage in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Its Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was the outcome of its own deliberations and acknowledgement at the highest levels, that there was urgent need for an explicit poverty reduction strategy.<sup>1</sup> Its approach to defining this strategy was broad-based, and included representatives from different line ministries, local government, academic institutions and civil society organizations. This was skilful political planning; it laid the foundation for wide policy 'ownership' (at least among some key institutions) from an early stage. By 1997, Uganda had begun to implement its poverty action plan. The World Bank was then developing its country assistance strategy, though under new mandate: country strategies should now include input from local communities. The first participatory poverty assessment (PPA1) was launched in 1998 and the results published in 1999. PPA1 stressed the need for greater access to water, security, information and good governance, and the PEAP was redesigned to incorporate these. The PEAP was subsequently updated in 2000, with assistance from the World Bank, and submitted as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The PEAP to PRSP transition was relatively smooth. There were no substantial ideological differences as President Museveni and other key officials had by then accepted the 'economic logic of adjustment'<sup>2</sup> The 2000 PEAP/PRSP established four major objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> Foster and Mijumbi, 'How, When and Why does Poverty get Budget Priority', ODI Working Paper, 163; Interview, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

<sup>2</sup> G. Harrison, Post-Conditionality Politics and Administrative Reform: Reflections of the Cases of Uganda and Tanzania, *Development and Change*, Vol. 32 (2001), p. 663.

- Rapid and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation (focusing on economic openness, and on modernising agriculture, manufacturing and services);
- Good governance and security (promoting transparency of public actions, respect for human rights, zero tolerance for corruption, security and accountability);
- Increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes (through employment promotion and improved access to services and information);
- Enhanced quality of life for the poor (emphasizing health, education, housing, service delivery and information).<sup>3</sup>

With an approved PRSP, the country was the first to access the Enhanced HIPC debt relief initiative. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) has been instrumental in ensuring that HIPC debt relief savings are channelled to poverty priority areas through the Poverty Action Fund (PAF). Departments are encouraged to formulate plans that meet the PAF and PEAP criteria, and funding is withheld where proposals are not considered credible. Foster and Mijumbi report that there have been dramatic increases in expenditure in education, roads, water and sanitation. Defence spending has been capped and much of the funds are being allocated through local authorities. The poor have benefited, particularly from increased access to primary education, water supply, road transport and health. Thus, Foster and Mijumbi conclude, “we are aware of no other country that has achieved such a dramatic pro-poor change in spending patterns in so short a period”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Poverty Eradication Action Plan (2001-2003), Volume 1, pp. 4-5.

Particularly among Bank economists, Uganda is *the* success story; ‘a pioneer of macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment in sub-Saharan Africa’<sup>5</sup>, and a model of participatory governance and transparency. This claim has not gone unchallenged. Recent reports reveal growing dissatisfaction among officials and some of the leading civil society organisations (CSOs). While they agree that there is consensus on the governing priority---poverty reduction--- they are critical of what they perceive to be an increasingly exclusionary approach to formulating the required policies. They warn of the consequences for ownership and effective policy implementation.<sup>6</sup> Political analysts are also guarded in their assessments. Though many celebrate the politics and policy management that have secured and maintained the relative peace and stability necessary for adjustment, they point to the lurking political risks. Fissures exist and tensions are beginning to mount: ethnic and religious cleavages still threaten; the Movement system is demonstrably incapable of accommodating contending interests; there is growing disquiet, even among segments of the population that were traditionally supportive of the NRM. There are important political issues here. Uganda’s story is not---and cannot be---exclusively economic; there is much to tell about the politics that has underpinned its macroeconomic reform and the politics that can unravel it.

### **1.1 THE ‘STATE RESPONSIVENESS TO POVERTY’ PROJECT**

Since 2000, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), Sussex have been working with partners in Uganda, Ghana, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on an ESCOR-funded project: State Responsiveness to Poverty: The Politics of

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<sup>4</sup> Foster and Mijumbi, ‘How, When and Why does Poverty get Budget Priority’, ODI Working Paper, 163, April 2002, p. ix

<sup>5</sup> Reinikka and Collier eds, Uganda’s Recovery: The Role of Farms, Firms and Government, xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Nyamugasira and Rowden, ‘New Strategies, Old Loan Conditions’, April 2002

Pro-Poor Policymaking and Implementation. The 'State Responsiveness to Poverty' project uses a comparative approach to study the factors that shape the design and implementation of poverty reduction strategies. It evaluates select government programmes and highlights, specifically, the factors influencing service delivery in health and agriculture.

### **The Programmes**

In Uganda, the study focuses on two programmes: The Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) and the Health Sub-District Initiative (HSD). The PMA has been described as 'a holistic, strategic framework for eradicating poverty through multi-sectoral interventions'.<sup>7</sup> It is an important component of the government's poverty eradication plan. In principle, the PMA is designed to improve the welfare of subsistence farmers, specifically, and to boost agricultural production, generally. The defined objectives are to 'increase incomes and improve the quality of life of poor subsistence farmers; improve household food security; provide gainful employment; and promote sustainable use and management of natural resources'.<sup>8</sup>

Uganda's Health Sub-District Initiative (HSD) is key to its decentralised health management system. It is meant to drastically improve equity of access to care, and to strengthen service management by relocating decision-making and health management functions closer to the people. National level staff would then concentrate on overarching matters such as policy formulation and establishing performance standards.

### **Research Objectives**

The State Responsiveness project was designed to analyze four variables:

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<sup>7</sup> Republic of Uganda: Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, v.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



1. The configuration of “political society”, particularly the extent to which it offers opportunities for the expression of demands by civil society groups which purport to speak on behalf of the poor;
2. New approaches to budget and public expenditure management at the macro, sectoral and local-government levels, and how these alter the incentives facing policy implementers of different kinds;
3. Whether and how the legal and institutional framework promotes the capacity of the poor to assert their rights or to mobilise in their own interests;
4. The organisational structures, and pattern of incentives, within which front-line workers exercise discretion in their dealings with clients and other interest groups, and how this influences policy outcomes.

Much of the work on approaches to budget management and public expenditure has been completed under a separate Centre for Aid and Public Expenditure (CAPE) initiative, and the results have been published in an ODI working paper (Number 163): ‘How, When and Why does Poverty get Budget Priority’. In addition, CAPE recently concluded its Results Oriented Management series and has published another case study of Uganda: ‘Targets and Results in Public Sector Management’ (ODI Working Paper 205). In this publication, Tim Williamson dealt, in some detail, with the budget and expenditure subtopic, as well as with questions on organisational structures and incentives.

This paper concentrates on the politics of anti-poverty policy-making in Uganda. It addresses five broad questions:

- How do historical legacies affect poverty reduction processes and outcomes?
- What is the role of political management in facilitating and undermining poverty reduction?
- How do the political structures and processes affect policy formulation and outcomes?
- How do the administration and politicisation of decentralisation affect poverty outcomes?
- What sorts of positive political actions are required to secure and sustain effective pro-poor outcomes?

## **1.2 METHODOLOGY**

The State Responsiveness project relies, principally, on primary qualitative and comparative research methodologies, involving semi-structured interviews among relevant policy-makers and key stakeholders at the national level, and focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and observation (particularly of service delivery) at the district, sub-county and village levels. These techniques are combined with intensive review of pertinent secondary data, including academic publications, country reports, programme plans, projections and reviews, and newspaper articles.

### **District Selection**

Two districts were selected for investigation and, within each, one sub-county and two parishes. Researchers first narrowed the range of options to districts that had already begun to implement the PMA and the National Agriculture Advisory Service (NAADS), which is now being piloted in select areas. From these, they selected Mukono and Kabale, where the principal district investigators knew the local languages.

**Mukono**, which is one of the oldest local governments in Uganda, is 14,635 sq km in area and has an estimated population size of 965,800 [including Kayunga District]. Farming is the main economic activity with emphasis on food crops, cash crops, fruits and vegetables, dairy farming and fishing on Lake Victoria. There are 49 health units in the district; thirty two of these are government units, 16 are NGO-led, and one is private. All 4 counties and 22 sub-counties (excluding the town councils) in the district have health units; nevertheless, coverage at parish level is approximately 12%. Additionally, there are 28 private clinics headed by qualified doctors, 115 registered drug shops, and 25 community-base organisations involved in preventive services. However, the District Director of Health Services (DDHS) reports that only 52% of the community use the available facilities, and that poverty is the most significant obstacle.

Kyampisi Sub-county, Mukono County, is 4,800 sq km and has an estimated population of 33,130. The sub-county comprises five parishes: Kyabakadde, Ntonto, Dundu, Bulijjo and Kabembe. Though peasant crop farming (both subsistence and cash) is the most popular economic activity, there are concerns about food insecurity. The sub-county has two health units [at grade 3 level and 2 respectively].

**Kabale** district is located in southwest Uganda and borders Kisoro to the west, Rukungiri to the north, Ntungamo to the east and the republic of Rwanda to the south. There are 16 sub counties, 105 parishes and 1299 villages, excluding those of the municipality.

Kabale is one of the most populated districts, with a population density of 344.5 persons per square kilometre. There are 104,900 households with an average of six persons per household, and a total population of 629,000. Seven percent of the population resides in the urban area,

while 93 percent lives in the rural areas. On average, there are 5.08 acres of land per household. Land is highly fragmented and this affects efficiency in farming. The most critical social problems include under nutrition, high mortality and morbidity rates, soil and environmental degradation, low capacity in development planning and illiteracy among the youth and the adults. Kabale is one of the first 13 districts that to be decentralized in 1993. It was also a pilot district for the Local Government Development Program (LGDP)<sup>9</sup>. In Kabale, NAADs is being implemented in four subcounties: Bubale, Bukinda, Rubaya and Kyanamira. Of these, Rubaya---the sub-county selected for the study--- is the most remote.

Section 2 provides a theoretical background on political systems and poverty reduction. Section 3 highlights Uganda's political history, the existing political structures and processes, and discusses how these influence policy. Sections 4 and 5 study the PMA and HSD, focusing, especially, how these programmes have been influenced by national and local level politics, and by historical legacies. Section 6 outlines what this understanding of politics suggests for pro-poor policy.

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<sup>9</sup> The LGDP has been operating since 1997 in five pilot districts of Arua, Kabale, Jinja, Mukono and Kotido.

## **2. POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

### **2.1 DEMOCRACY, DECENTRALISATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

The evidence suggests that what was posited as the optimal conditions for poverty reduction---including democracy, democratic decentralisation and participation---produce mixed results, even in some of the best cases. There are no straightforward solutions; any claims we make must be hedged with qualifications. For example, we know that while democratic systems of government may offer the best framework for public participation and voice, there is no necessary correlation between democracy and poverty reduction.<sup>10</sup> Procedural democracy may be sufficient for replacing political leaders with minimal disruption; it may even---though this is far less assured---institute those leaders who represent majority interests<sup>11</sup>. However, majority interests may be totally inconsistent with poverty reduction, even where the majority is poor, and it is the more substantive/deeper forms of democracy---that, for example, emphasizes education, health, inclusion and moral and legal rights---that are likely to improve the welfare of the poor. There are non-democracies with comparable, and some with even better poverty reduction records than the more stable/institutionalised democratic governments. Two principal reasons, as Moore and Putzel define them,

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<sup>10</sup> See A. Varshney, 'Democracy and Poverty', K. Niles, 'Economic Adjustment and Targeted Social Spending' and Mick Moore et al, 'Polity Qualities: How Governance Affects Poverty'; C. Johnson, 'Local Democracy, Democratic Decentralisation and Rural Development: Theories, Challenges and Options for Policy'; Natrass, N. and Seekings, J. 'Democracy and distribution in highly unequal economies'.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Stokes (1997 and 1999) provides some interesting illustrations of policy switches in Latin America and argues that governments do not always make honest representations of what they really intend to do. Pre-election dishonesty, she claims, is much more prevalent in developing democracies where there are often inadequate mechanisms for holding governments to account. Bernard Manin (1999) points out that there has been an upsurge in 'audience' democracy, particularly in the developed countries, where representatives are selected based on their appearances and ability to convince the electorate that they are trustworthy and capable. The emphasis is on image rather than on clearly stated policy objectives and well designed strategies.

are that (a) there are 'wide variations in the substantive content of formal, electoral democracy', and (b) some of the best performers in poverty reduction are the former socialist but un-democratic countries, such as Cuba, China and Vietnam.<sup>12</sup> However, there are other explanations for this apparent discord: Democracy and the demands and discontents it facilitates can preclude the strong economic direction that is necessary for economic growth, and the authoritative political direction that is crucial for poverty reduction. This is one of the paradoxes of democracy.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, it is important to qualify claims of necessary links between decentralisation and democracy. One fundamental problem is the varied interpretations and, as a consequence, applications of 'decentralisation'. However, the extent to which there is 'deconcentration' or 'devolution' is consequential for policy outcomes. The political motivations behind decentralisation---whether or not the ruling elite is attempting to build its power base through congenial interests at the local level; whether or not the ruling elite wishes to circumvent the local elite; whether or not the ruling elite considers it important to fragment local power bases---are likely to have considerable influence on the character of the decentralisation process.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is not the proven case that decentralised local governments, in most circumstances, 'enhance the legitimacy of government (by strengthening accountability and participation) and the efficiency of public service delivery (by improving information, input and oversight'. In reality, there are all sorts of intervening variables. Case studies are replete with illustrations of local

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Diamond, L. 'Three Paradoxes of Democracy' in L. Diamond and M. Plattner, eds. *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, pp. 95-107, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993

<sup>14</sup> Crook, R.C. and A. Sverrisson, 'Decentralisation and Poverty-Alleviation in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis or, is West Bengal Unique?' IDS Working Paper 130, June 2001.

elite capture, inadequate local level capacities, poor accountability systems, corruption, lack of information and inappropriate and ineffective centre-local relations.

## **2.2 THE PROBLEM WITH PARTICIPATION**

The critiques of decentralisation are even more rudimentary. Though most welcome the contemporary people-focused development agendas, there are still valid concerns about the very assumptions that underlie decentralisation and about goals such as 'empowerment' that are associated with it. For example, it is assumed that the poor will act rationally---which almost always means in their economic interest---and, accordingly, engage in those political processes that allow them to express their needs and hold service providers to account. For some time, this also translated to the expectation that the poor would eagerly commit their time and energies to designated development projects. Much has already been said about the limits of this approach. For example, Cleaver<sup>15</sup> points out that this project of participation constitutes:

...a rather apolitical individualisation of the concept; the individual is expected to take opportunities offered by development projects to better themselves and so contribute to the development of the group or community. The mechanisms of such empowerment are either startlingly clear (that is, empowerment of the individual through cash transactions in the market) or conveniently fuzzy (as in the assumed benefits to individuals of participation in management committees). The scope (and limitations) of the empowering effects of any project are little explored, the attribution of causality and impact within the project alone problematic. [Thus], there seems to be a need to recognize the non-project nature of people's lives, the complex livelihood interlinkages that make an impact in one area likely to be felt in others and for a

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<sup>15</sup> Cleaver, Frances, 'Paradoxes of Participation: A Critique of Participatory Approaches to Development', Paper for presentation at the conference: 'Participation: The New Tyranny?' University of Manchester, November 3, 1998.

recognition of the potential for unintended consequences arising from any intended intervention or act.

McGee<sup>16</sup> reminds us that the participation approach has progressed beyond the period when participation was predominantly the means to achieve project objectives. Now, and largely in response to criticisms from 'alternative/radical' development theorists, development agencies endorse 'participatory development', which is influenced by notions of citizenship, human rights, governance and partnerships. Participation must now have 'transformative purposes, with a stress on 'empowerment' through joint decision-making, initiation and control by stakeholders'.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, there are still noteworthy questions about the transformative potential of current participatory strategies. Current expressions of alienation from the policymaking process in Uganda are significant for they indicate how 'participatory' processes can at once promote wide consultation and restrict involvement, ownership and accountability. Though advocates make the ambitious claim that the PRS process promotes broad programme 'ownership' and 'empowerment' of the poor, participation is in many places by selection and short-term, and the poor have little influence on and input in the policies that follow.<sup>18</sup> Transformative potential is equally doubtful where the strategies employed ignore or underestimate the powerful political and social forces and factors that limit participation in the first place. Correspondingly, there is contention that by not focusing adequately on these constraints and grasping their complexity, both development agencies and their government 'partners' tend to lapse into the old 'participation via project'

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<sup>16</sup> McGee, Rosemary, 'Participating in Development', in eds. U. Kothari and M. Minogue, *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2002

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105

<sup>18</sup> D.Brown, Participation in poverty reduction strategies: democracy strengthened - or democracy undermined?



approach, even though the initiatives in question are now broader and 'sector-wide'.

