



# **IMPACT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS' SCORECARD INITIATIVE 2019 - 2021**

**Strengthening Demand for Effective Public  
Service Delivery and Accountability**



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Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the ACODE Management team and Staff for their contribution.

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
BCC	Budget Call Circular
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CEAPs	Civic Engagement Action Plan
CEM	Civic Engagement Meeting
DEC	District Executive Committee
DGF	Democratic Governance Facility
DLB	District Land Board
DSC	District Service Commission
EAC	East African Community
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FY	Financial Year
IPF	Indicative Planning Figure
IRI	International Republican Institute
LG	Local Government
LGCSCI	Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative
MDA	Ministries, Department and Agencies
MDLF	Multi-District Peer Learning Forums
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
MoLG	Ministry of Local Governments
NDP	National Development Plan
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PS	Permanent Secretary
PSST	Permanent Secretary/Secretary to the Treasury
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UAAU	Urban Authorities Association of Uganda
ULGA	Uganda Local Governments Association

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Booklet presents the impact registered by the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) through the implementation of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI). This impact is noticeable at the International, National, and Local Levels. This impact has been achieved as a result of ACODE's uniqueness and ability to engage Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Governments. The impact is also partly attributable to ACODE's ability to build meaningful partnerships with government institutions, national local government associations, international NGOs, and international development agencies.

ACODE is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda working in East and Southern Africa. ACODE has been ranked in the Global Go to Think Tank Index as the best think tank in Uganda and one of the top think tanks in the world<sup>1</sup>. In Uganda, ACODE works with the Government of Uganda agencies, civil society, and local governments to develop and monitor the implementation of public policies that promote development, growth and good governance guided by the mission of making public policies work for the people.

### 1.1 The Context of Decentralisation in Uganda

Uganda's decentralization journey has been a mixture of successes, challenges and reversals. Since 2009, ACODE with support from DGF and other partners has incrementally implemented (starting with 10 and later expanding to 20, 26 and 35 districts) the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI) as a capacity-building initiative in Uganda. The initial focus was geared towards enhancing political accountability and citizen participation. Several positive impacts have over time been registered including improved debates in district councils, increased monitoring of service delivery by elected leaders, improved relationships between the political and technical leaders and re-election of good performers during the general election cycles of 2011 and 2016.

However, research conducted by ACODE titled: *"A comprehensive Review of Decentralization"* and *"Analysis of Local government financing in FY2019/20"* highlighted five major challenges. First was the glaring waning political support for the implementation of decentralization as had been envisaged in the 1995 Uganda Constitution and Local Governments Act (1997), which was demonstrated by recentralization of local government functions and the creation of numerous other smaller unviable local governance entities. Currently, there are 135 districts, and 10 cities as of July 2020. Second, there is continued weakening of local government structures, systems and processes that cannot effectively deliver on their oversight, legislative, planning and budgeting mandates<sup>2</sup>. Third, there is a diminishing interface between local governments

1 [http://repository.upenn.edu/think\\_tanks/10/](http://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/10/)

2 Mushemeza, E., D., Decentralisation in Uganda: Trends, Achievements, Challenges and Proposals for Consolidation, Kampala: ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No.93, 2019 . Available at:

and the central government line ministry mandated with supervision, monitoring and capacity building which has largely affected the functionality of local governments. Fourth, is inadequate financing of devolved local government functions with the share of the national budget earmarked for the same falling from 18% in FY2012/13 to 12% in FY2018/19 and currently to almost 7% in FY2019/20.

This is compounded by meagre local revenue generation and collection and withholding of resources meant for decentralized functions by central government Ministries, Departments and Agencies in contravention of the law. Lastly, there is a disengaged citizenry with limited participation in and knowledge of local governance processes. All the above show that the political, social, economic, and legal context of decentralisation in Uganda has largely been changing.

The changing context in the implementation of decentralization requires a new focus on systems, structures, processes and citizen agency. Therefore, the LGCSCI interventions have been making attempts to strengthen the existing governance structures, systems and processes at the local government level. This is being done through research focused on governance aspects, capacity building aimed at systems strengthening, advocacy at national and local levels. Creating constructive partnerships to ensure responsiveness, uptake and sustainability of interventions and strong governance systems has been a central feature of the LGCSCI.

There has been a deliberate focus on building citizen agency to ensure effective participation in local governance processes. LGCSCI takes cognizance of the Local Government Performance Assessment conducted in FY2018/19 by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). This assessment largely focuses on the performance of the technical arm of local governs while LGCSCI largely focuses on the performance of elected political leaders. The convergence of these two assessments is that they both identify governance issues and challenges in local governments. LGCSCI specifically picks governance issues from the Local Government Performance Assessment to inform the systems strengthening interventions.

## **1.2 The Problem**

The overall problem is that while Uganda has been hailed for outstanding progress in implementing democratic decentralization in Africa for over three decades; the country has witnessed significant reversals. At the national level, there is a waning commitment to decentralization largely characterized by recentralization of key local government functions, inadequate financing of local governments and creation of many unviable local government units (districts and urban authorities). At the local government level, governance structures are largely ineffective in their representation, legislative, planning, budgeting, accountability and oversight roles. On the other hand, citizens have remained largely disengaged with limited participation, only able to engage in largely

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<https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS93.pdf>

hushed voices. Consequently, this has led to democratic governance deficits characterized by weak systems, structures and processes. These issues have been articulated by local governments, the private sector actors, civil society organizations, and citizen groups. ACODE's research has equally captured these concerns (see [http://www.acode-u.org/Files/Publications/PRS\\_75.pdf](http://www.acode-u.org/Files/Publications/PRS_75.pdf) and [http://www.acode-u.org/Files/Publications/PRS\\_70.pdf](http://www.acode-u.org/Files/Publications/PRS_70.pdf)). The main causal and contributory factors for this trend includes: limited citizen civic awareness and lack of information, weak local governance structures, and limited responsiveness of the central government. The basis for specifically selecting the 35 districts of intervention was informed by scores in the national performance assessment, national/regional representation, the timing of coming into existence (old and new districts), pre-existing networks and partnerships. This project was expected to result in a renewed commitment to decentralization and more efficient and responsive national and local governments systems, structures and processes.

### **1.3 Geographic Coverage of the LGCSCI**

The project has a national geographical coverage of 35 districts and 20 Municipalities spread around the country. The districts include: Agago, Amuria, Amuru, Apac, Arua, Bududa, Buliisa, Hoima, Gulu, Jinja, Kanungu, Kabarole, Kaliro, Kamuli, Lira, Lwengo, Luwero, Masindi, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto, Moyo, Mpigi, Mukono, Nakapiripirit, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Nwoya, Rukungiri, Sheema, Soroti, Tororo, Kabale, Kasese, Wakiso, The 20 municipalities include: Hoima, Gulu, Jinja, Fortportal, Kamuli, Lira, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto, Mukono, Ntungamo, Rukungiri, Sheema, Tororo, Kabale, Kasese, Wakiso, Arua, Apac and Masindi

### **1.4 The Intervention: The Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI)**

LGCSCI is a social accountability initiative that enables citizens to demand excellence from their local governments and enables local governments to respond effectively and efficiently to those demands. The initiative is implemented in 35 districts of Uganda, by ACODE in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA) and Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU). Through this initiative, it is envisaged that local governance can be improved by complementing the current supply-side of democracy interventions from the government with demand-side solutions. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen the weak political accountability mechanisms between the citizens and their elected local leaders that prevent citizens from receiving efficient services. The interventions include annual assessments; policy research and advocacy, capacity building for political and technical leaders at the district level, peer to peer learning among local governments, civic engagement meetings at the local government level as well as strategic meetings and engagements with key stakeholders.

By 2021, the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative (LGCSCI) had been implemented for eleven years now (since 2009). The implementation of the initiative has been guided by an Expert Task Group that is composed of

stakeholders from; academia, Ministry of Local Government officials, Members of Parliament, Local Government leaders, Development partners, ULGA, UAAU and CSOs. The main function of the expert task group is to provide strategic guidance to the Initiative. The project is implemented from a perspective of a demand-side model of monitoring and accountability, with three major groups of actors. The first group, which has been the primary focus of the project since inception to date, is the district council. Individually and collectively, the district council is the pressure point that is jolted into demanding accountability from the central government. The second group are the citizens/ electorate who are actively involved in monitoring and demanding better performance from mandated political and administrative institutions and leaders. The third category of actors is comprised of civil society, political parties, and the media. These actors operate in the space between citizens on one hand and political and administrative leaders on the other hand. This is implemented through different strategies including:

- a. **Research and Analysis:** This project's public policy research and analysis create new knowledge and innovative tools for local governance to support Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Local Governments to expand the range of policy choices to confront challenging and sometimes controversial public policy problems. This policy research includes:
  - **The Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment:** A CODE's theory of change posits that by undertaking and availing timely evidence-based research on relevant policies, national governments and policy makers will utilise this research to improve policy-making processes. A CODE under the Local Government Council Scorecard has undertaken several research studies to influence the narratives of the decentralisation policy.
  - **Issue-Based Research:** This Issue-Based Policy Research focuses on specific advocacy issues under the project. This has mainly focused on Local Government Financing among other things.
  - **Research on Emerging Issues:** This kind of research looks at the unanticipated issues that emerge and affect the functionality of local governments. This research is intended to help understand the nature of the problem at hand and provide appropriate recommendations on how it should be handled. COVID-19 is one such issue.
- b. **Capacity Building:** Capacity Building for LGs related to mandated roles and responsibilities is inherent in the scorecard itself (even without any training). This is due to the chosen scorecard methodology i.e. assessing LCs roles and responsibilities as described in national laws. Also, there are other targeted trainings for standing committees of Councils; District Executive Committee; District Land Boards; District Service Commission; and Local Government Public Accounts Committee among others. This capacity building is usually informed by research (Local Government Scorecard Assessment Reports). Capacity building interventions also include: providing customised Diaries to Elected leaders at the District – the Councillors' Diary; providing reference materials; conducting multi-district peer learning forums; undertaking conflict

resolution clinics in targeted districts; conducting district scorecard inception and dissemination meetings and radio talkshows among others.

- c. **Civic Engagement:** This done through Civic Engagement Meetings (CEMs) conducted at the parish level in the targeted local governments. The CEMs culminate into Civic Engagement Action Plans (CEAPs) –which are developed by members of the community with strategies to constructively engage elected leaders and local government authorities. In each sub-county, the research teams conduct at least two CEMs; one in a rural area and another in an urban or peri-urban area. Participants are drawn from members of the community; with deliberate attempts to ensure participation of youth, women, Persons Living with Disability (PLWDs) and older persons. The meetings also target area councillors representing the targeted sub-counties in a district, youth, older persons, and PLWD councillors at the district, as well as LCIII and LCI councillors. Each meeting lasts an average of 2 hours and brings together 50-70 strategically selected participants. The LGCSCI researchers that facilitate these CEMs are usually cognisant of voter bias during such discussions. Such platforms also provide a civic education opportunity where communities are educated about: their roles and responsibilities; roles of their leaders and actions they can take to demand better services in their area through CEAP strategies like writing letters, writing petitions, attending community meetings, making call-ins on radio talk-shows or sending messages to their leaders.
- d. **Outreach and Policy Advocacy:** This project strategy focuses on the effectiveness of the LGCSCI in influencing both local and national level policy issues. The LGCSCI project envisaged engaging policy outreach and policy advocacy activities with relevant Ministries, Departments, Agencies; Local Governments and Development Partners to influence policies towards effective public service delivery in local governments. Policy Advocacy has been done through the dissemination of policy research findings to targeted audiences; strategic meetings with key stakeholders especially Ministries, Departments and Agencies; publishing of policy briefs and memorandums on accessible internet platforms, conducting policy dialogues and conferences with targeted stakeholders; use of media (including online-media; print media; electronic media; and social media) and partnerships with key stakeholders including; Ministries of Local Government and Finance, Planning and Economic Development; Uganda Local Governments' Association and Urban Authorities Association of Uganda; among others. ACODE also launched the Local Governance Briefer which continues to generate alternative policy ideas for policy makers. This Briefer also triggers policy debates that contribute to effective implementation of the Decentralization Policy across Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Local Governments. ACODE in partnership with ULGA also started a Local Governance Parliamentary Forum (LGPF), which is constituted by interested Members of Parliament and Leaders drawn from Local Governments as a forum to bridge the communication gap between national and local governments.

## 1.5 Interventions in Pictures

### 1.5.1 Research and analysis

Figure 1: Research Products under the LGCSCI



Figure 2: Board member (Dr. Josephine Odera in blue) participants in the launch of ACODE's book on Local Governments in Uganda



### 1.5.2 Capacity building in Pictures

Figure 3: Peer-to-Peer Learning Event between Nwoya and Kabarole Districts



*Figure 4: Members of Arua District Council after training on Council Roles and Responsibilities*



*Figure 5: Training Members of Statutory Bodies in Hoima District Local Government*



Figure 6: Training of Members of Statutory Bodies in Mbarara District Local Government



Figure 7: Community Engagement in Mpungu Sub-County Kanungu District



### 1.5.3 Policy Advocacy

**Figure 8:** Left to Right: Hon. Jenipher Namuyangu (former Minister of State for Local Government), Hon. Jacob Oulanya (Former Deputy Speaker of Parliament), Dr. Arthur Bainomugisha (ED ACODE) and Gertrude Rose Gamwera (Secretary General, ULGA)



**Figure 9:** Minister of Local Government, Hon. Raphael Magyezi, giving remarks at the launch of the LG Councils Scorecard Report for FY 2018-19



Figure 10: Dr. Arthur Bainomugisha, ED ACODE giving remarks at the launch of the LG Scorecard Report



Figure 11: The Permanent Secretary MoLG, Ben Kumumanya presenting an award to the Chairperson of Arua DLG for improvement in Performance. Looking on is Ms Gertrude Gamwera, the Secretary General ULGA



Figure 12: Best Performing LG Leaders in a group photo



Figure 13: Participants at the launch of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Report FY 2018/19



## 2.0. IMPACT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS SCORECARD INITIATIVE

Over 10 years of implementation of LGCSCI, there is awesome evidence that it has had a substantive impact at the international, national, local government, and community levels as well as at the institutional level. The highlights of these impacts include among others;

- a. the recognition of the scorecard as best practice in promoting participatory democracy;
- b. the contribution of the scorecard in the academic discourse on the theme of decentralisation;
- c. the adoption of scorecard by other nations in the East African Region;
- d. the increased interest in local government issues at the national level;
- e. elevation of the Local Government to a sector level;
- f. policy and legal reforms;
- g. improved performance of local government leaders;
- h. improved quality of service delivery among others.

### 2.1. At the International Level

#### *2.1.1 The Scorecard recognized as best practice.*

The scorecard has been credited by International Republican Institute (IRI) as an international best practice in fostering local democratic governance. This is highlighted in IRI's publication, for best practice in democratic governance in Africa<sup>3</sup>. In recognizing LGCSCI, IRI observed that the initiative affords citizens an outlet to express their experience with local government officials as well as track specific performance indicators, holding officials accountable for their performance while providing input for the way forward<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Strategic meeting with the President and Chief Minister Sierra Leone to promote Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative in West Africa**

On 21-27th November 2019, ACODE met with President Julius Maada Bio and Prime Minister Prof. David Francis to establish possibilities of introducing the Local Government Councils Scorecard to Sierra Leone. Just like in Uganda, decentralisation was found to be key in governance and service delivery in Sierra Leone. The Decentralisation Secretariat of Sierra Leone reported that they were carrying out assessments of technical staff in the government. However, their assessment was not as detailed and comprehensive as what ACODE was doing. The meeting agreed that a Quadruple Partnership between ACODE, a credible civil society organization in Sierra Leone, the Chief Minister's Office, and the Ministry of Local Government should be signed. ACODE shared with the Chief

3 International Republican Institute (2013). Best Practices in Democratic Governance in Africa. 2013 International Republican Institute.

4 Ibid. pg 7-8.

Minister a Model MoU around which a Quadruple partnership could be crafted. Prof. David Francis also gave the ACODE team his commitment to continue serving on the Board of Trustees of ACODE and to continue promoting ACODE in West Africa.

*Figure 14: Executive Director and Director of Research of ACODE and with the President of Sierra Leone*



### 2.1.2 Academic Discourse

At the international level, LGCSCI has impacted the academic discourse on local governance and decentralisation through the generation of new knowledge<sup>5</sup>.

5 Emily Comfort Maratho (2017) Local Governments and Primary Education in Uganda Vol 48 (2).

Within the eleven years of implementation of the initiative, key papers have been published on local governance and democracy: such as i) Local Governments in Uganda: Democracy, Accountability and Civic Engagement.; ii) Decentralisation in Uganda: Trends, Achievements, Challenges and Proposals for Consolidation, and iii) Financing Local Governments in Uganda. These publications have revealed new realities in local governance and democracy and have been cited by major academics, research institutions, and several scholars. The LGCSCI has attracted created a lot of interest among academicians both local and foreign about issues of local governments; political accountability; social accountability; local democracy; citizen engagement; and citizen participation among others. The LGCSCI has therefore provided insights and very important lessons for scale that have been widely studied. For instance, Guy Grossman, Kristin Michelitch and Carlo Prato (December 2020) cited the scorecard in their work, *The Effect of Sustained Transparency on Electoral Accountability*. Innovation for Poverty Action (IPA) also cited the scorecard assessment in their work, *Strengthening Local Political Accountability in Uganda*. Further, Ana Garcia-Hernandez, Guy Grossman and Kristin Michelitch (August 2018) cited the scorecard in their work; *Gender, Networks, and Politician Performance: Evidence from 50 Ugandan Subnational Governments with Women's Reserved Seats*. Some of the academic or journal papers that have been inspired by the LGCSCI can be accessed on:

- Bainomugisha, A., Cunningham, K., Tamale, L. M., & Muhwezi, W. W. (2019). LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN UGANDA: Democracy, Accountability and Civic Engagement. Adonis & Abbey Publishers. Retrieved from [https://www.adonis-abbey.com/book\\_detail.php?bookid=248](https://www.adonis-abbey.com/book_detail.php?bookid=248)
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- Garcia-Hernandez, A., Grossman, G., & Michelitch, K. (2018). Gender, Networks, and Politician Performance: Evidence from 50 Ugandan Subnational Governments with Women's Reserved Seats . Retrieved from: [https://www.vanderbilt.edu/csdi/research/WP3\\_18\\_final.pdf](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/csdi/research/WP3_18_final.pdf)
- Kyohairwe, S., (2014). Local democracy and public accountability in Uganda: The need for organisational learning. July 2014, Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance. DOI: 10.5130/cjlg.v0i0.4064. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276738611\\_Local\\_democracy\\_and\\_public\\_accountability\\_in\\_Uganda\\_The\\_need\\_for\\_organisational\\_learning](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276738611_Local_democracy_and_public_accountability_in_Uganda_The_need_for_organisational_learning)

The Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative has become so novel and attracted academic and social development workers alike to study its achievements, lessons and contribution to local governments. The above academic articles in journals and textbooks profile the work under the project demonstrates how the scorecard has been able to enthuse the generation of new knowledge in local governance.