Hickey is critical of current [mis]understandings of citizenship and of what is required to 'catalyse processes of citizen participation'.<sup>19</sup> Following the civic republican tradition, he defines citizenship 'in terms of membership within a particular *political* community' and discounts the more formal liberal definitions that, as he claims, rely on legal formalisms. The value of this alternate approach is that it recognizes the sociological realities, particularly of marginalized groups; these groups are normally "subjects, clients and consumers, not...citizens of equal worth and decision-making capacity".<sup>20</sup> Hickey's case study of the Mbororo Fulani (North West Cameroon) demonstrates his position.

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<sup>19</sup> Hickey, S. 'Politicising participatory development: Citizenship and exclusion in North West Cameroon', Paper prepared for DSA Annual Conference: Different Poverties, Different Policies, September 10-12, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Stewart 1995, quoted in Hickey (2001), p. 6.

### **The Mbororo Fulani (North West Cameroon)**

Adapted from Hickey (2001)

The Mbororo (pastoral) Fulani is a semi-nomadic group in Cameroon's multi-ethnic North West Province. Community participation development initiatives were introduced from the pre-colonial period, though the right to participate was limited to particular 'ethnic-territorial communities'. Traditionally, the Mbororo'en have been marginalised: 'their lack of hierarchical community power structure, late arrival and movement-based livelihood meant that they were not considered as a political community to be incorporated into the colonial state'. During the late colonial period, a newly educated and urbanised elite began to lobby for participation in the political process and formed their own associations to press their cause. The Mbororo Fulani did not benefit from this as they lacked the elite direction and associations. In any event, much of this activity was circumscribed in the postcolonial period, when legal sanctions against associations were enforced, particular where these associations maintained ties to sub-national or tribal lineages. Many of the existing associations, including women's groups were coopted into the state administration.

Importantly, participatory roles within community development have always been "unequally distributed according to social, spatial and political difference, and/or inequality, and have created different sets of rights and obligations along these lines". For example, women and the youth tend to participate less; urban mirants normally contribute financial and leadership resources while rural residents provide labour. These patterns continued through to the 1990s when citizenship participation began to flourish anew. During this period, the Mbororo Fulani had an urban based and educated elite that represented their interests through the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA). MBOSCUDA aimed to promote the group's right to identity and to protest human rights abuses. They were able to achieve this through increased national and international connections. The Ballotir programme, which involves MBOSCUDA, its constituent women's groups, one international and one national development organisation, has been especially influential. Its political literacy project, for instance, was designed to "catalyse processes through which the Mbororo'en are able to review, explore and put into practice their own notion of citizenship on their terms and within the context of the wider Cameroonian State". (p.14) The programme focused, particularly, on literacy among women and later included a legal component, through which the Mbororo were able to gain legal representation and to receive counselling, where required.

The emerging problem is that the Mbororo elite are now increasingly preoccupied with international development agency activity and is losing their close connection to "the grassroots". There is a budding gap in accountability between the local and the urban, as the urban elite become more accountable to external supporters. Hickey notes that this "professionalization of MBOSCUDA's leaders lessens the likelihood that local communities can participate fully in decision-making.

The core lessons from the Mbororo Fulani case study are these:

1. A *political* understanding of citizenship and community is likely to unmask the power and historical relations that sustain certain allegiances, and that prevent 'equitable' participation;
2. By engaging with groups on the level that they understand their citizenship and community, it is possible to devise more responsive and practicable policies;
3. Responsible policy-making in the interest of these groups may need to constitute measures that address the root of marginalization: these may well consist of establishing/supporting effective legal recourse, defending rights to identity, promoting values of 'social responsibility and reciprocity'.

These are useful governing principles but our understanding of *real* politics suggests that they may be resisted even in those contexts where governments claim to be committed to inclusive anti-poverty policies. Frances Stewart<sup>21</sup> describes the 'horizontal inequalities' that normally degenerate into conflict and substantial human and material costs for the poor. She suggests that the appropriate *political* response must comprise initiatives for political, social and economic inclusion. Central governments may not be amenable to resolving these conflicts; moreover, they may---with sound reasons---consider it risky to celebrate rights to identity. Governments are hardly faced with clear-cut political choices. Recognising ethnic identities may, for instance, incur threats to security. Even where the centre adopts this more fluid interpretation, local governments---for reasons such as ethnic or political linkages---may present a barrier to inclusion. Here, national and international associations (as they did in the Ballotiral programme) are important. Their tasks are decidedly political; change will depend on their powers and strategies for persuasion.

These lessons may be understood intellectually but it is reasonable to be sceptical about the extent to which they inform practice, even in fields where there has been progress, such as 'gender relations'. There is still a tendency to skirt the real (largely long term) *political* issues and actions

Recent participatory assessments in Uganda reveal some of the difficulties of *transforming* self-perceptions and *empowering* women. In one fishing village, Kasensero, Rakai, women do not fish in the lakes, largely because of cultural beliefs but also because it is perceived as a risky enterprise. Both men and women (particular the older among them) have beliefs that prohibit women's involvement in fishing. For example, older women believe that "if a woman swims in the lake then the fish would disappear". One woman insisted that women "should not go to the lake at all because a woman is always dirty... For another, the younger women had annoyed the gods and caused the fish stock to be depleted:

"When I had just come to this landing site, all the children that were born died. No child would survive until we consulted our god. He came and sat on a skin on the waters and took away this evil. Now many children have survived. He used to do many other rituals, including calming down the waters and increasing the fish catch. Now the young women spoil all this and the catch has continued depleting. He cannot come back here". **Elderly woman, Kasensero, Rakai**

that are required to address the persistent discrimination against women, and the perceptions that some women continue to have of themselves.

All these nuances and complex relations of power demonstrate the naiveté of any decentralisation agenda that suggests that by simply bringing government closer to the people, accountability and the interests of the poor will be better served. Reorganising the administrative and political system in this way may (or may not) be a useful first step. As Hickey again points out, it is incorrect to assume that 'genuine participation can only occur at the local level'; 'grassroots empowerment also requires a strong state'.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.3 PRO-POOR POLICY MAKING: THE BASICS**

Given these caveats, we can make a few reliable statements about the politics of pro-poor policymaking:

1. Research shows that whether and how the poor is organised and has the space to influence policy are crucial to effective policymaking and outcomes; this is pertinent to both democratic and non-democratic systems. The obstacles to meaningful participation include ingrained relations of power that discriminate against particular categories of the poor (for example, women and ethnic groups), effectively excluding them from the political process; resource and spatial constraints, particularly in the rural areas; factors and forces such as ethnic, religious or patron-

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<sup>22</sup> Hickey, p. 3. See also C. Johnson on Local Democracy, Democratic Decentralisation and Rural Development; J. Tandler, Good Government in the Tropics; Moore and Putzel, 'Thinking Strategically about Politics and Poverty'; Joshi and Moore, 'Enabling Environments: Do Anti-Poverty Programmes Mobilise the Poor?'

clientelist obligations; and the priority (in many cases, necessary) given to securing immediate material gains.<sup>23</sup>

2. All political systems are susceptible to adverse terms of engagement and to practical impediments to reaching the poor. The advantage of democracy for poverty reduction is that it can facilitate the types of political and civic organisations that promote the interests of the poor. Democracy, as Sen<sup>24</sup> maintains, has intrinsic value, and instrumental and constructive worth. It is within democracies, more than any political system, that people are likely to have the freedom to formulate and express their needs. Furthermore, democracy can provide appropriate incentives so that political leaders will hear and respond to those needs. Endorsing the desirability of democracy is insufficient; effective (and long term) anti-poverty strategies require democratic safeguards. “The achievement of social justice depends not only on institutional forms (including democratic rules and regulations), but also on effective practice”.<sup>25</sup>
3. Political parties that are competitive and broad based can be instrumental in representing the poor and holding governments to account. However, in practice, political parties are often fragmented, representative of very narrow interests, and driven by patrimonial politics rather than well-designed competitive programmes. Therefore, while democracy is desirable, the poor may well benefit within a political system that lacks competitive parties but that is led by political leaders who are committed to poverty reduction. (Uganda is a good case in point; it rivals (and in cases exceeds) many developing democracies both in terms of the political directorate’s commitment to poverty reduction and with

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Sen, A. *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books, 1999.

respect to real gains. However, there is doubt about the extent to which 'institutionalised non-competitive states' such as Uganda actually improve the *capabilities* of the poor---facilitating self-confidence, dignity, individual autonomy---and whether the poverty reduction and empowerment agendas (assuming these are well defined) can be sustained in contexts where rights to expression through organised channels such as political parties, are disallowed)

4. Political parties are not the only and, in cases, the most credible avenues for representing the interests of the poor. Civic associations may be instrumental but these may require encouragement and safeguards from the centre.
5. Effective anti-poverty policies require strong political direction. This does not merely imply government commitment to poverty reduction and insistence on a defined agenda; successful governments are those that are skilful at negotiating; bargaining; building alliances between varied interests, including the poor and non-poor; resolving conflicts; promoting public acceptance and securing policy and programme ownership.
6. Anti-poverty policies have the best prospects where states are effective, exercising the authority and maintaining the cohesiveness that preclude highly fragmented and divisive social organisations. Force and oppression are not suitable strategies for securing and maintaining cohesion; they tend to stimulate disaffection and revolt. Cohesiveness may also depend on recognition of different identities and perceptions of citizenship and tangible methods for accommodating these. Where these are not acknowledged both the 'national' and 'local' development programmes may be perceived (and may actually be) as exclusivist.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

7. Governments need to provide positive incentives for mobilisation and action among the poor. Their credibility depends on the extent to which they minimize the occasions on which the poor are forced to take action because of provocation and failed promises.<sup>26</sup>
8. Poverty reduction, particularly in its more comprehensive interpretation, requires 'enabling environments' that, as Joshi and Moore<sup>27</sup> outline, are defined by tolerance, credibility, predictability/stability and rights (moral and legal).

All these embody the politics of policy-making in the interests of the poor; they establish standards for government performance and can explain some of the gaps between policy intent and outcomes. Section 3 describes the political and administrative context for anti-poverty policymaking in Uganda. It also emphasizes the influence of history on institution building, administrative arrangements, political and civic attitudes, and discusses the implications for policy specifically, and the decentralisation process, broadly.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. See, also, Karen Brock et al. Poverty knowledge and policy processes in Uganda: case studies from Bushenyi, Lira and Tororo districts.

<sup>27</sup> Joshi and Moore, 'Enabling Environments: Do Anti-Poverty Programmes Mobilise the Poor?', *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, October 2000, pp. 25-56.

### **3. POVERTY, POLICY AND THE MOVEMENT**

#### **3.1 THE MOVEMENT**

No one with knowledge of Uganda can forget its gruesome political/military history or discredit the massive gains since 1986. In post-Independence Uganda, as Brett describes it, “bullets rather than ballots dominated politics”<sup>28</sup>:

- Under Obote (1) 1962-1971, ethnic cleavages, particularly between the north and south, were exploited and used to defend insecure political positions. The largely Northern-sourced (and British and Israeli trained) military crushed opposition voices, real or imagined, and shattered any remaining faith in the security of procedural democracy.
- Amin, after 1971, capitalised on religious divisions between Muslims and Christians and on racial tensions between Asians and Africans---he appointed Muslims to key positions in the army, thereby alienating the majority Christian country; he expelled all non-citizen Asians (1972) and appropriated their assets, which removed needed business skills, access to credit and encouraged corruption and inefficiency<sup>29</sup>. Until his exile in 1979, Amin secured his tragic period of government with frenzied destruction of property and life.
- From 1980, when Obote won an allegedly fraudulent election, ethnic flavoured politics continued and was again characterised by ‘northern’ appointments to the army and a repressive military campaign against non-UPC supporters. Obote’s attempt at political monopoly provoked rebellion in the South and West Nile.

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<sup>28</sup> Brett, E.A. ‘Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda: the Role of the Military in Politics’ p. 129.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 139.



These points in history are patent reminders of the perversities of Ugandan politics. They hint at the deep divisions that preceded and, in some respects, made political manipulation possible. They indicate the potential political risks that persist despite recent achievements. These types of divisions that can have a lasting influence on institutions, politics and possibilities.<sup>30</sup>

Various political commentaries on the NRM leadership of Uganda highlight the mix of democratic and despotic features that now distinguish Ugandan politics<sup>31</sup>. President Museveni's NRM is credited with improving and sustaining peace and security in most parts of the country, allowing a fairly free press, and encouraging participation through democratically elected local government. In principle, the government's decentralisation programme is designed to support "grassroots participation" and to strengthen local level leadership and responsiveness. Consequently, district councils maintain their own budgets, though they depend on funding from the centre, and are required to account for expenditure on priority areas such as education, health and agriculture. Local election campaigns are vigorous, even though questions of corruption arise, and residents are normally unreserved in their criticisms of the performance and accountability of their representatives. Compared with many democracies, Parliament is lively, and largely critical of corruption, arguably with modest

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<sup>30</sup> See P. David. *Path-dependence in Economic Processes: Implications for Policy in Dynamical System Contexts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992. Also, by the same author, 'Why are Institutions the Carriers of History? Path-dependence and the Evolution of Conventions, Organisations and Institutions', in *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, Vol. 5, pp. 205-220, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Oliver Furley, *Democratisation in Uganda*, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Nov 2000), pp. 79-102; Kjare, Mette, *Fundamental Change or No Change? The Politics of Constitutionalizing Uganda*, *Democratization*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Winter 1999, pp. 93-113; Hauser, Ellen, 'Ugandan relations with Western donors in the 1990s: what impact on democratisation?', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 4, (1999), pp. 621-641.

consequences since “government has various means to absorb these attacks”.<sup>32</sup> There are budding civil society organisations, though these are largely confined to the towns and business communities. (Rural, perhaps more than the majority of urban, residents continue to feel isolated, alienated and powerless.)

These are no small feats. The relative peace and security (still fragile in Northern parts) followed a period of gradual, arguably painstaking, accommodation of opposition, and particularly northern politicians, into the broad based Movement; various guerrilla factions were incorporated into the National Resistance Army (NRA); peace agreements were made with contending parties and prominent leaders instituted in government. All these efforts at reconciliation increased support for the NRM and its poverty reduction platform; these were well-devised and profitable *political* strategies. However, there is growing doubt, even among NRM supporters, that this careful political policymaking is still a priority. The Movement holds up its efforts at political accommodation and grassroots involvement as evidence of democratic practice and intent but has used some non-democratic tactics to quell opposition: election rigging, covert constitutional amendments, political education campaigns that preclude opposing opinions, unequal access to the media for opposition members, misuse of government resources for political outreach.<sup>33</sup> Hauser describes how donor action or lack of reaction has undermined political development in Uganda. She is not alone in suggesting that donors---for reasons that include their need to present Uganda as an exemplar of the soundness of their structural and post-structural adjustment policies, and in order to maintain a necessary alliance with President Museveni as a regional leader---have applied double standards, imposing political conditions on countries such as Kenya and Malawi and ignoring the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

contraventions in Uganda. Anti-Movement MPs are equally persuaded and express disappointment at this state of affairs.<sup>34</sup> Notably, Hauser is not satisfied with a requirement for procedural (multi-party) democracy; she insists on the need for deeper, substantive change and predicts that without this, current economic gains will be undermined:

During the early 1990s, more discussions on economic policy apparently took place between the NRM government officials and donors, than between NRM and opposing Ugandan political leaders. This exclusion opened up the possibility for opposition politicians to emphasise regional differences in the levels of deprivation that some Ugandans were experiencing due to economic reforms, and to alienate segments of Uganda's population from the NRM government...When the power dynamics in a country are not addressed, and when underlying political conflicts are not solved or at least cooperatively managed by opposing political forces, the politics in a country can undermine whatever democratic institutions and processes are put into place.<sup>35</sup>

In March 2003, the NRM's National Executive Committee (NEC) and the National Conference (NC) proposed two major constitutional changes: to lift the ban on political parties and to remove presidential term limits. Both are potentially momentous. The first would end almost two decades of compelled membership of an all-encompassing Movement. Given Uganda's history of divisive and sectarian party relations, Museveni has always maintained that political parties are a potential threat to stability, and that stability is a crucial precedent to social reform. Furthermore, political parties are unnecessary where there are no clearly defined social divisions. Uganda, he maintains, is largely comprised of a peasant class, and this is unlikely to change in the near future.<sup>36</sup> Multipartyists do not discount Uganda's fractious political history or object to the need for safeguards to check the traditional divisions. However, they insist that

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<sup>33</sup> Hauser, 1999, p. 631.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews.

<sup>35</sup> Hauser, p. 636.