### 2.1.3 International Libraries

Besides the numerous citations that ACODE's publications under LGCSCI have received, these have also been uploaded on renowned international online libraries such as African Portal<sup>6</sup> and US Library of Congress and Columbia Library, among others. These are available on the following links:

- US Library of Congress available at <https://catalog.loc.gov/>
- Africa Portal Library. Available on this link: <https://www.africaportal.org/content-partners/advocates-coalition-for-development-and-environment-acode/>
- The Land Portal. Available on this link: <https://landportal.org/organization/advocates-coalition-development-and-environment>
- Columbia University Library. Available on this link: [https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog?datasource=catalog&f%5B-format%5D%5B%5D=FOIA+Document&q=ACODE&search=true&search\\_field=all\\_fields](https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog?datasource=catalog&f%5B-format%5D%5B%5D=FOIA+Document&q=ACODE&search=true&search_field=all_fields)
- Decentralisation; Trends, Achievements and the Way-forward for Local Governments in Uganda: Conference Report. Columbia International Affairs Online. <https://ciaonet.org/record/57457?search=1>
- Civic Engagement : Activating the potentials of local governance in Uganda. <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/12829613>

## 2.2 At the National Level

### 2.2.1 The Impact of the Study on the Performance of the COVID-19 District Task Forces

#### Background

On March 11, 2020 Corona virus (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World

<sup>6</sup> See details at [https://www.africaportal.org/publications/?content\\_partners=advocates-coalition-for-development-and-environment-acode](https://www.africaportal.org/publications/?content_partners=advocates-coalition-for-development-and-environment-acode)

Health Organization (WHO). As a strategy to fight the pandemic, the government of Uganda set up task forces both at national and local government levels. At the national level, the national task force was headed by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), while at the local government level, the district task force (DTF) was headed by the Resident District Commissioner (RDC). However, there were concerns about the leadership, membership and performance of the COVID-19 District Task Forces. There were also stakeholder concerns about inadequate financing of local government structures in response to COVID-19. Other concerns related to adherence to the disaster response policy, preparedness of local governments, provision of other public services and observance of human rights issues among others. It is against this background that ACODE with support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) conducted a study to assess the performance of the COVID-19 DTFs.

### The Intervention by ACODE

ACODE undertook a study on the *Performance of COVID-19 District Task Forces (DTFs)* between September to November 2020 and it was published on December 21, 2020. ACODE also published a *Policy Brief from this Study highlighting the key findings and recommendations*<sup>7</sup>. The specific objectives of this study were: a) To assess the level of effectiveness, efficiency and functionality of the district task forces; b) To explain the role of central government support to district task forces and identify success stories for replication; c) To establish the level of participation of civil society organizations in the activities of the district task forces; and d) To provide appropriate policy recommendations for building resilient, accountable and effective disaster response structures at the local government levels. To influence government policy towards response to COVID19, the report which was widely disseminated to key stakeholders including; Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Ministry of Health (MoH), Uganda Local Government Association (ULGA), and the National Scientific Advisory Committee on COVID-19. ACODE held a strategic meeting with the Permanent Secretary and the Minister of Local Government to share the findings of the report. The findings of this study were also widely disseminated in the local newspapers including

- a. The New Vision
- b. The Daily Monitor. See <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/70-have-no-access-to-covid-services-report-3271572>
- c. The Observer. See <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/68510-covid-19-report-rates-govt-interventions>

### The outcome

In July 2021, The Government of Uganda released more funds to boost COVID-19 Task Forces in Districts, Cities and Municipalities in the battle against COVID-19. The Minister of Local Government, Hon. Raphael Magyezi revealed that each District and City was allocated UGX 150 million and each Municipality was allocated UGX 100 million. Each Village Health Team (VHT) will be paid UGX 300,000 as payment for the period of July-September 2021. While each

7 Available here <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PBP55.pdf>

village committee would be paid UGX 100,000<sup>8</sup>. This outcome is in line with the recommendations that ACODE made in the study on the Performance of the COVID-19 District Task Forces requiring the central government to further support the Local Government Structures to be able to effectively respond to the containment of the spread of COVID-19.

Figure 15: Exerpts of some of the Findings in the Report

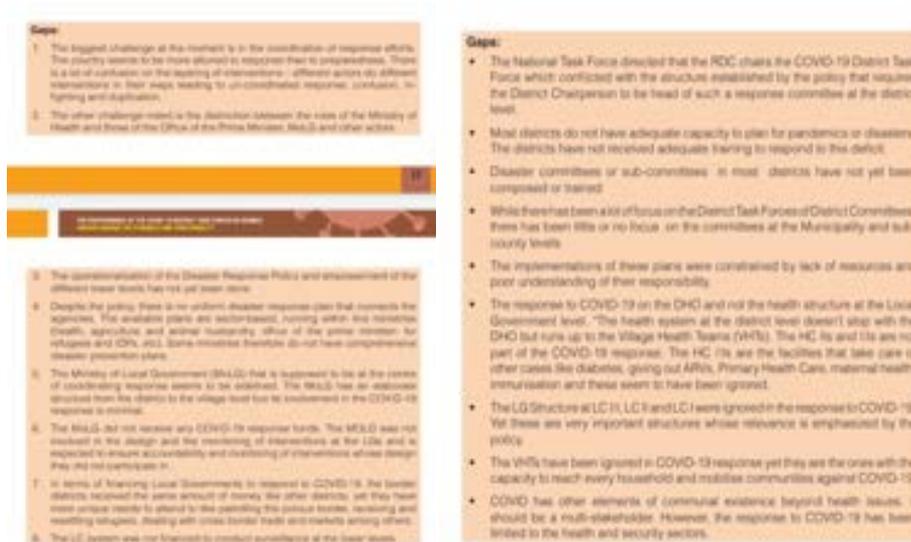
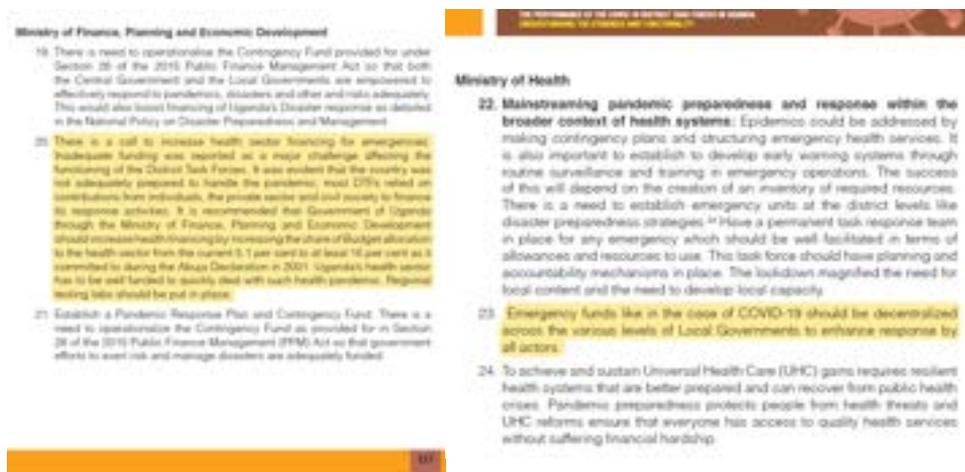


Figure 16: Some of the recommendations made in the report on the performance of the COVID-19 District Task Forces advocating for funding for DTFs



8 <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-releases-funds-for-covid-fight-in-districts-3470020>

*Figure 17: A Team from ACODE after a Dissemination Meeting with the Minister of Local Government (in a yellow necktie)*



*Figure 18: The Minister of Local Government, Ho. Raphael Magyezi, in a yellow tie receiving a copy of the District COVID-19 Task Forces Performance Report from the Executive Director of ACODE, Dr. Arthur Bainomugisha*



Figure 19: Print Media Reports on the Study



2.2.2 Increased interest by stakeholders in Local Government issues (Creation of the local government sector).

At the national level, there used to be limited prioritisation of the local governments. The Local governments were part of the Public Administration Sector. This implied that priorities of the sector took an upper hand while those for the local governments were secondary given that there were many other interests. As a result, the local governments faced operational challenges like funding, capacity gaps. These challenges had impacted the capacities of local governments to deliver on their mandates. ACODE has to date consistently carried out advocacy for prioritization of the needs of local governments through policy dialogues, conferences, policy briefs and policy memos and strategic meetings with key Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and Local Government

Associations to raise policy and administrative concerns for local governments. In 2019, ACODE conducted two groundbreaking studies on; Local Government Financing; and Implementation of the decentralization policy in Uganda since its inception (ref as a footnote perhaps). These studies have generated substantive interest by key stakeholders in the issues of local governance. Prominent among the issues flagged-up by ACODE in the different advocacy engagements has been the issues of Local Government Financing. Consequently, in 2019, the Ministry of Local Government was elevated to a sector level.

### *2.2.3 Financing for local governments*

Funding from central government to local governments in Uganda had always been inadequate. Local governments tend to be heavily dependent on central government transfers for revenue [over 95 per cent]. The low levels of internal revenue generation – which accounts for less than 5 per cent of the district budgets – are partly because of the low capacity of revenue generation by local governments.

In several Local Government Council Scorecard Assessments conducted by ACODE since 2009, inadequate local government financing has been one of the sticky policy issues emerging from the findings. There have been similar complaints of inadequate funding for local governments mainly from the Ministry of Local Government, Local Governance Finance Commission (LGFC) and the Local Government's leaders across the country. In 2016, the Office of Auditor General (OAG) conducted an audit on local government financing. The findings of the audit demonstrated that local governments were inadequately funded and unable to implement all devolved functions and mandates. However, there was no information to show where additional funding for local governments would come from given that the budget did not have a wiggle-room for appropriate re-allocation of funds to the local governments for them to meet their funding needs. It is on that basis that ACODE undertook a *study to analyze the proposed FY 2019/20 budget with a view of identifying resources within the budget that should be re-allocated to Local governments or rationalized*<sup>9</sup>. The study found out that UGX 1.006 trillion was being held by MDAs which is inconsistent with the Local Governments Act. It was also noted that the MDAs were planning to use this money to implement activities or projects which were under the mandate of the Local Governments.

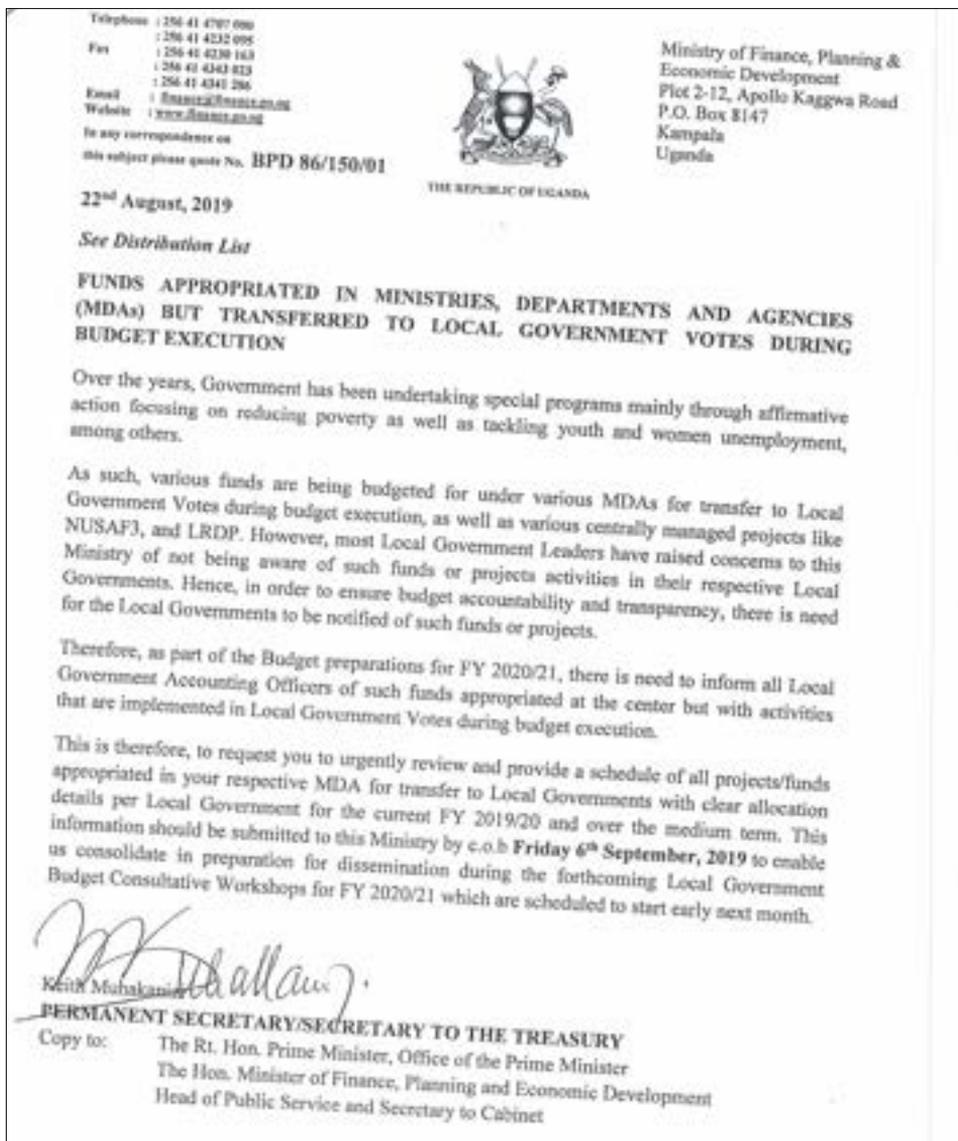
On August 13, ACODE in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Governance and Accountability, Participation and Performance (GAPP) Program held the first National Conference on Decentralisation, in Kampala where the findings of the above study were presented. The findings of these studies were further shared with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), LGFC, Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA) through strategic meetings held with leaders of these entities. The findings were also presented to Members of Parliament

<sup>9</sup> Ggoobi, R., and Lukwago. D., Financing Local Governments in Uganda: An analysis of Proposed National Budget FY 2019/20 and Proposals for Re-allocation. Kampala: ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No. 92, 2019. <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS92.pdf>

who sit on the Local Government and Public Service and Budget Committees of Parliament, CSOs and the private sector. ACODE also shared widely the results of these studies in both electronic and print media. This resulted in increased media coverage of the findings through newspaper stories, press dialogues, and talk-shows which generated public debate about the subject.

Consequently, on 22nd August 2019, the Secretary to the Treasury and Permanent Secretary of MoFPED, Keith Muhakanizi wrote a letter (*ref: PBD/86/150/01*) requesting respective MDAs to review and provide a schedule of all projects and funds appropriated to them for transfer to Local Governments with clear details per local government for the current FY 2019/20 and over the medium term. In the same letter, MDAs were asked to provide information to Local Governments on all the appropriated funds to MDAs whose budget execution for FY 2020/21 will take place in Local Governments. This information as the letter indicates was shared in Budget Consultative Workshops for FY 2020/2021 to enable the MOFPED to consolidate information on the appropriations to MDAs and be able to inform accounting officers in local governments of the existence of such funds so that they can be included in their district budgets for FY 2020/2021 as indicated in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Communication from PSST to MDAs over funds for Local Governments appropriated to MDAs



Further, in the first Budget Call Circular (BCC1)<sup>10</sup> paragraph 38 as indicated in figure 21, the permanent secretary MoFPED and the Secretary to Treasury informed Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs) that all funds meant for services under Local Governments should have these funds directly appropriated to the beneficiary local governments.

<sup>10</sup> Available at <https://budget.go.ug/sites/default/files/SUBMISSION%20OF%20THE%20FIRST%20BUDGET%20CALL%20CIRCULAR%20FOR%20FY%202020-2021%281%29.pdf>

Figure 21: Section of 1st Budget Call Circular that shows policy Direction for MDAs to Appropriate Funds meant for LLGs to the Beneficiary LGs

remitted to the Consolidated Fund but returned to the Local Governments in its entirety. Therefore, all Accounting Officers are reminded to ensure that in FY 2020/2021, all locally raised revenues will be remitted to the Consolidated Fund for appropriation by Parliament.

38. With regard to funds appropriated at the Center but meant for services under the Local Governments e.g., NUSAF III, Uganda Road Fund, Luwero-Rwenzori Development Program etc, transfers will be done directly by this Ministry. I am engaging the Sectors (Office of the Prime Minister and Sectors of Agriculture, Education, Health, Water and Environment, Works and Transport and Social Development) and Parliament on this Policy decision to streamline and have these funds appropriated directly under the respective beneficiary Local Governments. All Accounting Officers of affected Central Government Votes are therefore asked to take this into consideration to avoid incurring further administrative overheads, transfer challenges and implementation delays by the Local Government Votes.

Also in the 2nd Budget Call Circular (BCC2)<sup>11</sup>, the Permanent Secretary, MoFPED instructed all funds held by MDAs but for Local Governments must be appropriated to their respective votes as shown in paragraph 42.

Figure 22: Budget Call Circular 2 Showing an instruction to appropriate funds to Respective Local Votes

**Funds appropriated under Central Government Votes but transferred to Local Governments**

42. All funds must be appropriated for in the respective Votes by Parliament for implementation. Any Central Government Vote that does not submit the Local Government IPFs to this Ministry by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020, will not be allowed to

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send funds to the Local Governments for approval by their Local Government Councils in form of Other Government Transfers. The concerned Central Government Votes will be held responsible for such activities in the Local Governments by spending the funds at their Vote level.

According to the Ministerial Policy Statement, Financial Year 2020/21 for the MoLG, the Committee for Local Government and Public Service recommended that; (a) Government ensures that the identified funds are directly channeled to the local government Votes for FY 2020/2021 onward for efficiency and effectiveness of implementing government programmes attainment of value for money and

11 Available at: <https://budget.go.ug/sites/default/files/THE%20SECOND%20BCC%20ON%20FINALISATION%20OF%20DETAILED%20BUDGET%20ESTIMATES%202020-2021.pdf>

equity in LGs. The Ministerial Policy Statement for MoLG also notes that the Ministry has also started consultations with the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development and other MDAs on this matter<sup>12</sup>. Subsequently, ACODE has been conducting follow-up studies on an annual basis to establish how the respective MDAs have responded to this policy direction from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

#### 2.2.4 Timely fiscal releases to LGs

Section 14(2) and (3) of the Public Finance Management, (PFM) Regulations, 2016 requires all central government grants (conditional and unconditional) from MoFPED to be released by the 10th day of the beginning month of a quarter and development grants by the 3rd quarter. A review of the non-wage recurrent and development releases by MoFPED to LGs, revealed that whereas the PFM Act 2015 requires all grants to be released by the 10th day of the beginning month of a quarter, MoFPED had in some instances not fulfilled that requirement<sup>13</sup>. The longest delay of 6 weeks was noted in the first quarter and an average delay which ranged between 3 and 4 weeks in the second to fourth quarters. MoFPED attributed the delays to the late submission of release advice by the sector ministries before funds are released to LGs. Failure to release funds within the stipulated time is known to affect timely implementation of planned activities by LGs which sometimes results in unspent balances that are later returned to the consolidated fund. Delayed release of funds impacts service delivery within the LGs, particularly concerning development grant-funded activities.

Under LGCSCI, ACODE (in partnership with ULGA) have sought to strengthen policy dialogue with the MoFPED in respect to central government transfers to local governments. Through policy memos, strategic meetings and presentation of research findings on budget transparency, ACODE and partners like, ODI, CSBAG and ULGA have consistently engaged MoFPED in different platforms to ensure timely release of funds to local governments.

Consequently, responding to Advocacy efforts from ACODE, ULGA, and other stakeholders, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in the Budget Execution Circular FY 2019/2020 directed that *“the quarterly release circular shall be issued by the 10th day of the first month of each quarter latest”*<sup>14</sup>. The circular further notes that *“In the FY 2019/2020, all Local Government Development Grants and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) funds shall continue to be released 100% by Quarter three (Q3) to eliminate Challenges of unspent balances by the end of the fourth quarter”*<sup>15</sup>.