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Chabal and Daloz question whether there are social classes in present-day Africa, specifically groups that exhibit behaviour that is comparable to their Western and Eastern counterparts (Chabal and Daloz, p.41).

parties are essential for proper articulation of the public's interests and, as a consequence, for good government. Pro-Movement supporters still maintain that the strong and focused central direction that the Movement provides is necessary for poverty reduction:

“This method of government guards against different philosophies other than the national goal. It prevents regional and ethnic divisions from coming in. Our programmes are managed without divisions”.<sup>37</sup>

“Having a system that is not a multiparty does not mean that there is no opposition. You may have a system whereby you agree on a vision. If someone is somehow deviating from that vision, it doesn't matter whether there is a multi-party system or not, they have to be brought back in line...Though we do not have a multi-party system, this happens in government here and it is healthy. The consensus on poverty has helped Uganda”.<sup>38</sup>

Dissenters are sceptical:

“One of the characteristics of good government is the nature of elections and one of the main reasons why Museveni went to the bush was to ensure that people can choose their own government. Yet, up to now Uganda lacks free and fair elections. How can you then ensure that what you are targeting in terms of poverty alleviation will reach the poor? Political parties are the engine of government. They are the main protective factor for the taxpayers. Parties were originally created to articulate the central interests of the people, to provide alternative government based on organized ideas and programmes. If you ignore their activities, how can you ensure that poverty can be fought?”<sup>39</sup>

“With political parties and competition, people would want popular support. They would have to go to the grassroots to get people's views. There is a fundamental difference between pluralism and the Movement. Pluralism would bring greater changes to poverty alleviation. Currently, there are no checks and balances in the system. One person monopolizes policy and leadership”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Minister of Agriculture, January 2002

<sup>38</sup> Interview with senior staff, Ministry of Finance, January 2002

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Leader of the Conservative Party, February 2002

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Member of Parliament, February 2002

The second proposed constitutional change, that is, to remove presidential term limits is, in some circles, regarded as political trickery: an attempt to extend President Museveni's term in office despite his promise not to contest the 2006 elections.<sup>41</sup> Anti-Movement MPs see this latest attempt at constitutional amendment as consistent with the type of dictatorial politics that typifies the NRM government.

“The problem with the system is that it is a one man show within the Movement; there is no internal democracy. If you analyse the way policy is organized, Museveni comes with his policy paper and debates on his own policy. Policy does not come from the people; policy comes from Museveni and a few people aligned to him”.<sup>42</sup>

It is widely acknowledged that President Museveni is highly influential in establishing priorities and determining policy direction.<sup>43</sup> Technical staff within the ministries disagree on the consequences for policy. One opinion (from one high-ranking MFPED official) is that though the executive is influential, the technical team and CSOs agree with the established policy direction, and this ‘consensus’ on poverty reduction is the principal reason for success. However, the more popular position seems to be that opposition opinions, even on policy components, are hardly entertained and that this compromises outcomes:

“My thinking is that policy would be more effective if you didn't shut out the opposition completely. To me, we say that the system is broad and everyone is included; however, this does not obtain in reality. There are people who do not belong to the broad Movement and those who government does not consider a part of the Movement, since their ideals differ... The President has defined a 15-point agenda, which is executed through the ministries. Therefore, the president establishes the broad macro priorities and the technocrats have the mandate to establish priorities within this framework. The technocrats and the president do

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<sup>41</sup> The Monitor, April 3, 2003

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Note, however, that it is not the case that President Museveni always has the latitude to dictate the courses of action the Movement adopts. Hauser notes, for example, that Constituent Assembly delegates have voted against the President, particularly on constitutional matters.

not agree all the time. There are times when the president declares that he has wanted to take some action but is obstructed by the technocrats; therefore, he will implement the policies in his own way”.<sup>44</sup>

Recent case studies of policy outcomes in Uganda<sup>45</sup> draw attention to how political systems might at once encourage and obstruct poverty reduction strategies. Specifically, Uganda provides an interesting commentary on the need for balance between strong central direction and broader accommodation. Museveni’s strong and focused leadership has been beneficial for economic growth and poverty reduction. However, it has also resulted in questionable interventions in policy (such as in health and agriculture), particularly where Museveni has been in disagreement or felt that his personal agenda was being undermined. Even sympathisers are now conceding that the Movement system has not been especially accommodating of opposition opinions and some are convinced that the leadership has continued the practice of ‘politicising ethnicity’,<sup>46</sup> though through less overt means. Anti-Movement MPs have pointed to the disproportionate number of ‘pilot projects’ that have been placed in select favoured regions or parts of regions, while others are denied. There are perceptions of unfair dealings and deliberate exclusion, and these views, justifiable or not, are tainting the government’s credibility and affecting ownership of the poverty reduction programmes. Current efforts to reform the Movement come against a background of mounting doubt that the prevailing political system can be sustained.

### **3.2 INTER AND INTRA-DEPARTMENTAL POLITICS AND POLICY CONSEQUENCES**

The MFPED is the government’s core agency, with responsibility for spearheading the poverty reduction programme. The Ministry has been instrumental in ensuring that priorities are realised, through its

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with technocrat, MFPED, January 2002

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Tim Williamson, *Targets and Results in Public Sector Management: Uganda Case Study*, ODI Working Paper 205.

<sup>46</sup> Kjaer, 1999, p. 93.

management of the Poverty Action Fund (PAF), coordination of the Poverty Eradication Working Group and policy reviews under its poverty monitoring unit. Foster and Mijumbi cite the Ministry's 'real quality control over sector expenditure plans' as an important contributor to Uganda's success. MFPED rewards those sectors and line ministries that promote the PEAP priorities and restrict funding for those that do not.<sup>47</sup> Apart from its achievements in macro management, the MFPED has sought to improve responsiveness to poverty by actively seeking views from the poor through participatory poverty assessments. Many, particularly among the line ministries and CSOs are uncomfortable with the relationship between the government and MFPED, which they see as a pawn of the administration and inexcusably uncritical of government dictats. MFPED officials maintain that the Ministry does not simply act on government recommendations. In principle, technocrats have the flexibility to design programmes within the specified mandate, and the courses of action they choose to pursue are not all consistent with what the executive favours. (See interview excerpt on page 29) Ultimately, however, Cabinet approves the budgets and it is, therefore, important that MFPED retains government approval.<sup>48</sup>

Donor agencies are impressed with the quality of personnel within the Ministry of Finance and with the vision and expertise that key staff exhibit. Consequently, there is a tendency to by-pass other relevant ministries and to work with select groups within the Ministry of Finance.<sup>49</sup> This has resulted in inter-departmental tensions and wider

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<sup>47</sup> Mick Foster and Peter Mijumbi, *How, When and Why does Poverty get Budget Priority*, xii.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. viii.

<sup>49</sup> Graham Harrison (2001) suggests that there are other, more deliberate, causes for the MFPED's prominence within government and for its favour with the donor agencies. Harrison maintains that the nature of donor involvement in certain African states, such as Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Tanzania, has changed from the outright coercion that typified the 'conditionality mechanism' to a more 'supportive' and selective engagement. He uses the term 'post-conditionality' specifically

objections, particularly among CSOs and anti-Movement activists. Nyamugasira and Rowden<sup>50</sup> recently reported that many leading officials and representatives from civil society organisations are not satisfied that the actual policies---particularly in the current World Bank financed Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) and the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF)---are consistent with the stated poverty reduction goals. Specifically, they challenge the PRSC's strict emphasis on further privatisation, liberalization and deregulation---particularly in health, education, water and sanitation and agriculture---and maintain that without regulation, these policies are unlikely to reach the poorest groups. Additionally, while there is support for decentralization, CSOs caution that in the absence of improved administrative/technical capacity and regulatory oversight, decentralization is likely to impede poverty reduction.<sup>51</sup> Interviews among anti-Movement MPs reveal similar concerns. Respondents were openly doubtful about the published poverty reduction gains. They maintain that this "success story" is not reflected "outside the city":

"The poverty that has been reduced has resulted in greater indebtedness. Poverty has been reduced through contributions from donor agencies. It is not the product of internal struggle. If the multinationals pull away, what would face the country? Poverty has been reduced via dependence. The amount of money owed has increased dramatically. The self-sustaining ideology is gone and we are totally dependent."<sup>52</sup>

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to describe the new state of relations with a few favoured sub-Saharan countries. Post-conditionality politics, Harrison argues, "requires more carrots than sticks".

<sup>50</sup> Nyamugasira and Rowden, 'New Strategies, Old Loan Conditions', April 2002

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>52</sup> Interview, Anti-Movement MP, February 2002 [Readers may recall that Himbara and Sultan created a stir when they described Uganda as an international bantustan. Many disagreed with the classification though they shared the fear of growing reliance on foreign aid. See Himbara, D. and Dawood Sultan, 'Reconstructing the Uganda State and Economy: The Challenge of an International Bantustan' in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 63, pp. 85-93, 1995]



There is unease with the government's close alliance with the donors, and both CSOs and anti-Movement MPs have been challenging what they perceive to be an unquestioning, and potentially costly, capitulation to the neo-liberal ideology. The sentiment, particularly among CSOs and anti-Movement MPs, is as Harrison describes, that the MFPED's prominence has much to do with its 'centrality to [post] conditionality and structural adjustment'. [MFPED] is the prime 'conduit between the state and donors/creditors'<sup>53</sup>, with considerable power over line ministries, and increasingly resistant to opposing opinions.

### **3.3 DECENTRALISATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

Uganda's decentralised system of government is fairly advanced. Though local government was substantially downgraded after the 1967 constitution and, subsequently, under Amin's rule, it was considered an important component of the NRM's democratisation agenda. Decentralised government was also crucial for poverty reduction and service delivery: services were to be brought closer to the people; the people should have a role in deciding how these should be provided; citizens would also have easier access to the means and mechanisms for holding their service providers to account.

The current local government framework builds on the resistance council (RC) system of the late 1980s and was formally converted under the Local Government Statute (1995), the 1995 Constitution, and the 1997 Local Government Act. The 1997 Act stipulates that this 'democratic participation and control of decision making' would be facilitated under a tiered political and administrative system running from the village (LC1) to the parish (LC2), the sub county (LC3), county (LC4) and the district (LC5). Representatives from each level/council are sent to the next tier

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 664.

of government, culminating in district representation at the National Assembly. The Act also provides that administrative staff, headed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the sub-county chief (SCC), would be appointed to all levels. At each level, the administrative officer reports to the political appointee. For example, the CAO heads the public service in the district and is the chief accounting officer; s/he reports to the Chairperson and the District Council. The District Council is “the highest political authority within the area of jurisdiction of a Local Government”. It comprises an elected district Chairperson, one councillor elected to represent an electoral area of a district, two youth councillors (one of whom should be female, two councillors with disabilities (one of whom should be female), and with women councillors forming one third of the Council.<sup>54</sup> (Indeed, Uganda, like South Africa, has been exceptional at increasing women and youth’s numerical representation in politics.<sup>55</sup>)

In principle, elected officials should deal with local concerns and needs; they should pass requests up to the next level when they are unable to resolve them. The system hinges on participation. For example, all levels of local government should participate in the planning and budget process. Views from the village level should feed into the sub county and then district plans. Therefore, the resulting district development plans (DDP) should be a true reflection of local needs.<sup>56</sup>

Though local levels are responsible for delivering many government services, most of the funding for these services comes from central government in the form of sector conditional grants, under the Poverty Action Fund (PAF). In addition, local governments receive

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<sup>54</sup> The Local Governments Act, 1997, pp. 14-15.

<sup>55</sup>Goetz, Anne Marie, ‘Women in Politics and Gender Equity in Policy: South Africa and Uganda’, *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 76, pp. 241-262, 1998.

block/unconditional grants from the government; these are used to pay administration costs, including salaries. Notably, the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) is unique in its approach. It funds small-scale investments through discretionary grants, though district and sub-county governments are required to meet specified administrative and implementation capacity criteria.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the Centre contains local discretion and maintains what it considers 'necessary strong control', given the widespread problems with implementation capacity and accountability systems at the local levels.

### **Politics, Tensions and Local Level Administration**

Tensions exist between the central and local governments; some of these revolve around the old question of how to balance strong central direction and broader accommodation. Districts are not all accepting of imposed limits and there is a perception that the conditional grants have impeded the potential benefits from decentralisation. Tensions exist, too, between technocrats and politicians at the local levels. Technocrats and politicians tend to have different, sometimes widely diverging, views on how programmes should be implemented. This is especially pertinent in those cases where the politicians manipulate circumstances and their control over administrators to suit their own political ends. For example, various studies have cited cases where local politicians have based their election platforms on a repeal of the graduated tax; voters are discouraged from paying tax, which further undermines an already weak revenue base. Politicians exert their control in other areas, such as the award of contracts under the District Tender Board (DTB) and the appointments of district staff under the District Services Commission

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<sup>56</sup> See Tim Williamson's "Targets and Results" for a more comprehensive review of the budget process.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

(DSC). Here, Francis and James<sup>58</sup> show, there is ‘enormous scope for patronage’ as the District Council, on the District Executive’s advice, is responsible for appointing members to both the DTB and the DSC; these members are not elected. Under current arrangements, civil servants are often pressured to make decisions that favour the politician and are victimized when they do not comply. Francis and James report one case of a DSC being forced to dismiss a ‘Deputy CAO after he questioned the use of the unconditional grant for politicians’ allowances’.<sup>59</sup> In this district, local administrators thought the only solution was to restrict politicians’ discretion even further by increasing the proportion of conditional grants. Thus, while the mechanisms for a functioning local government are well established, a “dual-mode” or ‘technocratic versus patronage’ system of local governance has emerged.<sup>60</sup> In the ‘technocratic mode’, as Francis and James describe it, the centre---and specifically MFPED, controls the use of funds through conditional grants; the local population has limited say in defining how these funds are used and in ‘decentralisation’ has little empowerment potential. There is more scope for empowerment where local populations have access to unconditional grants and locally generated revenues; however, these tend to be [mis]used by the politicians and, though mechanisms exist, local people do not have the authority/real power to hold their elected officials to account: the ‘patronage- mode’.

The ‘patronage mode’ does not only incur costs in terms of misappropriated revenues; it reinforces patterns of dominance and may

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<sup>58</sup> Francis, P. And James, R., ‘Balancing Rural Poverty Reduction and Citizen Participation: The Contradictions of Uganda’s Decentralization Program’, in *World Development*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 325-337, 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

even be more incapacitating to local populations than were centre-local relations. Goetz and Jenkins<sup>61</sup> put it well:

Poorer people usually have as little influence in their local settings as they do in the national political arena, and sometimes substantially less. Local authorities often have at their disposal even more resources – symbolic and material – with which to resist efforts to address the needs of the poor, whether these are initiated locally or by national or international agencies.

### **RCs, LCs and the Competition for Patronage**

The Brock et al studies in Bushenyi, Lira and Tororo districts reveal that while people had observed some improvements in local governance under the LCs (such as the establishment of Councils of Women and People with Disabilities), they favoured the ‘personal autonomy’ of the RC system. LCs, they observed, are ‘only used to levy taxes’; the system had increased the scope for patronage and, by [over]-empowering the politicians, had shrunk the capacity for accountability. Brock et al recount<sup>62</sup> comments from one respondent in Lira:

The power of LCs started in the 1990s when we started to talk to the government about our problems. Any idea coming up comes through the LCs—you cannot come away except through the LCs. LCs have strength and power---decentralisation brought them more power.

Another elder from Lira describes the futility of seeking accountability: the law requires that a meeting should be held before elected officials can be removed but “it is the same Chairperson, the one you are trying to get rid of, who calls the meeting”.

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<sup>61</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Rob Jenkins, *Creating a Framework for Reducing Poverty: Institutional and Process Issues in National Poverty Policy*. Uganda Country Report, (Report for DFID and SIDA) April 1999. See, also, Mick Moore and James Putzel, ‘Thinking Strategically About Politics and Poverty, IDS Working Paper 101.

<sup>62</sup> Brock et al., *Poverty knowledge and policy processes in Uganda*, pp. 13-14.

## **Historical Legacies and Decentralised Governance**

Golooba-Mutebi's<sup>63</sup> lively portrayal of local governance in Rakai and Mukono districts helps us to understand how historical legacies have influenced the decentralisation process. The NRM government was intent on breaking local traditional---sometimes harsh---control and, accordingly, subjected local chiefs to LCs. However, many people regret this loss of imposed discipline. LCs were not merely seen as corrupt; they lacked the authority to insist on required levels of performance:

...Long before the introduction of the RC<sup>64</sup> [LC] system, chiefs had exercised discretionary powers that left villagers no option to defy legitimate [and illegitimate] orders on the grounds of being free to do so. Individuals refusing to take part in communal projects, for example, would be liable for prosecution and were often prosecuted. Under the 'democratic' RC (LC) system elected councillors were reluctant to alienate the public for fear of votes of no confidence. Sanctions of the kind chiefs had been able to apply were therefore unknown under the RC [LC] system. People ignored orders or calls they regarded as inconveniencing with impunity...