12 MoLG (2020). Ministerial Policy Statement, Financial Year 2020/21. Ministry of Local Government, March 2020. Kampala

13 OAG (2016) Financing of Local Governments in Uganda through Central Government Grants and Local Government Revenues. See <http://www.oag.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Financing-of-Local-Governments-in-Uganda.pdf>

14 See the Budget Execution Circular FY 2019/2020. P4. Available at: <https://budget.go.ug/sites/default/files/BUDGET%20EXECUTION%20CIRCULAR%20FOR%20FY%202019-2020.pdf>.

15 Ibid. p5.

### *2.2.5 Relaxation of policy on unspent balance*

The Auditor General's audit report for the FY2018/2019 indicated that the government set aside UGX31b for the construction of 48 seed secondary schools in 48 local governments out of which UGX 28b was released but only UGX 15b was spent, and Shs13b returned to the Consolidated Fund. In the same breadth, UGX 17b was budgeted for upgrading 37 health centre IIs to health centre IIIs in 30 local governments. Though the full amount was released, only UGX 7b was spent and UGX 10b sent back to the Consolidated Fund. This is one of the many examples of such scenarios in Local Governments. The local government accounting officers blamed this on the protracted procurements and administrative reviews occasioned by PPDA. A review of local government audits shows that poor/under absorption of funds is a cross-cutting issue.

The Public Finance Management Act, 2015 provides that all unspent balances be sent back to the Consolidated Fund as of 30th June. However, local governments face wide-ranging challenges that limit their abilities to absorb funds such as the highly bureaucratic procurement process and delay in remittance from the centre. ACODE has consistently advocated for local governments to retain the unspent balances in the circumstance that the low absorption is a result of policy gaps. Now Local Governments retain unspent balances for up to 3 months from the lapse of the financial year.

### *2.2.6 Moratorium on the creation of new districts*

At the time of independence on October 9, 1962, Uganda had four kingdoms, Buganda, Bunyoro, Tooro, and Ankole. Other areas had a district status; Acholi, Lango, Bombo, Bugisu, Bukedi, Busoga, Karamoja, Kigezi, Madi, Masaka, Mpigi, Mubende, Sebei, Teso and West Nile. By 1980, Uganda had 33 districts named after major towns. According to Section 7(10) and Section 95 of the Local Governments Act, the government of Uganda has been creating districts almost every financial year with the highest creation being in 2005 where 22 districts were formed. Just last year in June, parliament created seven new 'cities' of Arua, Gulu, Mbale, Jinja, Masaka, Mbarara, and Fort Portal. This brought the total number of districts and regional cities to 146 with 2,184 sub-counties<sup>16</sup>. Also, since 2020, there have been several requests submitted to the Ministry of Local Government from districts such as Kitgum, Bududa, Agago, Mukono and Nwoya, among others requesting for the creation of more Local Governments and Administrative Units.

Although the constitution article 176 (2) (d) states that "there shall be established for each local government unit a sound financial base with reliable sources of revenue" One of the major challenges of Local Governments is inadequate financing. A Memo written by ACODE to the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) noted that Local Governments have been grappling with inadequate funding of the devolved functions through ceilings on the wage bill, limited funds for service delivery, political monitoring, technical inspection, planning, and budgeting, among others. It has also been established that the nominal amount

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ec.or.ug/electoral-commission-statistics>

of money sent to local governments has been increasing over time, but this is not commensurate to the devolved roles and functions<sup>17</sup>. For instance, in a Ministerial Policy Statement by the MoLG, it was noted that there is a lack of critical staff in the LGs, to deliver decentralised services largely attributed to inadequate wage bill for Staff Recruitment. Currently, the average staffing levels stand at 56% and 51% for District and Municipal Councils respectively. The Ministry also noted that it had funding pressures for 364 New Sub-counties, the backlog that was gazetted to be effective by 2017/18. The government had not provided UGX 29,801,886,444 required for operationalization of 364 Sub-Counties. Also, the Government lacked UGX 80,687,601,732 for 352 New Town-Council, the backlog of new Town-Councils that were gazetted to be effective by 2017/18<sup>18</sup>.

ACODE conducted and disseminated several studies to the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) and Local Government Finance Commission (LGFC). These studies included: Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment 2014/2015: Unlocking Potentials and Amplifying Voices (conducted in 2015)<sup>19</sup>; Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment 2016/2017: Civic Engagement: Activating the Potentials of Local Governance in Uganda” and conducted in 2017<sup>20</sup> and “Decentralisation in Uganda: Trends Achievements, Challenges and Proposals for Consolidation”<sup>21</sup> conducted in 2019 among others. All these studies recommended that the “Government should impose a moratorium on the creation of new districts and other local governments”

In a letter addressed to District Chairpersons, City Mayors and Mayors of Municipalities dated April 9, 2021 Ref. ADM/327/328/MC.22, the Minister of Local Government communicated a decision of the central government to suspend the creation of new Local Governments and Administrative Units. ACODE proudly associates itself with the decision taken by the central government following several advocacy interventions on the same through evidence-based research.

17 ACODE (2020) Memorandum of Issues on the Amendment to the Local Governments Act, Cap 243

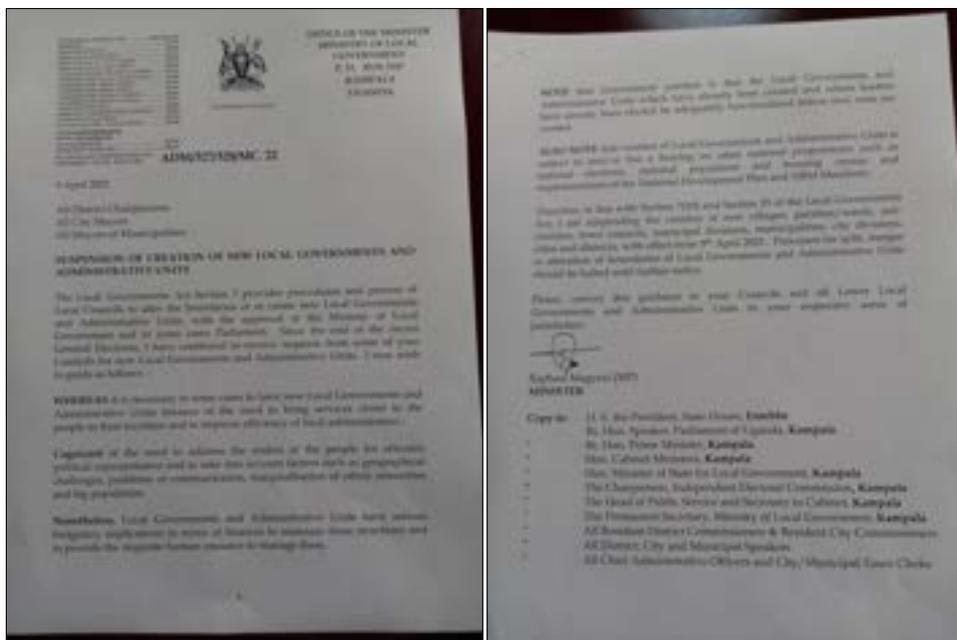
18 MoLG (2020), Ministerial Policy Statement FY 2020/2021

19 Bainomugisha, A., Muyomba-Tamale, L., Muhwezi, W., W., Cunningham, K., Ssemakula, E., G., Bogere, G., Rhoads, R. and Mbabazi, J. Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment 2014/2015: Unlocking Potentials And Amplifying Voices, Kampala, ACODE Policy Research Series No. 70, 2015. <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS70.pdf>

20 Bainomugisha, A., Muyomba-Tamale, L., Muhwezi W., W., Cunningham, K., Ssemakula, E., G., Bogere, G., Mbabazi, J., Asimo, N., Atukunda, P. Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment 2016/17: Civic Engagement: Activating the Potentials of Local Governance in Uganda, Kampala, ACODE Policy Research Series No.83, 2017. <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS83.pdf>

21 Mushemeza, E., D., Decentralisation in Uganda: Trends, Achievements, Challenges and Proposals for Consolidation, Kampala: ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No.93, 2019. <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS93.pdf>

Figure 23: Letter from The Ministry of Local Government Communicating the Suspension of New Local Governments and Administrative Units



### 2.2.7 Minimum Qualification for elected political leaders.

The Local Government Act 1997 (amended) does not require any minimum qualification for anyone to be elected councillors in councils at the Division, Town Council, Municipal, Sub-county and District Levels. ACODE and Partners particularly the Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA), through research established that the lack of minimum qualification for elected leaders in local governments affects not only the performance of local governments but also the leaders in fulfilling their mandates. The Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment (LGCSCI) FY2018/19 conducted by ACODE revealed that more educated councillors performed relatively better than their less-educated counterparts. In the Scorecard assessments for Local Governments, ACODE also established that for the council to perform better, the level of education of councillors matters and that it is important to have minimum education qualification for councillors so that they can effectively perform their mandates.

ACODE and ULGA advocated for the introduction of minimum qualifications for the local government leaders. Several strategic meetings with the Ministry of Local Government were held; the local government scorecard findings were widely disseminated; there was preparation and dissemination of a *policy memo*<sup>22</sup> to demonstrate the need for minimum qualifications among other interventions. ACODE, therefore, provided research to support the need for legal amendment and contributed to the debate in various fora to justify it.

<sup>22</sup> See the Policy Memo here: [https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/LGA\\_Amendment\\_Memo.pdf](https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/LGA_Amendment_Memo.pdf)

The Ministry of Local Government in 2019 introduced a Local Governments (Amendment) Bill which provided for minimum qualifications, advanced level or its equivalent for all mayors of Cities, Municipalities, Divisions and Town Council. In March 2020, Parliament passed the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which required mayors of Cities, Municipalities, Divisions and Town Council chairpersons to have an advanced level certificate of Education or its equivalent. However, this amendment was later rejected by the President when the Bill was sent to him to assent. The president argued that the need for educational qualifications would disenfranchise people by limiting them on the choice of Leaders they can elect into positions of leadership, is discriminatory and not realistic in some instances where it requires qualifications of persons in certain offices yet these people perform different roles, which require different competencies. The bill was later sent back to parliament to drop this amendment. Parliament sitting on Tuesday 4 August 2020 passed the Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2019 dropping the education qualification of Advanced Level requirement for persons seeking to contest for the positions of chairperson or mayor of a municipal council, town council or division council.

### *2.2.8 Citizen Scorecards*

Citizen Engagement had been overlooked and not much effort had been invested by key stakeholders in harnessing the dividends that come with citizens' engagement. This had increasingly widened the gap between citizens and their elected leaders and impacted the planning process as there emerged a wide gap between citizens' needs and services delivered by the government.

However, ACODE has continuously promoted the demand-side of democracy through civic engagement that empowered communities to demand better delivery of public goods and services at local levels. Since 2015, ACODE through the Local Government Council Scorecard has implemented the Civic Engagement Meetings (CEMs) in the 35 districts where it operates. This has transformed substantively citizens' participation in the governance process in these local governments. Increasingly, citizens' demands started to influence budget processes in Local Governments. In 2019, ACODE published a Book Volume titled; *Local Governments in Uganda: Democracy, Accountability and Civic Engagement* in which it highlighted the need for citizen's engagement in the governance process. This book volume was widely disseminated to key stakeholders in the Local Government Sector including the Ministry of Local Governments. The need for citizen engagement was further amplified in the Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment for FY2018/19 that was published in early 2020. As an outcome, major stakeholders in Government are increasingly developing an interest in citizen's engagement. In the National Development Plan III, the Government and National Planning Authority recognised and adopted citizen engagement as a key approach in development planning and an important step in achieving vision 2040. Therefore, the Ministry of Local Government will be implementing Citizen Scorecards as a strategy for government-citizen engagement. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development has also procured consultants to develop community

scorecards for the Government of Uganda.

### 2.2.9 Recognition of ACODE and LGCSCI in Localising SDGs

The Office of the Prime Minister, in the Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (June 2020) recognizes ACODE's contribution in localizing SDGs in Local Governments in Uganda. The report recognizes the contribution of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative through capacity building and assessment of the performance of the elected leaders at the district level. The report notes that:

*Much effort has been made at the subnational level to contextualize the SDGs and mobilize communities to own their development agenda with meagre resources. A civil society policy think-tank, Advocates Coalition on Development and Environment (ACODE), has been implementing the Local Government Councils' Scorecard. This scorecard is based on performance indicators aligned to the roles, responsibilities and functions of elected district leaders as articulated in the Local Government Act and the Government's decentralization policy. The scorecard initiative implemented by ACODE in partnership with the Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA) stems from the desire to contribute to the deepening of democratic decentralization in Uganda while addressing the problem of poor service delivery. The theory of change of the scorecard places emphasis on both the demand and supply sides of local governance. This annual assessment is key in monitoring the performance of Local Governments. It provides useful governance information that acts as a basis for activating citizen engagement and provides evidence for sustained advocacy at the national level.*

*For 2018/2019, the scorecard was conducted in 35 districts and indicated an improvement in the average performance of the assessed District Councils, up from 51 per cent in FY2016/17 to 62 per cent in FY2018/19. This improvement in average performance is also reflected in other parameters such as legislative function, accountability to citizens, and monitoring service delivery, which went up from 15 to 16 points, 11 to 14 points and 10 to 17 points respectively. This positive change in functionality and performance of District Councils is partly attributed to the sustained capacity-building programme for elected district leaders<sup>23</sup>.*

The recognition of ACODE's work under LGCSCI is an outcome of the interest and impact that the project has generated over time. ACODE will continue to constructively engage OPM on critical issues that affect local Governments and the Localisation of SDGs in Uganda.

## 2.3 At the Local Government Level

ACODE has contributed to deepening social accountability and local democracy

<sup>23</sup> OPM (2020) Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available at: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26354VNR\\_2020\\_Uganda\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26354VNR_2020_Uganda_Report.pdf)

through annual performance scorecards for local leaders in their respective district councils. ACODE has continued to promote the demand-side of democracy through civic engagement that empowered communities to demand better delivery of public goods and services at local levels, empowered district councils to perform their roles as envisaged in the law under the decentralization policy through several activities. An evaluation of the scorecard conducted by VNG (provide a reference in a footnote) in September 2014 confirmed that the LGCSCI was relevant in fostering local democratic governance. The evaluation noted that the scorecard approach of measuring councillors' performance against formal roles and responsibilities is appropriate as many of the policy issues arising from the LGCSCI can only be addressed at the national level.

### *2.3.1 Improved performance of local leaders*

The last eleven years of implementation of the Local Government Scorecard Initiative has witnessed a significant improvement in the performance of statutory functions by elected local government leaders. Evidence from cumulative statistics of the scorecard assessment reveals a significant rise in average scores across parameters of the scorecard. Furthermore, an evaluation of the impact of the scorecard by VNG revealed that the scorecard is highly relevant in boosting councillors' performance related to their formal roles and responsibilities<sup>24</sup>. VNG International's evaluation concludes that there is 'a clear improvement in the scorecard performance of LC Vs, Chairperson and Speakers. This significant improvement is attributed to the interventions undertaken by ACODE under LGCSCI to build the capacities of elected local government leaders to be able to deliver on their mandates and to build on the demand-side of accountability. The LGCSCI capacity building activities and the councillors' participation in the scorecard have contributed to an increased understanding amongst councillors of their formal roles and responsibilities. In addition, there is convincing evidence of councillors' improved performance from an evaluation of LGCSCI by the International Institute of Social Studies<sup>25</sup>.

*"Since the introduction of the ACODE score card, councillors are under pressure to perform well because they know that they will be graded at the end of the year. No one wants to appear to have done poorly because it will affect their future bid for leadership."* – Civil society leader, Gulu district

During the scorecard assessments for FY2018/19 similar observations about the improvement in the performance of the District Councils, District Chairpersons and Speakers were made. The details are as follows:

- a. *Performance of Councils:* According to the Local Government Councils Assessment FY 2018/19, there was an improvement in the average performance of the Councils assessed from 51 to 62 points in the FY

24 Evaluation of the ACODE Scorecard for Local Government, VNG International, Kampala , September 2014

25 International Institute of Social Studies ( 2016). Policy Review Good Governance: Uganda Country Study. Report Commissioned by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, January 2016. Available at: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/102964/Final-report-Uganda-country-study.pdf>

2016/17 and FY2018/19 respectively. This general improvement in average performance was also reflected in other parameters like legislative function, accountability to citizens, and monitoring service delivery from 15 to 16 points, 11 to 14 points and 10 to 17 points respectively. This positive change in the Councils is partly attributed to the capacity building programme within the Councils and the structures of Councils<sup>26</sup>.

- b. *Performance of District Chairpersons:* Like the district Councils, analysis of the performance of the district chairpersons shows that there is an improvement compared to the scores of the previous assessment in the FY 2016/17. The scores reveal that the district chairpersons on average scored 72 points compared to 62 points in the previous assessment. This observed improvement is a result of relatively high average scores on the specific parameters used to measure the quality of service delivery by this group of leaders<sup>27</sup>. Further analysis reveals that more district chairpersons managed to score between 76–100 points than was in the previous assessment. The results indicate that for the current assessment, 49 per cent of this category of leaders scored between 76–100 points as compared to only 30 per cent in the previous assessment<sup>28</sup>.
- c. *Performance of Speakers of District Councils:* The scorecard assessment results revealed that there was an improvement in the average performance of the speakers of Council from 56 to 62 points in the assessments of FY 2016/17 and 2018/19 respectively. This improvement is also reflected in performance in legislative function (16 to 17 points); contact with the electorate (15 to 16 points); and monitoring service delivery and government projects in their electoral areas (22 to 25 points)<sup>29</sup>.

### 2.3.2 Performance of Legislative functions

Before the intervention, most council debates were dominated by personal issues such as councillor allowances as well as petty conflicts between speakers and chairpersons which bogged down council business. The impact of the training and regular assessment of councils and individual councillors about their performance has resulted in the improvement of the legislative roles of councils.

Currently, most councillors comprehend their legislative role better and most of them testify to this fact. Most councils have been able to pass quality by-laws and motions to respond to the specific challenges that affect their electorates and districts. The scorecard assessments conducted since FY 2011/12 confirms this progress. For instance, the average performance of these councils in FY

26 See Local Government Councils Scorecard Assessment Report FY 2018/19. P 35. Available at: <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS96.pdf>

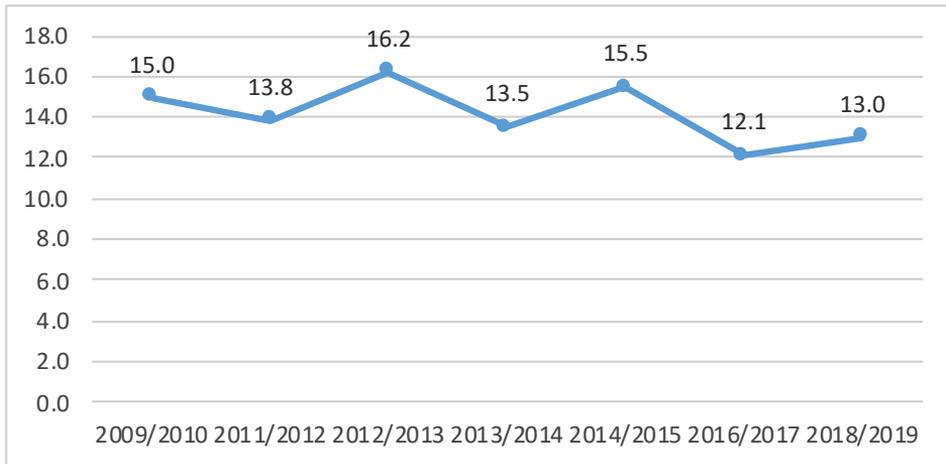
27 Ibid. p42

28 Bainomugisha, A., Mbabazi, J., Muhwezi, W., W., Bogere, G., Atukunda, P., Ssemakula, E.G., Otile, O., M., Kasalirwe, F., Mukwaya, N., R., Akena, W., Ayesigwa, R., The Local Government Councils Scorecard FY 2018/19: The Next Big Steps; Consolidating Gains of Decentralisation and Repositioning the Local Government Sector in Uganda. ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No. 96, 2020. Available here: <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS96.pdf>

29 Ibid. p49

2014/15 is 15 out of 25 points, compared to 13 points scored in 2011/12<sup>30</sup>. Figure 24 shows the trend in performance since 2009/2010.