The lasting effects of tradition do not figure sufficiently in governance studies, though they are critical determinants of the amount of 'real' space that is available for change. People were willing to retain traditions (and sacrifice personal freedoms) in order to gain in other 'social' areas, such as communal propriety. At least in these communities, the issue is not resentment to LC power per se but objection to how that power is [mis]used. LCs lack credibility because many use their positions to extract personal gains; the government's popularity is waning because it has implemented a decentralised system of government that lacks

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<sup>63</sup> Golooba-Mutebi, F. 'Reassessing Participation in Uganda' Paper prepared for presentation at the Development Studies Institute's 10th Anniversary Conference on 'New Institutional Theory, Institutional Reform and Poverty Reduction'. September 7-8,??

<sup>64</sup> Golooba-Mutebi notes that within the villages, both terms (RC and LC) are often used interchangeably.

sufficient controls, particularly in matters such as taxation. Compared with the license and new forms of abuse that decentralisation allows, Rakai and Mukono residents would opt for the authority of chiefs they respect. Golooba-Mutebi reports two exchanges that underline this position:

Asked what he understood by *demokulaasi*, one 64-year old bicycle repairer in Bbaale sub-county, Mukono District, said: "it is the kind of rule brought in by Museveni [the president], whereby people can do whatever they like, with leaders not having the right to punish them. The kind of freedom *demokulaasi* has brought about baffles me; people have simply got spoilt. So what kind of rule is that?"<sup>65</sup>

Another elder explains:

In this part of the world people no longer do any communal work like we used to do in the past. You cannot find an LC [official] standing by the roadside overseeing communal work as chiefs used to do in the past. All our roads are covered in vegetation; snakes are everywhere. Chiefs used to summon us to go down to the swamp to work on the [main] road. They would go from house to house informing everyone of what was to be done, and when. On the appointed day, they would sound the drum, *saagala agalamidde*, to remind us that it was time for communal work, and then we would all go down with our implements. Whoever did not turn up would have to answer to the chief. If anyone absented himself on two occasions without a good reason, he would be taken to the sub-county [headquarters] to answer for his crimes. Things were much better then. Chiefs were real chiefs. These LCs have no idea how to rule; they just want to make money and get drunk.<sup>66</sup>

Interviews within MFPED indicate that there is concern about the quality of participation that obtains during both the budgeting process and programme implementation. Officials admit that while there is consultation between the centre and the district, the rapport with the lower levels is much more limited. Consequently, the government is now concerned with building capacity at the sub county level and increasing sub county input into the development plans. These are difficult

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

objectives to attain, as there are longstanding hurdles, including low education and skills levels, particularly from the village to sub county.<sup>67</sup>

However, there are deeper---historical, political and cultural---issues that affect community participation. Golooba-Mutebi's findings reveal that the assumption that people will always want to participate where the activity is clearly in their economic interest is not well founded. In one sub-county in Mukono, the village chairman explains:

I have not been active in convening village council meetings because people do not attend them. Whenever I summon them, very few turn up. That discourages me from trying again. Whenever I ask them to come for meetings, some people ask me why I do not use the authority they have given me to make decisions and simply tell them what I have decided instead of calling meetings. 'We gave you power; why don't you use it?' they ask. Others tell me the executive committee [*kakiiko*] should meet and make decisions, and then pass on the information to them. They never bother to turn up for meetings because they feel they have the freedom not to do so. I think there is too much freedom these days.<sup>68</sup>

As the author discovered, people were likely to attend meetings when matters of security were being discussed or when celebrities attended. Otherwise, they were content with using their power to delegate responsibilities, as in a representative democracy, but not to engage in the more participatory and *empowering* way desired. Where participation did occur, the more powerful still dominated proceedings, sometimes in a patently dis-empowering manner. Excerpts from speeches from the parish and sub county chiefs in one area record both officials accusing the villagers of laziness, irresponsibility and disrespect for those in authority. The sub county chief also warned 'of dire consequences' for those who reneged on their taxes. These examples do not merely point to the excesses of power; they are also the outgrowth of a culture of deference to the leader/big-man, which make such excesses possible.

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, Poverty Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Finance.



People anticipate domination and do not consider themselves equal citizens. With this profound sense of 'inequality', they continue to vote for the wealthier, more educated and more articulate to lead and represent their interests, though these groups might be unacquainted with what those interests are, and though they are likely to assume the traditional master-servant, boss-employee stature. (Therefore, the problem at the local level is not merely that of elite capture; perversely, there is also elite accommodation.) Respondents from Kabale maintain that in any event there are material/practical obstacles to their inclusion in politics<sup>69</sup>. People are required to pay in order to register as public representatives. During election campaigns, it is expected that favours will be doled out to prospective supporters. The poor cannot afford the costs of election; 'democracy' itself rules them out.<sup>70</sup>

### **3.4 RIGHTS, ENTITLEMENTS AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

Legal mechanisms have been established for defending rights and entitlements for those who cannot afford to pay. Under the local council system, committees should preside over civil disputes, thereby minimising litigation costs. From Golooba-Mutebi's account, it is in this area that some community members are most appreciative of their elected representatives; communities have easier access to LC1 representatives, who sometimes protect them from police harassment. PPA2 findings also confirm that in some sites, people regard LC1 representatives as 'very useful in dispute settlement'.<sup>71</sup> However, this is undoubtedly one of the core policy areas in which progress has been

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<sup>68</sup> Golooba-Mutebi, p.8.

<sup>69</sup> Interviews, January 2002.

<sup>70</sup> Note that elections are frequently associated with corruption but they are, increasingly, being used as vehicles for accountability. PPA 2 notes that community members in Mubende, Jinja and Bundibugyo claimed that they use election periods to question leaders and to demand accountability for inadequate/inappropriate performance. (pp. 171-172)

especially laggard and costly for pro-poor programming. The mechanics (structures and processes) of decentralisation have been instituted but without visible and convincing demonstrations that rights and entitlements must be observed at all levels, decentralisation may well empower new authorities to demean and abuse the poor, with impunity. Despite the established mechanisms, Kabale residents still maintain:

Once you are poor, everything of yours will be taken. One can even encroach on your land and take you to court but because you cannot raise any money, you leave your land to be taken.

Government officials claim that they have had some success in reforming the judiciary, which has traditionally been among the most corrupt institutions in the country. One official acknowledged that “it seems as if justice serves the rich, since only people who have the money can have their cases heard, and get bail” but that it is, nevertheless, important to “put the whole thing in context”. The government has ensured that everyone has the right to a lawyer, and has awarded one million shillings, even to the poorest, to defend their case. However, lawyers are reluctant to adjudicate for these small amounts; this leaves the poor excluded and subject to abuse.<sup>72</sup>

The wanton disregard for rights and entitlements contradict and undermine the stated commitment to poverty reduction and many of the programmes that are implemented. For example, in Jinja, PPA2 researchers observed that workers are subject to especially harsh conditions, which clearly infringe on their human rights. Workers feel trapped, powerless and isolated by both the local and central administration.<sup>73</sup> Busabala, like many other communities in Uganda,

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<sup>71</sup> PPA 2 (Final pre-publication draft), p. 161.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with government official, January 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Jenny Yates and Joy Moncrieffe,

report exploitation by middlemen <sup>74</sup>. Women and youth are frequently robbed of their entitlements to land, and the poor has the least access to land and inputs.

Sections 4 and 5 focus on the PMA and HSD. They show how these various factors and forces---presidential dominance, inter-ministerial conflict, inadequate coordination across levels of government, low capacity levels, tensions between technocrats and politicians; political patronage; historical legacies, including ethnic and religious conflicts; contempt for rights and entitlements ---conspire together to shape initiatives and influence outcomes.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 43

#### **4. POLITICS, POLICY-MAKING AND THE PMA**

The PMA had highly political origins. Confidential interviews reveal that the plan was conceived, with direction from MFPED, because the Ministry was dissatisfied with the preceding agriculture reform proposal (then within the ambit of the current Vice President of Uganda). This caused tremendous dissent at the outset, including allegations that the VP had attempted to prevent the plan's approval. Though it was based on the PEAP and reflective of previous poverty studies, the PMA was drawn up after fairly selective consultations. The major players included DFID, DANIDA, the World Bank and MFPED. Local consultants were involved in preparing the plan but these were largely economists, rather than specialists in agriculture. According to one respondent, the Ugandan consultants who were commissioned were "people who agreed with the MFPED and donor approach; the PMA was certainly not prepared by farmers". This is not to suggest that broad decision-making constituencies are always required to ensure policy acceptance and sustainability; there is sufficient evidence that this is not in all cases practicable or desirable. However, among the more frequently cited problems with the PMA are (a) the failure to include the major stakeholders in the design of the plan, which was compounded by (b) the failure to sell the plan to key players, including the President

##### **4.1 KNOWLEDGE, POLITICS AND POLICY**

Many with specialised knowledge of the PMA (largely MFPED or donor agency employees, external commentators employed to analyse government policies, and interested parties from

##### **Core PMA Objectives**

- Increase incomes and improve the quality of life of poor subsistence farmers
- Improve household food security
- Provide lucrative employment
- Promote sustainable use and management of natural resources

the core NGOS) agree that it is a well-conceptualised framework, with a sound set of principles, though it lacks details in some areas. The PMA is consistent with the thrust and spirit of the PEAP. Unlike previous agricultural plans, it is properly multi-sectoral; it concentrates on minimizing the direct and indirect impediments to agricultural and, specifically, the poor farmers', development and, accordingly, creates a structure under which concerns as diverse as health, education, roads, marketing and water supply can be addressed. The core designers maintain that this novel multi-sectoral emphasis demonstrates that the PMA *is* responsive to the needs of the poor. Based on recommendations from previous participatory poverty assessments, it builds on a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty and, accordingly, has a more comprehensive and effective strategy to address it. "Agricultural development", the secretariat's director explained, "is beyond the traditional MOA".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Interview, Head, PMA Secretariat, November 2001

PMA Priority Areas	Main Components	Government Roles	Private Sector Roles
Research and Technology Development	Research into areas such as pest and disease resistant crop varieties, farm power and tillage, post harvesting and handling and agro-processing technologies--- to boost productivity. Research will also include needs and impact assessments, and other strategic studies.	The National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) is responsible for coordinating this research, with the important caveat that farmers will now be involved in defining the priorities, and assessing the implementation and effectiveness of the technologies.	NARO will confer with the private sector in order to define the areas that are best suited for private funding or that could be contracted to private research institutions.
National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS)	NAADS is to operate as a demand driven system. It will support advisory and information services to farmers, technology development, quality assurance services, private sector institutional development, programme management and monitoring.	Encourage farmers to form village level groups and, subsequently, farmers' forums at sub-county and district and national levels. Primary plans will be defined during group discussions. These will then be aggregated and prioritised at the sub-county, district and national levels	Advisory services are to be partially privatised and operated through contracting arrangements, with the proviso that the poor and women should be specially provided for.
Agricultural Education	Promote new ethos: farming as a business. Develop curriculum and skills required to improve productivity and profits.	Government to promote agricultural education policy	Private sector is one key stakeholder in defining education programmes.

Improving Access to Rural Finance	Encourage MFIs and formal institutions to increase the number and coverage of financial institutions; and to train relevant personnel for effective service delivery	Government will withdraw from providing direct credit but will establish the necessary regulatory framework and engage in capacity-building	Private sector to have crucial role in improving access to credit. MFIs to increase coverage.
Agro-processing and marketing	Build road network and competitive transport service, improve infrastructure of markets and quality of market information, and build capacity for negotiating greater access to international markets.		
Sustainable Natural Resource Utilization and Management	Land reform, sustainable soil and land management practices; improve irrigation, comprehensive policy on forestry, raise awareness of environment	Facilitate land reform, with special emphasis on improving food security for the landless poor and women.	Assist with improving irrigation; invest in environmental preservation
Physical Infrastructure	Improve roads, electricity, water and communication infrastructure	Rural electrification programme; capacity to be built and resources provided for road construction and maintenance	Private sector already well involved in expanding radio stations, mobile telephones, internet services.

The PMA emphasizes private sector assisted development, which is also consistent with the policy direction outlined in the PEAP. The government restricts its input to supplying public goods and reducing what it describes as ‘governance related constraints’: ‘insecurity of persons and property, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, poor delivery of basic public services, weak local leadership, lack of consultation of farmers by governmental and non-governmental organisations concerning their priorities’, ineffective implementation and monitoring of programmes.<sup>76</sup> The PMA has identified a number of priority areas for action. These, as summarized above, include research and technology development, national agricultural advisory services, agricultural education, improving access to rural finance, agro-processing and marketing, sustainable natural resource utilisation and management, and improving the physical infrastructure. These interventions are variously geared at meeting the needs of the commercial, semi-commercial and subsistence farmers, who make up the bulk of the population.

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<sup>76</sup> Republic of Uganda: Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, p.vii



**Table 3.2 Farmer Categories, Characteristics and Needed PMA Intervention**

Farmer Category	Characteristics	Needed Public Sector Interventions
Commercial Farmers (5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Possess or have access to critical skills and knowledge</li> <li>-Produce for the market with a profit motive</li> <li>-Engage in specialised production, marketing and agro-enterprises.</li> <li>-Use skilled and non-skilled hired labour</li> <li>-Have access to local and international market information</li> <li>-Have access to and use risk management instruments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provision of security of person and property</li> <li>-Stable macro-economic environment</li> <li>-Good infrastructure -roads, energy, water and markets</li> <li>-Access to domestic, regional and international markets.</li> <li>-Efficient banking services</li> <li>- Legal and regulatory services, including enforceable contracts, product grades and standards.</li> </ul>
Semi-Commercial Farmers (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Produce for both home consumption and the market</li> <li>-Use relatively improved methods of production</li> <li>-Use both family and hired labour</li> <li>-Maintain several enterprises</li> <li>-Are partial risk takers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provision of security of person and property</li> <li>-Business skills development</li> <li>-Access to product markets and market information</li> <li>-Efficient and reliable inputs delivery systems</li> <li>-Accessibility to post-harvest technologies and agro-processing</li> <li>-Access to production and marketing credit</li> </ul>
Subsistence Farmers (70%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Have low literacy, skills and knowledge levels</li> <li>-Produce mainly for domestic consumption</li> <li>-Engage in a multiplicity of enterprises</li> <li>-Rely on low input/low output technologies</li> <li>-Depend on family labour</li> <li>-Use small land holdings</li> <li>-Often forced to sale produce to meet basic domestic needs (education, health etc)</li> <li>-Highly exposed to risks (price, weather, yields etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provision of security of person and property</li> <li>-Literacy, knowledge and skills development</li> <li>-Involvement and participation in development activities/good governance</li> <li>-Access to affordable and improved technologies</li> <li>-Access to market information and markets for their outputs</li> <li>-Access to rural financial services for savings mobilisation, production and marketing credit</li> <li>-Access to productive land, in some cases</li> </ul>

**Source: MAAIF/MFPED, Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, p.29.**

In principle, the PMA facilitates inclusive strategies, with special attention to women. Against a background of persistent discrimination within households, communities and in land and domestic disputes, the PMA resolves to make all interventions 'gender responsive and gender-

focused' so that both men and women benefit.<sup>77</sup> This means addressing issues such as land reform, particularly the right of women and the youth to own and inherit land.

Multilateral and bilateral organisations---the 'development partners'--- support the PMA through grants and soft loans. NAADS is funded from pooled donor funds; approximately seventy five percent of this is channelled through the districts to the sub-counties as conditional grants. These grants should be used to finance those advisory requirements that were agreed at the sub-county level. Specifically, funds are to be used to contract private service providers and to pay for any resulting legal procedures; to procure necessary technologies; and to facilitate monitoring and evaluation. Of the remaining 25 percent, 12 percent is allocated to the districts; this is used to support the sub-counties and monitor activities. The NAADS Secretariat uses the other 13 percent for overall co-ordination/administration.

To be eligible to participate in NAADS, districts and sub-counties must comply with the government's PAF and LGDP criteria. At a minimum, these include a district council approved 3 year development plan and annual budget; staff (which could be contracted from the private sector) capable of supervising contractors, auditing and facilitating farmers forums; available counterpart funding, both at district and sub-county levels; a functional technical planning team at the district level and an effective development and investment committee at the sub-county level; available financial accountability reports and records of performance in agricultural development and modernisation; willingness to comply with NAADS and PMA programme emphases, including transferring existing

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<sup>77</sup> MAAIF/MFPED, Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture, p.9.

extension workers to the private sector and institutionalising farmer empowerment.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, the PMA provides Non-Sectoral Conditional Grants (NSCGs) (with the districts and subcounties co-financing 10% of the funds) through the local government to the sub-counties. These grants should enable communities to plan and execute small-scale projects and, thereby, solve some of the constraints to local agricultural development. The NSCGs need not be restricted to agricultural production; they may include projects such as improving roads, constructing bridges, improving educational facilities, where it can be demonstrated that these pose either direct or indirect constraints to agricultural development. The sub county production committees are instrumental in developing these plans, with the proviso that plans and projects should benefit the entire community, especially the poorest groups. The central government provides overall guidance for the use of the funds through the PMA Planning and Financing Forum.