Figure 24: Trend of performance of councillors in legislative functions



Councillors’ performance in their legislative role was significantly low in 2011/2012, 2013/2014 and 2016/2017. Two factors are attributed to this trend; i) the turnover of councillors, and ii) the reforms in the appointment of clerks to council both of which presented a capacity challenge. However, ACODE under LGCSCI had invested in the training of councillors with a specific focus on the Rules of Procedures and conducting the business of the council. This explains why in the subsequent years from the new term of office (2012/2013) and (2018/2019), councillors registered significant improvement in this parameter. While ACODE has also invested in training Clerks to Councils during the Multi-district leaders’ Forum, the high mobility of the clerks to councils (since the office was made an assigned role) meant that the impact of this trainings has not been quite sustainable.

### 2.3.3 Performance in Monitoring of Service Delivery

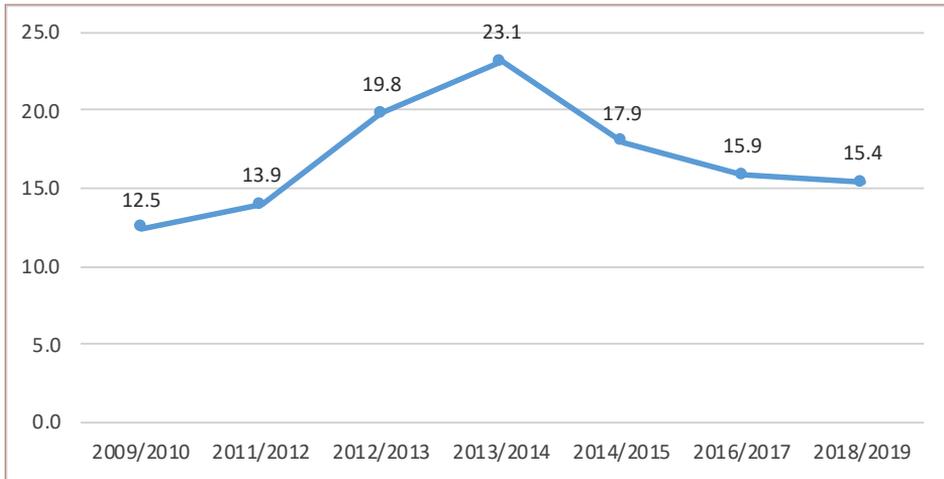
Despite councillor’s recurrent complaints regarding the lack of adequate facilitation to carry out monitoring of the delivery of public services under the National Priority Programme Areas (NPPAs), there has been a marked improvement in their monitoring function as most councillors now use tailor-made councillors’ diaries to document and submit written reports of their field visits to the offices of District Chairpersons, CAOs or heads of departments. The reports have been very instrumental in providing a basis for technical staff follow up and addressing service delivery deficiencies in health, education, water, and roads sectors.

Overall, there has been improvement in the performance of elected leaders in terms of monitoring service delivery in the districts of intervention. Generally, the average performance improved from 12.5 per cent to an average of 15.4 per

30 Ibid

cent over the years of assessment. Figure 25 below shows the performance trend of councillors in the execution of their monitoring function.

*Figure 25: Trend of performance of councillors in monitoring*



It is evident from the statistics in figure 25 above that the performance of leaders regarding monitoring of service delivery had been improving from 12.5 per cent in the first year of assessment to a peak of 23.1 per cent in 2013/2014. The steady performance improvement was attributed to the numerous capacity building training for the councillors that were conducted in that period. At the inception of the LGCSCI, there was poor record-keeping by individual councillors, however, after ACODE’s intervention through consistent training, most councillors improved on the aspect of documentation of their monitoring activities. Some councillors made use of the tailor-made ACODE diaries that were given to them to document their work, while other councillors took it a notch higher by producing monitoring reports from the observations made in the diaries and some of them took pictures as evidence for having fulfilled their monitoring obligation.

While it appears that performance in the parameter of monitoring service delivery by councillors took a downward trend in 2014/2015–2018/2019, it should be noted that this parameter in the scorecard had been subjected to numerous reviews since 2012. Initially, the focus was on mere visits and production of monitoring reports, the scorecard was reviewed in 2014/2015 to redirect the focus of this parameter and emphasis was placed on the follow-up actions of a councillor at the district council level on their findings of the service delivery deficiencies observed. During the 2016/17 and 2018/19 assessments, the parameter was reviewed to focus on the positive outcomes in the councillor’s electoral area that could be traced to the councillor’s efforts. With the evolution of the scorecard, it is, therefore, possible that if the assessment of councillors in the latter years were subjected to the parameters of the earlier years of assessments, the performance of councillors would most likely be superior and reflect an up-word trend in performance.

### *2.3.5 Reduction of conflicts in Local Governments*

There were many District Councils entangled in one form of conflict or another. Most of these conflicts were between the technical and the political arm of the district, members of DEC and Council, office of the Chairperson and Speaker. There were also boundary and ethnic conflicts in districts such as Tororo. These various conflicts were impacting the effective functioning of the council and delivery of social services because a substantive amount of the council's time and resources were invested in dealing with these conflicts.

Over time, ACODE has invested time in organising conflict resolution clinics in a number of the local governments in which it operates. Such conflict resolution clinics were conducted in districts such as Agago, Nwoya, Tororo, Sheema, Kisoro, Arua and Masindi. In July 2020, ACODE conducted strategic meetings in Kabarole and Mbarara districts to defuse the conflict that had resulted from the elevation of part of these districts into cities. These have been able to reduce the role conflicts in local governments and precisely conflicts between the political and technical arms; chairpersons and speakers; and members of DEC and council. Following these interventions by ACODE, conflicts have substantially reduced in six (6) of the 7 districts that had been earlier identified as conflict-prone under the Local Government Council Scorecard Initiative. The districts that reported a substantial reduction in cases of conflict in them include Agago, Sheema, Kisoro, Nwoya, Arua and Masindi. Furthermore, the strategic meetings held in Kabarole, and Mbarara Districts facilitated a peaceful and orderly transition into city status for the two districts.

### *2.3.6 Improved responsiveness of local governments to citizens' demands*

While Local Governments' have the responsibility to deliver services under the framework of devolution in the decentralisation policy, they have remained largely non-responsive to citizen's demands. Citizens on the other hand were docile and were not engaging their leaders. This has been noted in earlier findings of the scorecard assessments that revealed a largely docile citizenry and non-responsive district councils. In the assessment of FY 2014/2014 for instance, the disconnect between citizens and their leaders was established as a major inhibitor of the performance of councillors which informed the introduction of CEAPs. At the inception of CEAPs, it was further established that local governments were not receiving citizens' demands in the form of petitions and letters. However, The CEAPs has changed the narrative of participation in the process of service delivery and the council's responsiveness.

While governments have become more responsive to service delivery demands/ concerns raised by citizens through letters and petitions, citizens have also become more proactive in raising demands for service delivery. Citizens are increasingly taking part in the civic engagement meetings; in 2018, there were 850 citizen engagement meetings held while in 2019, 662 of these meetings were held across the 35 districts. Through the CEMs, citizens are becoming more empowered to constructively engage their leaders and make legitimate demands for service delivery. For example, there were 447 petitions and letters

submitted to councils by citizens in the 35 district councils in 2019. This has been going on since March 2015.

Through the CEAPs, local governments have become more responsive to the demands of the citizens. In Gulu, Moroto, Nwoya, Agago, Amuru, Bududa, Nakapiripirit, Wakiso, Lira and Luwero, there has been increased responsiveness to citizens' demands for service delivery by district councils. For instance, in Amuru District, the District Council responded to a citizens' petition over the shortage of desks in Abera Primary School by partnering with development partners to procure 300 desks for the school that had only 15 desks. Interestingly, the demand made in November 2019 was swiftly incorporated into the district plan at a meeting of the district budget conference in December. Similarly, the council responded to a citizens' petition from Oloyotong by allocating UGX 26 million for repairing a broken borehole and drilling a new one when the citizens submitted the demands in December 2020. In Moroto, the district council responded to a citizens' petition over foot and mouth diseases by procuring 3000 vials of vaccines to address the outbreak. Similarly, in Nwoya, the council responded to citizens' demand for road construction, drilling of boreholes and supply of cassava drying machines. In Gulu, the council constructed a modern maternity ward in Lapeta HC III after a citizens' petition while in Nakapiripirit, the council constructed a new maternity at Namalu HC III after a petition was submitted to the council by citizens. This increased responsiveness to citizen's demands has been largely responsible for the improved status of service delivery in these districts.