### **Politics of Planning: Information Dissemination**

Perhaps the ambition and breadth of the plan contribute to the misunderstandings and lack of knowledge that surround it, though some would contend that the PMA secretariat and steering committee have simply not been successful at informing the public. Among the MPs interviewed, only one had fairly detailed knowledge of the PMA. The majority contends that the PMA is “too confusing”. In one parliamentary session, the sessional committee on agriculture expressed confusion about the relationship between the PEAP and the PMA. As far as the committee was concerned, the PEAP alone should “prioritise public

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp.27-28.

actions across various sectors”. The PMA should remain a component of the PEAP but “it seems as is the PMA is set to replace the roles of PEAP, which should not be the case”.<sup>79</sup> Some are more specific in their critique:

“The PMA is badly designed. It is too complicated, too disintegrated and too academic. There is too much external (donor) influence. Some of the structures are not needed. For example, the unit for extension services (NAADS) is fully established with offices, staff and transport at the national level. These facilities are lacking at the local levels, where they are needed. Why is there need for a national office?”<sup>80</sup>

While there are some valid questions about specific components of the plan, the immediate concern is that persons and parties who should be publicising it and encouraging local participation remain ill informed. There is some fear that some of those charged with programme implementation are equally confused about their own roles in the process. This problem seems to surpass the PMA. As one MFPED official admitted, “even while we are saying that decentralisation has brought in problems of lack of capacity/knowledge, the centre also has difficulty understanding the policies”.<sup>81</sup>

This confusion and inadequate information dissemination is, in some circles, regarded as one underlying justification for President Museveni’s newly proposed Strategic Exports Initiative (STRATEX). This ‘presidential initiative’ was proposed and implemented after discussions with MFPED officials and key advisers (but excluded donors and line agencies involved with implementing the PMA). (STRATEX is President Museveni’s attempt to check what he perceives to be over-dependence on aid-supported foreign exchange inflows. It is designed to boost selected and potentially high-earning agricultural exports, such as fish and coffee. STRATEX is

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<sup>79</sup> Report of the Sessional Committee on Agriculture...Fiscal year 2001/2002.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with MP,

decidedly top-down. It is one prime example of a 'high profile' executive policy that lacks broad-based support.<sup>82]</sup>

Not surprisingly, there is also significant confusion about the PMA at the local levels. Brock et al found that in Bushenyi, Tororo and Lira, the PMA was the most misunderstood of the existing government policies<sup>83</sup>and recent PPA2 findings indicate that this is especially the case among the poorer people.<sup>84</sup> In Mukono, where the first set of interviews were conducted six months after programme inception, researchers found a generally low level of awareness of the PMA, even among ministry technocrats. Local politicians had received some information but had little knowledge of the details. Technocrats associated with programme implementation were relatively well informed while those who were not involved were confused about the details. Respondents reported that the PMA was implemented hurriedly, with little attention to information dissemination; thus, even key 'stakeholders' were ill prepared. Technocrats at the district and sub county levels noted that they were never consulted before the PMA was formulated or implemented; they first learnt of the programme when they were being 'sensitised', though only one day was allocated for this at the sub county and district. Among the common perceptions:

PMA is a conception from the from the centre without consultation at lower levels, just similar to the earlier Unified Extension Programme, which was also multi-sectoral and conceived from above...If we were consulted, our views would have been different.

PMA appears to be a broad ambitious programme but the deeper you read into the document, the more you get confused. For example, the objectives are highly mixed up.

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<sup>81</sup> Interview, MFPED

<sup>82</sup> See Booth et al., *Ex Ante Poverty and Social Impact Analysis: Uganda Demonstration Exercise*, Report Commissioned by DFID on Behalf of MFPED, Uganda, April 2003

<sup>83</sup> Brock et al, *Poverty knowledge and policy processes in Uganda*, p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Final (pre-publication) Draft, UPPAP, PPA2, **p. 85??**

Furthermore, some of the messages that are transmitted from the centre simply add to the confusion:

PMA would be a good programme, but the start was poor and confusing to the extent that it created an implementation paralysis for itself. The initial radio advertisement about PMA directed communities to go the Chairperson for Sub-county (LC3), Sub-county Secretary for Production, and Sub-county Chief to be given PMA money for poverty eradication...This message was interpreted by the communities as a directive from government to sub-county leaders to give free money to the people and this has created a lot of political problems for us as leaders and implementers of NSCG.<sup>85</sup>

Community members had heard of the PMA but were unsure about the details, such as the differences between the NSCG and LGDP funds and, more significantly, the differences between the NSCG and NAADS. One reason for the confusion is that the LGDP has been providing substantially more funds than the NCSG provides, over a longer time period, and towards similar initiatives. As one researcher observes, this overlap is likely to complicate attempts to measure NSCG effectiveness.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, it was clear that those sent out to 'sensitise' the communities had failed to convince people of how factors that are not directly related to agriculture can nevertheless have an effect on agricultural production. For example, community members saw no links between constructing a health unit and improving agricultural production. Therefore, they were still intent on using the funds to purchase improved seeds and to provide micro finance for agricultural improvement.

Similarly, though NAADS' support to Mukono district had started earlier than the NSCG, there was very little awareness among politicians, the

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<sup>85</sup> Interview, January 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Sam Kayabwe, MISR, May 2002.

communities and non-agricultural technocrats. The 'sensitisation' seminar for politicians was again restricted to one day. With insufficient knowledge of the programme, politicians advised their communities that NAADS would merely provide extension training and advice, which community members perceived as useless since extension officers---many non-functional---already existed. Officials employed at the District Planning Unit were equally unaware of the vision and purpose of NAADS, the mode of operation, the amount of associated funding or the planned timeframe for implementation.

There are implications for policy ownership and policy continuity. The widely held perception is that policy is formulated centrally and imposed. There is clear evidence that key stakeholders at the local level feel excluded from the policy process and believe that their experiences and expertise in the field merit consideration. One anti-Movement MP predicted that the PMA is likely to lack popular support. This is because "people did not participate in formulation and so there is no ownership. There is no interest in implementation and it is hard to implement within the system if there is no support"<sup>87</sup>.

#### **4.2 INTER-DEPARTMENTAL POLITICS, CENTRE-LOCAL COORDINATION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

There is other evidence of potentially costly planning: The MFPED (and the supporting donors) must have considered it prudent to bypass, what they consider an ineffectual MAAIF, and to lodge effective control of the PMA with MFPED. The PMA secretariat reports to government through the MAAIF but the MFPED chairs the PMA forum and steering committee. The MAAIF has opposed this division in responsibilities and maintained that PMA implementation should properly be under its

jurisdiction.<sup>88</sup> The consequence, as one commentator explained, is that the MAAIF feels marginalized: “the PMA should be about agriculture but the MAAIF has little to do”.<sup>89</sup> This, too, has implications for policy ownership and continuity. The conventional approach, particularly on the part of donors, is to identify amenable ‘entry points’ in order to implement what may, perhaps justifiably, be seen as urgent reform. However, in the absence of drastic reform and capacity building, the disagreeable conditions within key organisations remain unresolved. This short-term approach may also magnify the conflictual inter-ministerial relations, which can be as potent as political conflicts, and detrimental.

In addition, a number of politicians and technocrats are concerned that the PMA is not well coordinated across administrative levels, and warn of problems for accountability. For example, NAADS has its own Board and Executive, is responsible to the MAAIF, which in turn is responsible to MFPED. This is distinct from the PMA management structure, with its own secretariat and steering committee. The MOLG, its Decentralisation Secretariat and Local Government Finance Commission are to ensure that NAADS capitalises on existing development initiatives. NAADS has set up parallel structures to the MOLG and analysts are not persuaded that its quality assurance measures set appropriate standards for activities, such as training, or that these measures are sufficiently restraining for unscrupulous service providers. Therefore, there are questions about the wisdom of fracturing responsibilities in this manner when there are pervasive problems with accountability and capacity.

PMA is implemented centrally and through delegated authorities. It would benefit from powerful independent coordination. There is

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with MP, February 1, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Report of the sessional committee on agriculture, animal industry and fisheries on the ministerial budget policy statement for the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries for the fiscal year 2001/2002

<sup>89</sup> Interview, MFPED official, April 2003.



currently a lack of coordination between the different levels. Each level is a government in itself. The Line ministries should develop mechanisms for coordination and accountability and Parliament should effectively monitor all public expenditure. There is no acceptable monitoring framework and unless there is effective monitoring of the PMA, people are going to be shocked.<sup>90</sup>

The PMA has just begun its operations and, to date, there are no definite assessments of the extent to which the administrative structure impairs the programme. However, there are more conclusive signs of problems of coordination between the centre and local levels. In Mukono, for instance, the first allotment of PMA funds (provided in one lump sum instead of being staggered quarterly as planned) was awarded in May/June 2001 but had to be accounted for by June 30, 2001. District officials complained that they had received no notification or implementation guidelines. 'Sensitisation' occurred after funds were disbursed and there was no time for community involvement in planning. Officials had to resort to using the plans that had been developed for the LGDP funds. Thirty five percent of the allotted funds was retained at the district and 65% distributed to the subcounties and town councils. As stipulated, sub-county funds were allocated based on land area and population size. Districts funds were distributed only after project proposals were assessed, though there was emphasis on ensuring that all sub-counties benefit. Investigations revealed that project funds (where they were actually received) were used appropriately, that is, towards poverty reduction goals; however, almost half of the 36 subcounties did not receive the funds as promised. Kyampisi sub-county used 15% on monitoring expenses; the majority (85%) was used for contracting engineers and purchasing culverts for bridges. Respondents reported that this has eased previous transportation problems.

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<sup>90</sup> Interview, MP, February 1, 2002.

Compared with the more reliable LGDP programme, which has a reputation for providing timely funding, the PMA risks a lack of credibility. As technocrats in Mukono explained:

It is dangerous to do forward planning involving communities when you are not sure whether there will be funds to finance the identified projects. Communities participated in the planning process of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters for FY 2001/02 but to-date, no funds have been sent and communities have lost interest...That is why for money driven programmes, people tend to plan when money is on the ground.

Government should send funds in time...Programmes come, policymakers talk, people attend sensitisation seminars, and at the end of the day there is no action.<sup>91</sup>

### **4.3 POLICY GAPS?**

Therefore, not all with sound knowledge of the PMA are optimistic about its prospects. Ellis et al<sup>92</sup> are concerned that the very premise on which the PMA is built is fundamentally flawed. First, as their research on rural livelihoods in Uganda suggests, the upwardly mobile are hardly content with careers in agriculture. The common tendency is for the wealthier groups to diversify their sources of income and to engage in non-farm self-employment activities. Therefore, it may be unwise to anticipate long-term commitment to agriculture, particularly as people's incomes increase. Second, some long-standing structural and institutional problems are likely to flout attempts to raise incomes among the poorest groups. For example, many among the poor own only fragmented pieces of land. Without rapid and extensive land reform, the poor are unlikely to move beyond subsistence agriculture; the wealthy will continue to hold the prime land, to employ labour and, thereby, to benefit most from plans such as the PMA. Third, though there has been improvement in

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<sup>91</sup> Interviews, February 2002.

<sup>92</sup> Ellis, F., and Bahigwa, G., 'Livelihoods and Rural Poverty Reduction in Uganda', in *World Development*, Vol. 31, No. 6, pp. 997-1013, 2003.

education and road provision, people have no faith in extension officers and, given their deplorable performance records, have little reason to trust that NAADS' service providers (albeit under new administration) will operate fairly and effectively. Fourth, there is the thorny issue of taxation. Ellis and Bahigwa are not alone in describing a taxation system that is unprincipled, predatory and a considerable disincentive to growth; there are sufficient narratives from PPA2 to corroborate this. The important point, for Ellis and Bahigwa, is that policymakers need to reconsider "the nature of the problems confronting poor rural families in a country such as Uganda, and...the entry points by which these problems can be addressed and diminished in their effects".<sup>93</sup>

### **Land Tenure Arrangements**

Proponents of the PMA could, justifiably, counter with the argument that the upwardly mobile are less likely to withdraw from agriculture if it becomes the attractive business enterprise expected. However, they would be much less persuasive if they disagreed with the need for substantial (real) changes to land tenure arrangements. These 'new' tenure arrangements, as the PMA itself recognizes, must advance the rights of various categories of the poor, including women and children. The PMA intends to achieve this. Invariably, politicians, cultural leaders, local administrators and adjudicators are key to ensuring that these rights are upheld; various reports attest that local politicians and cultural leaders are often instrumental in ensuring that rights, particularly for women and the youth, are denied<sup>94</sup>. Land fragmentation, as Ellis and Bahigwa indicate, is a significant practical constraint to reaching the poor. As one technocrat (Mukono) observes:

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<sup>93</sup> Ellis, F., and Bahigwa, G., p. 1010.

PMA is a little bit theoretical given our tenure system, which lacks a clear land use policy...Land is being sub-divided and fragmented every now and then, so much so that even if peasants form groups, the size of land each one holds will not be commercially viable to practice farming as business.

In Rubaya sub county, Kabale, officials acknowledged that without access to adequate pieces of land, it was futile to channel resources to the poorest groups, as they would simply sell or consume them. The PMA had to concentrate on the 'more progressive' farmers, who could make proper use of the resources, with the hope that benefits would eventually trickle down to the poor:

For the time we have no option but to give improved seeds to those who can profitably utilize them. We still have to replicate more improved seeds for expansion and the poor, who are constantly hungry and without land, cannot be the target group now if we are to realize this.<sup>95</sup>

### **Taxation Policy, Extension Services**

The PMA has begun its operations in a context where people are sceptical of decentralisation and, particularly, of some of the poorly managed policies that attend it. Community members, as Ellis and Bahigwa describe, are convinced that "the plethora of local taxes and their mal-administration is damaging local enterprise and undermining the credibility of the government"<sup>96</sup> This taxation system thrives in local communities where people have no real power to insist on change. Communities are also wary of extension officers. PPA2 recounts complaints of no or inadequate assistance under the old extension system, and the expectation that the NAADS will be 'hijacked' by the wealthier farmers who, traditionally, receive better services. Women (Godia, Arua) were especially resentful, claiming that "extension agents

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<sup>94</sup> Note, however, that PPA 2 reports that there are isolated cases (such as in Soroti and Ntungamo) where LC1s have been commended for protecting women's right to land. (PPA2, final pre-publication draft, p. 181.)

<sup>95</sup> Interview with subcounty official, January 2002.

were biased against them”.<sup>97</sup> Admittedly, the old extension system had considerable resource constraints. Workers in Mukono noted that they were not properly remunerated and lacked facilities such as transportation. In Kyampisi sub-county, for instance, the four extension officers had to share the use of one aged motorbike with sub county officials who, invariably, have priority. Against this background, technocrats doubt the wisdom of the NAADS initiative:

No doubt, facilitation of extension services is necessary, but government should stop thinking that decentralisation will take care of all its needs. The centre should send conditional grants to lower governments to enable them to undertake facilitation of extension workers...Government is doing this for UPE needs, why not for the extension staff?

There is nothing new that is going to be delivered to the farmers by NAADS that the traditional extension staff have not done...Instead of contracting someone (referring to Sub-county Co-ordinator), this money should have been used to facilitate us to do a better job because facilitation is our only problem. Use of terms like ‘de-layering’ or ‘de-tooling’ by NAADS Secretariat, while referring to the process that is going to retrench us, is very degrading as it makes us feel like we are as useless as an ‘off-layer chicken’.

The way government publicised NAADS at the beginning was totally wrong when it said that university graduates would replace the extension workers at the sub-count level, implying that they (extension workers) were less qualified for the job. Government ought to have given them a chance to upgrade, if the problem was lack of academic qualification, instead of outright de-layering (retrenchment)...In any case, even the newly recruited university graduates have already started disappearing, so was this the right solution to the problem?

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<sup>96</sup> PPA2, p. 146 (final draft)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

In addition to the graduated tax, local governments charge a variety of duties on practically all monetary transactions; these include business licenses, crop taxes, livestock taxes, fish taxes and informal levies. Since local governments have found it difficult to collect the taxes, they have privatized the system by way of local competitive tender. Though tax revenues have increased in most cases, districts have no knowledge of the amounts collected by the tenderer. PPA2 reports that apart from a few cases, such as Ntungamo and Buwoya village in Bugiri, there are widespread complaints of misuse of funds, corruption, extortion, and abusive/insensitive methods of collection. Most community members were not aware that a Tax Appeals System had been established, while those that were aware maintained that this system is 'corrupt and ineffective, in that appeals are not listened to'. Further, it was very expensive to bring cases to appeal.

During potolo (midnight arrest of tax defaulters), the afandes (collectors) knocked at my door and demanded 'Towa' (produce the ticket) and I did not have one. They commanded 'Twende!' (Come!). I tried to explain that the LC1 chairman knew me and would be my surety and that I would sell a chicken the next day to pay the tax, but they refused to heed me and instead commanded me to remove my shirt. They then bundled me up into their car. I was too embarrassed because my bakko (in-laws) also saw my nakedness. I was taken up to Bugayi police where I had another

bout of torture from the inmates who demanded 'Leta loji!' (Bring money for lodging here). **Old man, Butema, Bugiri**

Tax is pocket money for the politicians, chiefs and councillors, not for us. We pay their allowances.

**Male youth expressing a view that seemed to be shared by the whole community, Kigungu, Masindi**

The Sub-County officials embezzle money, acquire assets, vehicles and grow big bellies. **Community members, Busabala, Wakiso**

All activities at the landing site are taxed, e.g. saloons, shops, bars, hotels, fish etc. But nothing is received in return from government. **Community members in Kasansero Landing Site, Rakai**

Source for quotations: PPA 2 (Final Draft), pp. 151-152

#### **4.4 POLITICS, HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PMA**

##### **Mukono**

The PMA requires that communities, and particularly the poor, contribute to defining needed interventions. In Mukono, as noted, community members were given little opportunity to participate as the programme was implemented hastily. Nonetheless, some respondents claimed that they had no desire to contribute to the process since they had previously 'sent in their requests, which had never been attended to; therefore, it was useless taking them through another exercise'. Where communities did participate, such as in planning and budgeting for the NSCG (financial year 2001/2002), this was often not rewarded. For

example, approximately ten months after the NSCG budgeting process, no funds were sent to the parishes. In Kitanda village, project involvement was limited to assisting with construction; there was little empowerment value added.

Consistent with Golooba-Mutebi's analysis, community members in Mukono generally felt incapable of demanding feedback and accountability, even where there were clear cases of substandard performance. Respondents were unwilling to challenge the technocrats who had already sanctioned these projects. Similarly, community members were prone to defer to their political leaders. One sub county official elaborated on how these attitudes affected participation:

Communities are called for needs assessment but the needs are at times influenced from above and channelled through a few members of the community who happen to attend the needs assessment exercise...In the final analysis, it is the conceived needs of the leaders that go through...Communities in most cases don't want to decide on issues that don't agree with what their political leaders want...Quite often they say, 'They are our leaders and they know better what we want'.<sup>98</sup>

There was also wide acknowledgement of political control of decision-making, and a belief that decentralisation had increased political power. Technocrats were dissuaded by the process, which subjected them to political control:

'Politicians, being the policymakers, have a tendency to influence demands in their favour...Decentralisation [allows] them to influence things in their favour...their position and decision are supreme'<sup>99</sup>

Political control often materialised into manipulation and subversion of the programme. It is alleged that though the NSCG requires that community-based project management be established to monitor the

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, January 2002.

implementation of NSCG programmes, this was discouraged in some parishes, under political direction, and responsibility for oversight was entrusted to the village political leaders. As one sub county worker suggested:

The political leaders have many powers and not all of them support government policies, thereby making it hard for technocrats to implement community interventions and pushing the blame to the extension workers.<sup>100</sup>

### **Kabale**

In Rubaya sub county, Kabale, plans were also rushed to meet funding deadlines and there was limited space for consultations. However, community members contended that their concerns are almost never represented in discussions. Therefore, the sub county development plan excludes many of their concerns, including land scarcity, housing and justice for the poor. Most did not attend council meetings and argued that when they did attend, their views were often suppressed. Poor women complained that they were never consulted in any development programmes and that their interests are not well represented, even by the women they elect. This sort of status differentiation is also likely to discourage the 'inclusive farmers forums' that the PMA hopes to secure. Some district officials maintained:

Progressive farmers are not likely to team up with the poor farmers and, therefore, the poor people's interests will not be considered. The progressive farmers are selective; they want to team up with fellow rich farmers. Progressive farmers can easily lobby for the resources; they are well known and can easily access the benefits.

From this account, the PMA has underestimated the power dynamics within communities and assumed an altruism that, at least in Kabale,

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<sup>99</sup> Interview, January, 2002.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with subcounty worker, January 2002.



does not obtain. Kabale is, in many respects, more divided and divisive than is Mukono. Apart from apparent class alliances, there are deeply entrenched religious divisions (protestant and catholic) that are also reflected in voting patterns. Furthermore, there is significant opposition to the Movement in Kabale and claims that anti-Movement advocates tend to sabotage government programmes. Conversely, 'opposition members' protest that they are excluded and frequently harassed. Compared with Mukono, patronage and corruption are more pronounced. There are widespread allegations of politicians buying votes and consuming resources that are meant for the poor. One politician explained the reciprocity of the arrangement:

People need power and are prepared to spend to get that. This man is going to eat. If I am going to vote, I should also eat...<sup>101</sup>

#### **4.5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- The PMA's continuity and success hinge on astute political management: policymakers must establish the mechanisms and create the appropriate policy environment for credibility and predictability. These, as current research shows, require that rights are established and *visibly* enforced. The Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mahashtra, India) is reputedly complex and fraught with political and administrative difficulties, yet it does offer guaranteed opportunities that can be/are defended through legal channels. The PMA has notable loopholes that make it easily subject to capture by the more progressive and able. What are the guarantees for the poor? A neo-liberal framework may be useful but does not necessarily provide the securities for the poor that

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<sup>101</sup> Interview, February 2003.

strong affirmative action does.<sup>102</sup> Interviews at the Uganda National Farmers Association indicate that the poor are excluded because of monetary requirements.<sup>103</sup> The poorer farmers are also likely to be excluded from the PMA because of inadequate access to land, and poorer communities will have difficulties paying for advisory services. Perhaps, interviewees in Kabale have presented the more realistic scenario: Given the current structure of the PMA, the more progressive farmers will benefit in the short to medium term, with the hope that benefits will 'trickle down'. However, there is sufficient case evidence to prove the unreliability of the 'trickle-down' approach. New mechanisms and provisions are required to ensure that the poor have guaranteed means of benefiting from the PMA. This may provide an incentive for participation.

**The Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Maharashtra**

The Employment Guarantee Scheme in Maharashtra, India is a multi-sectoral programme that is designed to meet demands for unskilled labour. A number of government agencies are involved in implementation, including agriculture and soil conservation, irrigation, forestry and rural roads. The programme requires extensive collaboration across government agencies, as separate departments (including those at the local levels) have distinct areas of responsibility. The EGS has been undermined by corruption (though reputedly less than in other public programmes), discordant inter-ministerial relationship, tensions between prospective employees and the state agencies, unwillingness of agencies to participate. Therefore, there is little public ownership. Still, the EGS is considered a success because of its predictability, credibility and associated rights. (Joshi and Moore consider these elements critical for anti-poverty programming) Among its central features are that: (1) rights to employment are enshrined in law and defended; (2) there are established procedures and conditions for work, which are revised in response to identified problems; (3) despite the difficulties associated with implementation, the government is obliged by law to continue the programme; thus, people can depend on it being in existence; (4) the programme is built to ensure that power is relatively balanced between the implementing agencies and the labourers; it is in the interest of the politicians and social activists to ensure that rights are upheld.

Source: Joshi and Moore, 'Enabling Environments: Do Anti-Poverty Programmes Mobilise the Poor?'

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<sup>102</sup> Note, for example, that guarantees for women's participation are having some positive results in Uganda, though there is still need for concerted action for women's empowerment. (Source: PPA2 (Final pre-publication draft). pp. 163-164.)

- If the PMA is to reach the poor, it is also critical that land tenure arrangements are addressed, with the aim of increasing ownership and control. Studies prove that redistribution is not only instrumental in reducing income poverty but has other spin-off benefits, such as in encouraging mobilisation and organisation within rural communities. Herring suggests that land reform is not the potentially explosive political undertaking that it once was, as land is no longer the prime source of accumulation in many countries. Furthermore, indigenous groups, women and other marginalized communities are, in almost all places, insisting on their rights to ownership and control; land reform is, increasingly, the 'politically correct' option. Among the significant political questions are these: What are the political risks of land reform in Uganda? How can land tenure arrangements be addressed to minimise disaffection from the more propertied classes? What political messages are needed to secure profitable coalitions and how must these be transmitted? Where are coalitions (cross-class) possible and where would they be difficult? What is the policy recourse in the more difficult situations? What short-term strategies are required to ensure that land entitlements, particularly for the poor, are upheld?
- As Ellis and Bahigwa point out, there are other constraints to effective pro-poor policymaking. Reform of the taxation policy and administration are important primarily because of the burdens they impose on the poor but also because community members are beginning to perceive the abusive and uncontrolled collection methods as a key feature of decentralisation. Ntungamo is one exception. Here, PPA2 findings indicate that people do not object to paying their taxes because they can see the benefits of taxation:

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<sup>103</sup> Interview, Uganda National Farmers Association, January 2002.

better services and better quality service delivery.<sup>104</sup> Other interviews reveal that Ntungamo profits from good political leadership. The challenge is to *encourage* these performance levels in other districts, including through punitive action to discourage infractions.

- Skilful political management is required to ensure that inter-ministerial conflicts are minimised and that the administrative arrangements do not impair programme objectives. Proper centre to local coordination is critical for improving the credibility and predictability of the programme. The PMA has started quite shakily, even on transferring funds in a timely manner. These administrative flaws have a backlash: poor perceptions of the programme damage credibility and discourage other objectives such as participation.
- There are important programme components that require attention. Many of these are built on assumptions that are ahistorical and apolitical, including the expectation of community participation and inclusive farmers' forums. How will the poor be reached where these do not obtain? In communities such as Kabale, notions of citizenship are complex (including religious and political communities); it will be necessary to understand these and create novel spaces for engagement.

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<sup>104</sup> PPA2 (Final pre-publication draft). p. 164.

## **5. POLITICS, POLICY-MAKING AND THE HSD**

Uganda's (2000) Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) fits neatly with the National Poverty Eradication Programme. It acknowledges the links between health and poverty and promises to contribute to poverty eradication through high quality primary health care that is guaranteed in its Minimum Health Care Package (MHCP). The HSSP outlines plans to improve the quality of care through well-focused and cost effective interventions, making the best use of health technology and trained personnel. Health promotion, disease prevention, and community and individual empowerment are key policy objectives, which the Ministry of Health agrees are best delivered through local governments and public/private partnerships. Uganda's HSDs are at the hub of this decentralised health management system that is meant to drastically improve equity of access to care, and to strengthen service management. Under this 'improved' management structure, the national level institutions, such as the Ministry of Health, focuses on 'policy formulation, coordination, setting national standards and regulations, supervision and providing technical support, monitoring and evaluation, control and management of epidemics and disasters, and the delivery of tertiary care'.<sup>105</sup> The district health systems have also been reorganized in order to ensure efficient and effective service provision. Many of the responsibilities for health service operations have been re-delegated from district administrations to health sub-districts while the district directors of health services (DDHS) retain overall responsibility for health provision within the districts.

The HSDs, which are established at the constituency level, should serve approximately 100,000 persons. Each HSD will be managed from a central hospital or upgraded health centre (Health Centre IV), which can

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<sup>105</sup> Republic of Uganda: Health Sub-Districts in Uganda Concept Paper, p. 3.

be owned by the government, NGOs or the private sector. The upgraded HCIVs are to be staffed by a resident doctor and core support staff, including a clinical officer, midwife, anaesthetic assistant, laboratory assistant and a community health assistant.<sup>106</sup> It is envisioned that the HSDs will be self-contained and well served with the essential drugs and other supplies required. HSDs relocate planning and management from district headquarters, many of which were too far from some sections of the communities. With closer proximity (ideally, at most 5km) to the communities being served, it is envisioned that the HSD would be better able to:

1. Prepare detailed plans of area health activities;
2. Maintain proper budgets and account for allocated resources;
3. Ensure that essential clinical services are provided; emphasize disease prevention and health promotion; provide community outreach services (curative, preventive, promotive and rehabilitative); ensure that health workers visit homes and schools;
4. Supervise lower level health units; provide technical support to community based care activities; collect, analyse and use appropriately disaggregated health data; provide in-service training for health personnel.<sup>107</sup>

The HSD arrangement should allow the DDHS to concentrate on:

1. Provision of overall leadership;
2. Planning district health services;
3. Resource mobilization and allocation;
4. Coordination of health activities within the district and with the Ministry of Health;

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<sup>106</sup> Republic of Uganda: Ministry of Health National Health Policy, pp. 18-19.

5. Surveillance and data management;
6. Monitoring and evaluation of district health services'.<sup>108</sup>

Health unit management committees should be set up to hear community complaints and suggestions, and to hold service providers accountable.

### **5.1 KNOWLEDGE, POLITICS AND POLICY**

Compared with the PMA, national level respondents were more aware of the HSD programme. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the need for and possible components of the HSSP were deliberated for some time, and in public arenas. Debates, particularly on issues such as cost sharing, were also well publicised. Second, health has significant political commitment and was central to President Museveni's (2001) election campaign agenda; therefore, many learnt of the pertinent issues through this channel. Third, the HSSP is more straightforward than is the PMA. Though it requires multi-sectoral input, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is the lead institution with responsibility for policy development, planning, quality assurance, monitoring and accountability.<sup>109</sup> There is no confusion about allocated tasks; the roles of Local Government, Water and Sanitation and Education are clear and consistent with their current responsibilities. Indeed, the Minister of Health was careful not to "create institutional mechanisms and structures outside the established government" institutions since this "has the risk of weakening sustainable health care management".<sup>110</sup>

The MoH has been using the media, particularly the radio network, and the LC system to publicise health messages. These avenues were helpful

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, pp.9-10

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>109</sup> Tim Williamson, 'Targets and Results in Public Sector Management', p. 84.

<sup>110</sup> The Republic of Uganda: Ministry of Health' Health Sector Strategic Plan 2000/1-2004/05, p. iii.

throughout is polio eradication campaign and significant in its current efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence. There is wide understanding of the relation between health and poverty, though many among the poor are still not aware of the new service delivery scheme. In Kyampisi sub county, Mukono, for example, it was reported that because of lack of awareness, some community members continue to go to Mulago hospital, which is 40km away, instead of visiting Mukono health centre (20km way), which serves as the HSD for the constituency. Yet, community members were clear:

Once you are poor, you cannot attend a clinic, and once you do not attend a clinic, you will not be healthy enough to sell labour to get rid of poverty.<sup>111</sup>

PPA2 results corroborate this. In all districts, residents were aware that poor health was damaging for productivity; they were especially aware of how HIV/AIDS and malaria had devastated their families and robbed them of much needed manpower. In some areas, community members reported that they were aware that they had a right to health care, so that:

Even when we are told that there are no drugs at the health unit, we keep going there because we feel we belong to it and have a right to be treated.<sup>112</sup>

However, it is not clear that this knowledge of 'right to care' is widespread or that people are, generally, willing to insist upon it. There are many more case examples of people using alternate facilities, resorting to traditional healers or returning home without treatment when they are turned away or dealt with harshly by health staff. It is

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<sup>111</sup> Interview, Community member, Kyampisi sub-county, January 2002.

<sup>112</sup> PPA2 (Final pre-publication draft) p. 106. From focus group discussion, Kitgum.



clear, too, that many do not believe they have recourse/adequate avenues for accountability.

## **5.2 POLITICS AND POLICYMAKING**

Not all are convinced that the decentralisation approach to health provision is the most appropriate or beneficial. Among key MoH officials, there is the view that the proposed link between decentralisation and poverty reduction is mere conjecture and has not been substantiated.<sup>113</sup> However, 'decentralisation was a central policy that Health *had* to follow'. Key administrators preferred to deconcentrate responsibilities to regional hospitals and then provide greater autonomy for institutions within catchment areas. The government, on the contrary, was intent on having doctors in every sub county. The HSD was, therefore, a compromise between MoH technocrats, who were concerned not to commit beyond available capacities, and the government, who was eager to demonstrate its eagerness to reach the poor. The outcome, one respondent explained, was that initial targets have to be lowered. The MoH has had difficulty completing the units at the county level, as districts were unable to deliver the services required. At the time of the interviews, the MoH had been considering re-centralising some of its operations, particularly the award of contracts.

MoH technocrats describe the political pressures to site HSDs in favoured areas and the highly charged disputes on cost sharing. Confronted with inadequate revenues and low staff incentives, the MoH had planned to phase out charges in all rural health centres, while increasing revenue collection in the hospitals to assist with funding with this. According to one official, 'the March pronouncements just before elections disrupted all this---including the increased revenue', for the

President, after little consultation with MoH, had decided to ban cost sharing. Most people at both the national and local levels welcome President Museveni's decision to abolish cost sharing, though they are concerned about the resulting problems. However, a number of anti-Movement MPs are sceptical of the political motives behind this decision. They maintain that this was largely an election campaign strategy and not the product of careful deliberation. Some question the wisdom of 'scrapping this source of income', without ensuring that sufficient funding is in place, and suggest that 'politics has subverted good policymaking'.<sup>114</sup>

Each hospital should take the initiative to introduce cost sharing. The gap between the actual need and what is given will not be filled by Government. Government left the situation possible for cost sharing to be introduced. They left it possible, though Museveni abolished it.

However, PPA2 describes the abolition of cost sharing as a bold initiative, since it has removed the major impediment to low usage of health facilities. In all areas, there has been a substantial increase in attendance at government facilities and community members accredit this to the new 'no-charge' policy. In Mukono, for example, community members travel longer distances (over 5km) in order to access free government facilities. Poverty prevents them from using the NGO-led hospital, which is merely 2 km away:

Those who have money go to Naggalama Hospital (NGO-led).. If you don't have money, you are in trouble as there is no mechanism in place to assist those who can't afford the services or who can't afford the cost of drugs".

PPA2 also acknowledges that with increased demand, resources are stretched and the quality of care has not improved. For example, both

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<sup>113</sup> Interview, MoH, December 2001.

<sup>114</sup> Interviews, January 2002.

Mukono and Kabale are representative of the many districts that report inadequate access to drugs. Focus groups discussants in Kabale point out:

At these health units, the drugs are not adequate and the services are still insufficient. Therefore, it is only the rich who can afford going to referral hospitals and other private clinics in Kabale; the poor man is left in his house to die!<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, there are inadequate ambulances, laboratory and maternal facilities. Health workers have increased workloads and insufficient incentives. At the Mukono Health Centre, for example, there is one doctor with responsibility for the upgraded HSD, who must also undertake administrative duties. Consequently, considerably less time is devoted to patient care. These administrative duties are challenging, particularly for doctors, who receive no management training before being required to supervise a zone. The problems of resource constraints and inadequate centre-local coordination affect both Government and NGO-led facilities. For example, the Naggalama hospital in Mukono is an NGO-led facility, with responsibility for 12 health centres. However, the staff levels have remained the same and no vehicles have been provided to facilitate its supervisory role. Further, Naggalama has been forced to reduce its user fees in order to make the services more affordable to the poor, and it relies on PAF funding to supplement its operational costs. PAF funds, in turn, are regularly late and this impairs service delivery. Consequently, one supervisor at Naggalama explains:

There is no equity in the delegated responsibility as we need more manpower and logistics to do a good job. We were not prepared to take on this role; they don't seem to have got prepared, as they ought to have

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<sup>115</sup> Focus group discussion, Kabale, January, 2002. Again, Ntungamo is a notable exception. PPA2 observes that there is better monitoring of the facilities, and more dependable drug supplies, despite the abolition of cost sharing.

carried out a baseline survey to establish the needs of an NGO hospital in undertaking more roles...We are complementing government efforts, so government should help us to serve the rural people...

Conditions such as these may, in part, explain reports that many service providers are abrasive to their patients. Increased workloads have also resulted in longer waiting times. Transportation problems continue and most find the costs of hiring taxi services prohibitive. Not surprisingly, there are complaints that the quality of the services has not changed, despite the new administrative structure:

Yes, they have changed the buildings but the services have not changed. The services have remained the same. Pregnant mothers have no midwife to attend to them; there is no laboratory to test blood for malaria; the theatre is there but not operating; the doctor is there but has not exercised his powers...<sup>116</sup>

The only saviour is the bicycle ambulances but even then they are still very few. So far, the HSD has not devised official means of assisting those in critical conditions who need referral. We only refer them to Kabale hospital and in case one fails, there is nothing we can do. They have to find their way out. We would be helping with transportation but there is no ambulance. We have been given an old vehicle that is shared between two health sub districts.<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps, more problematic for the credibility of the programme is the widely held perception that the government has not imposed sufficient checks and balances and that there is a pervasive lack of accountability among health workers. Interviews conducted with members of the Committee of Social Services reveal that the MoH has great difficulty preventing its staff from stealing drugs and using these within their private services. According to PPA2 reports, public patients are then directed to private facilities, which many cannot afford. Furthermore, there are reports that some health workers require bribes in exchange for

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Interview, Chairman, Health Unit Management Committee, Rubaya, Kabale, January 2002.

services. Though these allegations are usually denied, policymakers recognise that the abolition of cost sharing is regarded as a loss to health workers, since these fees are used to provide a boost to their allowances. Without this source of remuneration, improper conduct is more likely.

The *political* question is how to balance prudent and popular policymaking so that the long-term interests of the poor can be served. Health administrators maintain that politicians have limited understanding of the issues, and that their method of decision-making is not necessarily bottom-up. For example, as early as 1987, the Health Policy Review Commission had recommended free education for girls but MPs, who could not understand the correlation between education and health, refused to sanction the bill. This provision was not facilitated until approximately 10 years thereafter, under the UPE.

At the local level, there were also reports of undue political influence in planning. Health officials in Rubaya sub county claim that the political leaders were highly influential in determining where the HSDs should be placed. 'Every MP wanted the HSD in his constituency and, if possible, in his village'. Consequently, HSDs were not appropriately spaced and some are located far from the health units they are meant to supervise.

However, as with the PMA, community members have little influence on policy. Messages are transmitted through local leaders. In Kyampisi Sub County, for example, residents inform their leaders of poor services or disease outbreaks; these leaders then report to the Health Unit Management Committee, who then informs the health unit. In NGO managed areas, there are no HUMCs and therefore, no avenues for the poor to voice their complaints. Researchers note that suggestion boxes are provided but that these are of little benefit to those who are illiterate. In this case, there are practical obstacles to participation. HUMCs

should have been established to facilitate community involvement in planning, to hear and respond to complaints and to ensure accountability in service delivery. However, without access to allowances, these remain non-functional in most places.

## **5.5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- Politics everywhere influences policymaking, sometimes for less than noble ends. The outcome may be inappropriately timed/phased (arguably cost-sharing) or even counterproductive policies (MPs influencing the placement of HSDs; politicians discouraging the payment of tax). Democratic systems may facilitate consultation and debate; however, they may also encourage short-term decision-making in the interests of winning votes. Within non-democracies, opportunities for deliberation are likely to be more restricted. The customary policy response is to recommend transparent decision-making. This is a worthy objective but rarely observed (even by those who recommend it). Relations between the MoH and the executive demonstrate that decision-making and policy outcomes depend on the outcomes of political negotiations. (This is the real stuff of politics) The ability to negotiate depends, in part, on objective criteria such as proven performance record and knowledge of the issues; it can also depend on subjective factors such as the ability to transmit the correct messages and personal command. (Reputedly, these factors have helped the MoH to influence some decisions in its favour). The terms for negotiating are influenced by the political context. They are less predictable where there is a history of political domination and a personalised approach to policymaking.
- Rather than bringing services closer to the poor, effectively and efficiently, poorly monitored and under-resourced decentralised

systems deliver substandard quality and are prone to corruption. The administrative task is to balance the flexibility required for progressive decentralisation with the strong leadership necessary for quality assurance. Politics is also important here for minimising tensions across levels of government and providing authoritative leadership where required.

- Public-private partnerships may be a well-advised economic strategy but these need to be monitored; central standards must be established to secure the interests of the poor.

## 6. POLITICS, PRO-POOR POLICYMAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

More than a decade ago, Thomas and Grindle<sup>118</sup> demonstrated the non-linearity of the policy process. Between policy formulation and implementation, they explained, there are always unanticipated actions and reactions and these produce unintended consequences. Therefore, policymakers need to think strategically: anticipating conflicts and implementing the necessary safeguards, establishing cross-group coalitions, designing flexible alternatives; thus, making prudent *political* choices. This non-linear approach and the significance of politics to policy outcomes are simple to understand intellectually but manifestly difficult to incorporate in planning. Appropriately, political scientists and commentators have always emphasized this 'underworld' of policy. For example, Adam Przeworski<sup>119</sup> highlights the significance of procedural and substantive pacts to political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Jenkins<sup>120</sup> study of the 'political management of structural adjustment in India' reveals that the government (under the then prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao) was able to achieve some progress in its structural adjustment efforts--- despite tremendous elite resistance---principally because of shrewd schemes to quell potential conflicts and accommodate groups rather than an emphasis on transparency. Macdonald<sup>121</sup> observes that this same sort of political dealing was critical for democratic survival in South

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<sup>118</sup> Thomas, J. W. and Grindle, M., 'After the Decision: Implementing Policy Reforms in Developing Countries', in *World Development*, Vol. 18, No. 8, pp. 1163-1181, 1990.

<sup>119</sup> Przeworski, A., *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

<sup>120</sup> Jenkins, R.S. 'Liberal Democracy and the Political Management of Structural Adjustment in India: Conceptual tensions in the good government agenda'. *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 26, pp. 37-48, 1995.

<sup>121</sup> Macdonald, M. 'Power Politics in the New South Africa', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 22, pp. 221-233, 1996.



Africa. Recently, Mick Moore and James Putzel<sup>122</sup> raised the salience of strategic political management for poverty reduction. There is some indication that development agencies are now beginning to recognise that politics must figure in planning,<sup>123</sup> though one could, reasonably, be sceptical about the shape that this 'new inclusion' will take; politics may yet remain the unwelcome partner for an economics driven agenda.

What can politics contribute to planning? Thomas and Grindle provide a useful starting point. Their central thesis is that 'the characteristics of the reform being implemented will largely determine the kind of conflict it engenders, where such reaction is likely to become manifest, and what resources are needed for sustainability'.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, 'the distribution of the costs and benefits of a policy or institutional change, its technical complexity, its administrative intensity, its short or long term impact, and the degree to which it encourages participation determine whether the reaction or response to the initiative will occur primarily in a public or bureaucratic arena'.<sup>125</sup> This type of information facilitates strategic management. Political and economic contexts are important, and intimate knowledge of these is required. However, Thomas and Grindle outline two broad scenarios:

A. Policymakers should expect and plan for reaction in the public arena where:

- I. The costs or burden of the reform will have a direct impact on the public or on politically important groups in society;
- II. Extensive public involvement is required but the benefits are not clear;

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<sup>122</sup> Moore, M. and James Putzel 'Thinking Strategically About Politics and Poverty', IDS Working Paper 101.

<sup>123</sup> Unsworth, S.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas and Grindle, p. 1163.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 1166

III. The full impact/costs of change is immediately visible.<sup>126</sup>

B. Bureaucratic response may be anticipated where:

- I. The costs of the reform have the most impact on government institutions (for example, reorganisation of ministries);
- II. The reform entails significant administrative or technical input;
- III. The reform is to be implemented over a long period.<sup>127</sup>

Bureaucratic resistance is normally less costly than public hostility but in either situation, the skilful policymaker would provide requisite incentives, implement strategies for accommodation, supply the necessary information, build alliances and maintain a strong/authoritative posture where required; these are all features of the politics of policymaking and implementation. Politics in the interest of poverty reduction will require carefully crafted and deliberate actions if policymakers are to secure and maintain broad constituencies of support. Various strands of the literature identify pro-poor objectives and positive political actions. They include:

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 1172

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 1173.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Types of Positive Political Actions Required</b>
Providing incentives for political organisation among the poor (Moore and Putzel)	-Minimising the causes for 'perverse mobilisation', such as, unfulfilled promises or exclusion -Promoting opportunities for organisation to solve community and individual needs
Creating environments in which the poor can build and realise their personal political capabilities. (Moore and Putzel, Dasgupta, Sen, Brock et al, Cornwall, Goetz and Jenkins, 2, Moncrieffe)	-Working to minimise discrimination/adverse norms/perceptions and establishing the rights and legal entitlements that would enable affected groups to defend themselves -Providing ample information/opportunities for education -Facilitating citizen participation in oversight
Building credible and sustainable programmes (Joshi and Moore)	-Ensuring that interventions are characterised by tolerance, predictability, entrenched moral and legal rights, accountability
Building alliances between the poor and non-poor ('positive drivers') (Hossain and Moore)	-Delivering information in such a way that groups understand and support the mutual desirability of poverty reduction
Minimising the costs of horizontal inequalities (Stewart, Ascher, Lonsdale)	-Emphasizing/defending legal and moral rights -Encouraging cross-group accommodation -Promoting fair distribution of benefits, equal access to resources -Special interventions for the most marginalized groups

These types of 'desirable' political actions can help to transform political and institutional contexts. Admittedly, there are many more case examples of 'perverse politics', and these seem to thrive in some of the poorest countries.

## **6.1 HISTORY, POLITICS AND RISK**

We have described a political system with strong pro-poor (though not formally democratic) leadership. There are growing demands for more political space and signs that Uganda will formalize party representation. It is difficult to predict the consequences for poverty reduction and sound

reasons to be cautious for despite the significant gains in peace and political stability, there seems to be a perpetual undercurrent of ethnic and religious tensions, and political wheeling and dealing.<sup>128</sup> The NRM has been equivocal in some critical areas: it has defended offending party members, failed to censure some clear breaches of the law, and patronage and ethnic lineage still figure in some key appointments. All these contradict pronouncements of fairness and inclusion.

The NRM has had some success at promoting women's representation in politics but has largely failed to penetrate the core of gender discrimination, that is, within households and communities. Other forms of discrimination persist and are manifested in relations across and within cultural groups; that is, in horizontal inequalities. Authority and responsibility still seem to translate to 'big man' politics both at the centre and the local levels, though the 'dream' is to help the poorest to take charge of their destinies and to 'shape their lives in accordance with their reflective goals...'.<sup>129</sup> These power relations play out in inadequate 'space' for dissenting voices at the centre, and presidential directives and dictats, where technicians and other policymakers 'stray' from the preferred line. Similarly, at the local levels, they play out in muted opposition; low-level participation among women, even when they are allowed to attend community meetings; exploitation by greedy and seemingly uncontrollable tax collectors and middlemen; feelings of powerlessness on the part of the poor. In Uganda, there often seems to be little synergy between the formal arrangements and the informal norms, which suggests that the anti-poverty agenda is still unpredictable. Formal party representation could easily produce fragmentation; there are challenging constitutional questions ahead.

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<sup>128</sup> For an engaging discussion on political leadership in Africa, see Chabal and Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*.

<sup>129</sup> Quote from P. Dasgupta, *An Inquiry into Well-Being and Destitution*.

## **6.2 POLITICS OF MANAGEMENT**

### **Inter-ministerial dynamics**

Arguably, the conventional relations of power have made bureaucratic dissent relatively containable, despite misgivings about MFPED's stature or the allocation of roles and responsibilities under plans such as the PMA. Conversely, because of these relations of power, government departments do not have equitable representation/cannot make equal claims on MFPED. Commitment to the anti-poverty agenda is perhaps the most important criterion for recognition but much still depends on the personality and command of the ministries' directorate, and on perceptions of the quality of personnel within the ministries.

Various studies conclude that strong policy direction from MFPED has been important for the existing policy successes; however, the ministry's dominance is also producing harmful side effects. The short cut solution, particularly among donors and MFPED, is to bypass agencies and personnel that seem unable to execute the agenda and to establish 'more competent' parallel structures. However, this approach precludes necessary capacity building within government, alienates ministries and officials that should participate, and foments opposition and ill sentiments.

### **Districts and Sub-counties**

This tendency to circumvent the unwilling and incapable extends to other areas of policymaking. For example, policymakers are now proposing to bypass the districts and strengthen the sub counties, which appear to be more responsive to the poor. Such tactics may be immediately helpful but do not deal with the root problems, which are likely to resurface in other areas. Can the government guarantee that

the newly empowered sub counties will not misappropriate resources or renege in other ways in their responsibilities to the poor? One could reasonably expect that sub counties may, increasingly, assume responsibility for development plans and, like the districts, exclude or reinterpret lower level desires and needs. Therefore, the diagnosis and solutions to inappropriate use of authority at the district level are complex and will require more than reallocating responsibilities to the sub counties. The emphasis must be on a long-term plan to build accountability, *ex-ante* and *ex-post* and to foster new perspectives on the obligations/duties of representation.

Providing (*ex-post*) checks and balances (which is itself proving difficult to achieve) is important but not sufficient for accountability. *Ex-ante* accountability stresses deliberation, consultation and providing explanations, particularly where the public does not understand how particular courses of action serve their best interests.<sup>130</sup> These requirements should obtain whether or not officials consider the citizens capable of understanding. (As Ake<sup>131</sup> suggests, the claim that “there is no choice in ignorance” is both seductive and misguided. Low education levels and poverty do not necessarily mean that there will be no concern about or knowledge of the issues.) Goetz and Jenkins<sup>132</sup> suggest that there are other practical measures such as involving citizens directly in monitoring public service institutions. Importantly, policymakers must design such mechanisms strategically in order to ensure that the poorest and hitherto marginalized have a place in monitoring and oversight. Without appropriate safeguards, such accountability mechanisms may

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<sup>130</sup> J. Moncrieffe, *Accountability: Principle, Practice and Implications for a Developing Democracy*, p. 5.

<sup>131</sup> C. Ake, ‘Rethinking African Democracy’.

<sup>132</sup> Goetz, Anne Marie and Rob Jenkins (2), ‘Hybrid Forms of Accountability: Citizen Engagement in Institutions of Public Sector Oversight in India’

well perpetuate class divisions, and add an inequality of accountability to the original imbalance of power.

### **Technicians versus Politicians**

The accountability of technicians to politicians at the local levels may have seemed tactical and in the interests of the poor; however, in many places, political supervision has merely perpetuated the old patterns of patronage and preferential access to resources. The GoU must revisit this and establish relations of mutual/horizontal accountability, with sufficient incentives so that each party monitors the other and has a credible recourse when infractions occur. The policy objective must be to craft formal systems of accountability that supersede the conventional informal obligations, which tend to result in unequal access to benefits and divisions among the poor. As Marilyn Strathern urges, these formal requirements must “have a distinct presence over and above the performance of individuals”.<sup>133</sup>

### **Centre to Local Coordination**

Various commentaries on decentralisation stress the need for strong direction from the centre. Most focus on the government’s role in establishing checks and balances in order to prevent local elite capture. Our study corroborates this. There is sufficient evidence to prove that in the absence of effective controls, local political leaders and administrators can interrupt the flow of resources and undermine the accountability mechanisms that should benefit the poor.

However, strong direction is required to counter other behaviours, including the [mis] use of anti-poverty messages, particularly where they result in short sighted policy making or encourage irresponsible behaviour, such as renegeing on tax payments. Our case studies also

suggest that goals such as participation should not be conceived as solely local level activities. “Empowerment” may require visible demonstrations of inclusive politics at the national level. *Perceptions* are critical for policy acceptance/ownership and for poverty reduction.

Participation is desirable and has significant potential, particularly where policymakers take proper account of the context---including specific understandings of citizenship---and respond appropriately to these. Many attempts at local level participatory development fail to observe these guidelines, resulting in negligible gains in empowerment and inclusion. Empowerment, particularly where local biases exist, is unlikely without significant support from the centre. In the short to long term, the prudent course of action is to help to improve the terms on which the poor will engage. This involves ensuring that the poor are well informed of their rights and entitlements; that they have credible means to defend these rights and entitlements; and that civic education is prioritised, with special emphasis on both reaching the marginalized and informing both poor and non poor of their mutual responsibilities. (The USAID has been supporting civic education programmes in a number of emerging democracies. Blair<sup>134</sup> has assessed these programmes and found that civic education has improved awareness of democratic responsibilities, particularly among the poor and marginalized, and has allowed them to ‘close the knowledge gap’ with elites on a number of programme topics. However, he also acknowledges that where such programmes are not sufficiently inclusive, they may succeed in strengthening elite positions and, inadvertently, widening the existing gap between the poor and non-poor).

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<sup>133</sup> M. Strathern, *From Improvement to Enhancement: An Anthropological Comment on the Audit Culture*, Paper presented at Girton College, Cambridge, 1997.

<sup>134</sup> Blair, H. *Jump-Starting Democracy: Adult Civic Education and Democracy Participation in Three Countries* in *Democratization*, Volume 10, No. 1, 2003, pp. 53-76.



All these are significant government responsibilities. In addition, the centre must ensure that its poverty programmes are credible and transparent. This includes timely disbursement of funds, regular checks of service quality and distribution and visible demonstrations of non-discriminatory accountability in action.

### **6.3 STAGING POLICY RESPONSES**

As with all anti-poverty programmes, the PMA and the HSD's success depends on the extent to which policymakers can influence supportive behaviour both at the centre and in local communities, as opposed to the degree to which the programmes are captured and contorted by contending interests. The chart below describes some of the potential risks to pro-poor policymaking in Uganda, the possible consequences and the corresponding policy guidelines. It is useful to disaggregate the recommended policy responses into short-term and long-term actions or, in other terms, into components that are immediately feasible and those requiring more elaborate political and institutional changes. The political context may make certain actions impractical in the near term. Further, governments---particularly those of poor countries---faced with myriad responsibilities, may simply lack the resources and need to prioritise among equally pressing demands.

<b>POTENTIAL RISKS</b>	<b>POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY</b>	<b>POLICY GUIDELINES</b>
<p><b><u>Historical Legacies</u></b>            -Political/Elite domination            -Deference to Authority            -Low Levels of Local Participation            -Patronage            -Ethnic and Religious divisions            -Disregard for Rights and entitlements (esp. for women)            -Low/No Access to Justice</p>	<p>-Policies built on participation may not produce results in the short to medium term – likely to be dominated by elite interests            -Representative rather than inclusive patterns of participation may prevail, as people defer to authority            -Participatory strategies may be unworkable where there are ingrained divisions            -Without rights and entitlements and access to justice, policies are easily subverted            -Without rights and entitlements, and access to justice, people will likely lack faith in the process and, in turn, resist.</p>	<p>-Important to understand particular notions of citizenship            -Encouraging tolerance, conflict resolution and consensus building will be useful for improving the terms on which people engage            -Literacy programmes are important for improving knowledge of rights and entitlements-            -Implement mechanisms for accountability and defense of rights and entitlements and make visible demonstrations of these at the national level            -Ensure that there is short-term strategy for reaching the poor where participatory methods are likely to fail            -Establish guaranteed pro-poor provisions that are defensible in the courts</p>
<p><b><u>Political</u></b>            -Exclusion of Opposition            -Political Domination</p>	<p>-Lack of Policy Ownership            -Widespread disaffection            -Personalised rather than deliberated policy agenda</p>	<p>-Encourage consensus building and democratic decision making            -Donors to engage with governments in manner that offer clear messages on principles such as democratisation            -Build capacity for negotiation</p>
<p><b><u>Administrative</u></b>            -Discordant Inter-Ministerial Relations            -Inadequate Coordination Across Agencies            -Inadequate Centre-Local Coordination            -Inadequate Agency Capacities            -Low-level monitoring and accountability</p>	<p>-Low quality services            -Poor perceptions of government intent and capacity; subsequently, disengagement            -Waste of resources            -- Poor policy management</p>	<p>-Assure minimum acceptable level of capacity prior to implementation            -Ensure that the best personnel work to improve the resources that exist. Establishing parallel structures may not be prudent; they may also encourage conflict.            -Devise cost effective short term strategies for reaching the poor while building capacities</p>
<p><b><u>Policy Gaps</u></b>            -Land Tenure Arrangements            -Taxation Policy            -Inadequate Information Dissemination            -Monitoring and Accountability</p>	<p>-Exclusion from PMA benefits            -Structural and institutional impediments preclude pro-poor gains            -Lack of knowledge of rights, of programme objectives, and of role in programme compromises policy outcomes at the outset.</p>	<p>-Urgent attention to land reform and tax administration            -Clearer emphasis on the right to information and on the mechanisms for delivering messages. Standards are required here, including adequate monitoring and accountability.            -Monitoring and accountability should not be limited to centrally directed checks and balances; periodic explanations and discussions are helpful, as is including citizens in oversight.</p>



### **Short Term Responses**

In the immediate term, the GoU must ensure that:

- a. the programmes are appropriately designed, with defined and guaranteed mechanisms for reaching the poor;
- b. the programmes are implemented effectively;
- c. there is policy stability so that programmes have time to work;<sup>135</sup>
- d. there are remedial courses of action should the programmes or components of them fail.

With respect to the PMA, for example, this means identifying and addressing the policy loopholes. Here, some of the important objectives are to ensure that the poor has guaranteed access to benefits; define means of representing and catering to diffuse, unorganised interests and not solely to those organised in farmer's forums; enforce generally agreed standards and ensure that contracted service providers provide good quality for money. It is also important to adopt definite positions on land and taxation reform, and to establish credible courses of action.

Programme effectiveness (for both the PMA and HSD) depends on enforcing performance and financial accountability measures, and on ensuring that the poor are involved in oversight. This will require creative policy design and administration, particularly where there are barriers (historical, political, social) to participation. For example, providing incentives to HUMCs and to village units may help with improving accountability for health provision (HUMCs worked in the past are generally well regarded). Additionally, there could be stipulations to gradually include categories of persons (specifically the poorest and less educated) in identifying needs and providing oversight for particular

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<sup>135</sup> Weaver, R. K. and B. A. Rockman, eds. 'Assessing the Effects of Institutions' in *Do Institutions Matter?* Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Washington D.C. 1993,

groups within the community. (This sort of affirmative action policy has been instrumental in increasing women's representation in government) By assisting HUMCs in this way, villagers may become accustomed to acting as agents rather than reacting as mere beneficiaries.

The field reports indicate that there is scant attention to supplying information in a timely manner and through appropriately monitored channels. Usually, there is hurried and haphazard 'sensitisation'. Consequently, people are confused about the programme components and objectives, about their own roles in the process, the performance standards they should expect, and about avenues for redress. This is a seriously underestimated policy and programming gap since information dissemination is an important prerequisite for participation and for building a culture of accountability. In the immediate term, the GoU must refine the process: providing good quality training to those employed to disseminate information, establishing generally approved standards, and implementing effective means of monitoring delivery and outcomes.

For programme stability, it is important to revise the existing administrative structures and to ensure that responsibilities are allocated appropriately in order to build capacities within implementing institutions. Responsibilities must be well defined and attempts made to secure better coordination across the ministries and departments.

### **Longer term Considerations**

However, programme stability will depend on longer-term measures that aim to manage cleavages, empower the dispossessed, build accountability and improve capacities. These are highly political endeavours. The pace of implementation will depend on whether

facilitating conditions exist or can be encouraged, and on the risks to competing objectives and forces.<sup>136</sup> There are no quick solutions.

Depending on the character of the reform, Uganda's move towards multi-party democracy may help (over the long term) with transforming traditional perceptions. However, there are no guarantees. In many places, multiparty systems have unleashed new forms of patronage and methods of suppression. Much depends on the centre's interest in, and ability to, establish a sound foundation. The NRM has the presence and command to steer Uganda towards a viable democracy, though President Museveni's bid to seek another term in office (despite previous promises to the contrary) sets a rather shaky precedent. Presently, the NRM's mettle and commitment to democracy are being seriously tested. There are demands from various parts to include ethnic groups in government; uphold traditional/cultural norms and methods of administration; reform land tenure arrangements; make definite moves to check gender discrimination; pay special attention to circumstances in the North; make fair rather than favoured appointments; and to encourage the type of environment (national and local) in which the poor have the best prospects to improve their capabilities. These are among some of the many and difficult challenges. The underlying issues are complex and how the government responds (and is seen to respond) to these is crucial for the character of Uganda's democracy. For example, including the major cultural group(s) in government may be viewed unfavourably by the smaller and poorly organised groups; land reform will result in new disaffections; a definite gender policy will be viewed as a-cultural and unwise, even among some within government; however, a wavering gender policy may provoke dissent and loss of support from women. Can

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<sup>136</sup> Weaver, R. K. and B. A. Rockman, eds. 'Institutional Reform and Constitutional Design' in *Do Institutions Matter?* Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Washington D.C. 1993, p. 462

the government impose necessary losses on powerful groups in the interest of democracy and poverty reduction? Can it decide on and accommodate the types of inclusions that would serve broad representation while balancing these appropriately with the safeguards required for democratic and policy stability? Will it negotiate successfully and appease the losers? Will it be able and willing to promote and uphold values of fairness, justice and respect for the poor?

Public education programmes are essential. Such programmes should inform on rights and responsibilities; the importance of and tools for conflict resolution; the significance of accountability and the links between participation and accountability. However, these must be accompanied by legal reform in order to ensure *real* access to justice. Further, there should be innovative ways of demonstrating and gradually reinforcing accountability and new norms of public responsibility. For example, Bhatia and Dreze<sup>137</sup> reported that in Lasani village, Rawatmaal panchayat (Rajasthan), the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) convened a 'public hearing' in order to hear complaints and receive feedback on a number of construction projects, which villagers suspected were being operated fraudulently. According to the report, the meeting started with a puppet show, which discussed the abuse of public funds by local leaders. This sparked tremendous interest and people began to recount episodes of manipulation and corruption and to demand explanations and redress. Participants also included lawyers, journalists and activists, who then ensured that revelations were investigated and commitments honoured. Bhatia and Dreze explain that though such hearings may "seem like small victories, their symbolic significance is far-reaching". They are "practical weapons to eradicate corruption at the

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<sup>137</sup> Bhatia, B. and Jean Dreze, 'For Development and Democracy', *Frontline*, March 6, 1998, pp. 102-103.

village level...and a significant step towards the transition from representative to participatory democracy".<sup>138</sup>

Policymakers must adopt a more innovative, comprehensive and long-term approach to participatory development. Almost all successful accounts of local level empowerment report significant efforts to understand and engage with people where they are. Forced communities, whether through women's groups or farmers forums often mask underlying tensions and divisions, and these make collaboration untenable.<sup>139</sup> New talk of facilitating 'space' for participation rephrase and re-present policy advice from practitioners such as the ATD Fourth World, which has long been involved with participatory development and has a strong performance record. The ATD Fourth World stresses that empowerment requires long-term commitment and established relations of trust. While the ATD's close engagement with the poor is more suitable for small-scale and local operations,<sup>140</sup> the principles it advocates, such as the importance of trust, are pertinent at all levels. The centre has a significant role in encouraging faith in the process. This is what Joshi and Moore describe as creating the enabling framework. In Uganda, for example, this means reforming the judiciary and providing effective legal aid. Given the history of partial access and administration of justice, this too is likely to require a long-term/sustained effort.

### **Neoliberalism and decentralisation**

Two issues remain. This paper does not deal sufficiently with policy components and the suitability of the neo-liberal agenda (which will be dealt with separately). However, as many of Uganda's CSOs maintain,

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>139</sup> Cornwall, Making spaces, changing places: situating participation in development, IDS Working Paper 170, October 2002.

<sup>140</sup> J. Moncrieffe, 'Rights-based Programming and Reaching the 'Unreached': Programming Criteria and Case Descriptions. Document prepared for Gender, Partnerships and Participation Section/PD, UNICEF 2000



neoliberal solutions may be attractive but inconsistent with the goal of poverty reduction. Without definite efforts to guarantee provisions for the poor, plans such as the PMA can be used to enrich the progressive while the poor wait for the benefits that may or may not 'trickle-down'. Therefore, the pertinent issues are how to ensure financial viability and programme sustainability while securing a place for the poor and how to stretch plans to properly incorporate the more involved political strategies that are required for reaching and engaging the poor.

Prescriptions for decentralisation are often overly ambitious in their aims and in the timing allowed for results. The technocratic agenda that informs most of these reforms seem to lack knowledge of the history, politics and social relations that support adverse norms of accountability, financial impropriety, substandard service delivery and low levels of public participation. Indeed, by concentrating on superficial objects such as service delivery, the neo-liberal approach to decentralisation (similar to its preoccupation with democratic procedures) avoids the depth of understanding, analysis and substantive policy recommendations that would truly reflect and contribute to poverty reduction. The emphasis on history and politics suggest that decentralisation in the interest of poverty reduction must be properly staged, with calculated efforts to improve the presence and political power of the poor so that they can hold their officials service providers to account. The political and social transformation that is required for empowerment is hardly achieved through feedback mechanisms or rapid participatory appraisals, though these have their place.

One technocratic solution to problems of decentralisation is to quickly re-centralise areas of administration. This may be advised in some areas; strong control from the centre may be needed to prevent waste and stem corruption. However, it is important to guard against

fluctuating between administrative solutions. Many of the arguments against centralisation remain good ones: administration tends to be more cumbersome under central direction; decentralised governments should have more immediate channels to hear from and respond to the poor; citizens should have easier access to their local representatives and more effective means of holding them to account; decentralisation should better facilitate empowerment. Assuming these goals of decentralisation are important and that they are not being met under the existing administrative structures, the prudent course of action is to define, based on the context, the form of relations between the centre and local administration that would best support the objectives the short term. The level of engagement should be flexible, able to mature as conditions change. The nature of the engagement should not merely be administrative (or political to the extent that it eases administration); the centre must be involved in politics for the sake of substantive political and social development, in the interest of stability and in the interests of the poor. Framed in this way, decentralisation is decidedly political and long term; not many can claim to have approached it seriously.

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