### *2.3.7 Improved functionality of Statutory Boards and Commissions*

One of the key findings from the Local Government Council Scorecard Assessment for FY 2018/2019 was that statutory boards and commissions (District Land Board, District Service Commission and Local Government Public Accounts Committees) were not performing optimally and thus affecting the overall performance of Councils. The study further revealed that in most local governments, these boards and commissions were not fully constituted and therefore not functioning effectively. Kamuli District for example did not have a Local Government Public Accounts Committee in place. In Lira, the District Service Commission was not fully constituted while in Amuru there was no functional District Land Board. Between August and December 2020, ACODE intervened and conducted training of statutory boards and commissions in 34 local governments. As a result of the training, local governments have taken steps to revamp the statutory boards and commissions. In Kamuli, the district council approved the LGPAC in November 2020. While in Lira, the District Service Commission was constituted and approved in December 2020. In Amuru, the District Land Board was revamped in January 2021. These have substantively supported operations of the local governments, for instance, in Kamuli, consideration of Internal Audit Reports/Auditor General had stalled since 2018 over the expiry of the term of office of members of LGPAC who have since embarked on handling the backlog after their terms were renewed.

### *2.3.8 Improved performance in Local Governments*

Over the last eleven years of implementation of LGCSCI, districts in which the initiative is implemented have exhibited impressive performance, improving every year. In the Local Government Performance Assessment for FY 2019/2020, LGCSCI districts performed relatively better than non-LGCSCI districts. Ntungamo, Jinja, Mbarara, Wakiso, and Lwengo emerged as the top performers in the Local Government Performance Assessment conducted by the Office of the Prime Minister; each scoring above 80 points in the Assessment. While Ntungamo, Kisoro and Buliisa were the top three most improved districts in the assessment, improving from 44 per cent to 80 per cent, 52 per cent to 82 per cent and 27 per cent to 62 per cent, respectively. The districts in which LGCSCI is being implemented performed generally well across all the parameters in the assessment. For instance, Gulu, Jinja, Kisoro, Lwengo and Mukono led in the performance table under the parameter of adherence to accountability principles in the assessment.

Two of the districts in which LGCSCI is implemented (Mbarara and Wakiso) performed exceptionally in crosscutting issues under the Local Government Performance Assessment (Planning, budgeting, and execution; Human resource management; Revenue mobilization; Procurement and contract management; Financial management; Governance, oversight, transparency, and accountability; and Social and environmental safeguards). There was also impressive performance in Key service delivery sectors of health, education and water exhibited by LGCSCI districts. In the Education sector, Amuria District performed exceptionally scoring 94 per cent. In the health sector, Rukungiri and Ntungamo performed exceptionally each scoring above 90 per cent. Lwengo, Kaliro and Gulu districts exhibited strong performance under the water sector in the assessment each scoring at least 80 points which were improvements from the previous assessments in 2017 and 2018.

### *2.4 At the Community Level*

One of the key objectives of the Local Government Council Scorecard Initiative was to enhance the effectiveness of citizens to demand political accountability and effective service delivery. After 10 years of implementation of the initiative, there is strong evidence to suggest that this objective has been achieved. This is evident by the increasing use of the scorecard information by citizens to determine their voting pattern, the strengthened citizens' demands for improved service delivery, the transformed nature of citizens' demands and the improved quality of public service. Furthermore, through Community Engagement Meetings/ Civic Engagement Action Plans (CEAPS).

#### *2.4.1 Strengthened Citizens' demand for better services and building citizenry demand for performance*

The conceptualization of the Local Government Council Scorecard Initiative was premised on the realization that while the decentralization policy in Uganda had registered significant social, economic, and political progress especially in terms

of provision of service delivery and political participation, there were significant gaps that required urgent action. Therefore, the initiative sought to enhance the effectiveness of citizens to demand political accountability and effective service delivery. Over time, there has been a remarkable rise in the trend of citizens holding their leaders accountable and demanding better service delivery. Across the 35 districts in which LGCSCI is implemented, more citizens are demanding better services. This is evidenced by the increasing number of citizens' petitions and letters submitted to district councils. Citizens are increasingly taking part in the civic engagement meetings; in 2018, there were 850 citizen engagement meetings held while in 2019, 662 of these meetings were held across the 35 districts.

Through the CEMs/CEAPS, citizens are becoming more empowered to constructively engage their leaders and make legitimate demands for service delivery. For example, there were 447 petitions and letters submitted to councils by citizens in the 35 district councils in 2019. This has been going on since March 2015. Furthermore, a baseline survey of LGCSCI conducted in January 2021 confirmed that citizens in intervention districts were more engaged than their counterparts in the non-intervention districts. An evaluation of the impact of LGCSCI conducted by VNG in 2014 further revealed that the capacity of citizens to demand service delivery had not only been enhanced but also the nature of their demands had changed towards demanding that their local government councils perform better with the limited resources available to them. This is largely attributed to the Civic Engagement Action Plan (CEAPs) which acts as a medium for training citizens on the statutory roles of their elected political leaders.

Many stakeholders including citizen groups referred to the LGCSCI as a tool that '*open eyes*' or '*awakens*' all actors on their roles and responsibilities related to local service delivery. As citizen capacity on service delivery standards and awareness of the limited resources available to LGCs is enhanced, the nature of their demands seems to change towards demanding that their LGCs perform better with the resources available to them e.g. maintaining infrastructure, improving teacher performance and addressing staff absenteeism and misuse of drugs in health centres etc<sup>31</sup>.

#### *2.4.2 Citizens Demand for Accountability*

At the inception of the project, one of the challenges at the local government level was a failure by citizens to demand accountability and better service delivery from elected leaders and local government authorities. This was largely due to a lack of knowledge and information on citizen roles and responsibilities and how citizens could constructively engage the local authorities and elected leaders to deliver quality public services. This was further exacerbated by citizen apathy.

ACODE under the LGCSCI implemented Civic Engagement meetings in which

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<sup>31</sup> Evaluation of the ACODE Scorecard for Local Government, VNG International, Kampala , September 2014.

citizens were sensitised about their roles and responsibilities, service delivery standards, roles and responsibilities of leaders and their local governments among others. Citizens were also sensitised on how to make citizen engagement action plans (CEAPs) as tools that will public service delivery challenges, priorities to engage local authorities on and what strategies to use. The strategies included; writing letters and petitions to elected leaders and local governments; convening community meetings with their leaders; attending community meetings, and call-in radio talk shows among others. To further emphasise these ACODE conducted radio talk shows to share the same information with a wide audience in the intervention districts. These interventions intended to create an engaged citizenry that can hold their leaders accountable for their decisions, action or inaction.

In a recent baseline study of the Third Segment of the LGCSCI (2019-2021), It was established that citizens in the districts where the LGCSCI intervention districts (IA) have been more able to demand accountability from their leaders than the non-intervention areas (NIA). Respondents were asked a set of questions to assess their ability and active engagement in demanding accountability. Table 1 shows the actions taken by community members to demand accountability from the elected leaders.

*Table 1: Actions taken by Citizens to demand accountability.*

	District		Location		Gender		Disability		Total
	NIA	IA	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Yes	No	
Vote them out	81.6	80.9	83.0	79.4	81.3	81.2	85.7	80.7	81.2
Petition a higher authority	11.2	17.9	15.4	13.9	16.5	13.0	7.8	15.6	14.7
Write a letter to the leader in question	10.9	11.5	11.6	10.8	13.8	8.8	7.8	11.6	11.2
Engage in strikes	1.4	2.6	2.3	3.6	2.4	1.6	1.3	2.1	2.0
Participate in boycotts	0.5	2.2	2.8	1.2	1.5	1.2	2.0	1.3	1.3

In both intervention and non-intervention districts, rural and urban locations, the most mentioned avenue for demanding accountability from elected leaders was to vote them out in the next election (81.2%). Petitions (14.7%) and writing letters (11.2%) were the next options but mentioned by just a few people. They were less commonly mentioned amongst PWDs (7.8%) compared to those without (15.6% and 11.6% respectively). Other forms of actions such as demonstrations, litigation strikes, and boycotts were almost unlikely to be mentioned across all districts and population categories mostly probably due to the repercussions associated with them.

The study assessed levels and willingness to participate in popular actions

to demand accountability and better services from the government, besides engaging with leaders directly. Very few respondents had engaged directly in activism to promote accountability and good governance although the majority claimed they would get engaged if they had an opportunity. For example, 54% stated they would participate if they had a chance. Similarly, 54% said they had engaged through media (radio call-in) or writing in newspapers if they had a chance but 32% would never try.

About 20% of respondents had contacted a governmental official to raise an issue of concern. And finally, whilst 32% of respondents said they could refuse to pay taxes due to poor services if it were possible; the majority (65%) said they would never. The majority would also never participate in a demonstration (68.7%). The findings above further demonstrate the impact of the LGCSCI on the demand for accountability in the intervention area.

#### *2.4.3 Changed nature of citizens' demands.*

Key among the challenges that face local government leaders is the nature of demands made to them by the electorates. Initial findings from the scorecard assessment revealed that citizens' demands fell outside the legitimate statutory functions of their elected leaders and subsequently putting undue pressure on the local politicians. The findings revealed that citizens were demanding personal expenses like school fees and medical bills from the local politicians. However, after eleven years of the implementation of the local government council scorecard initiative, there has been a substantive shift in citizens' demands with the demands now in synch with the roles and responsibilities of the elected local government leaders<sup>32</sup>. This finding of the scorecard is corroborated by an evaluation by VNG International which revealed that citizen capacity on service delivery standards and awareness of the limited resources available to LGCs is enhanced, the nature of their demands seems to change towards demanding that their LGCs perform better with the resources available to them e.g. maintaining infrastructure, improving teacher performance and addressing staff absenteeism and misuse of drugs in health centres etc. VNG International attributes this paradigm shift like a demand by citizens to the impact that the LGCSCI has had on local accountability.

#### *2.4.4 A Case of Citizen Engagement in Local Governments*

This case story below from Bududa district in Eastern Uganda is a demonstration that the CEAP methodology is a powerful tool for civic engagement. Citizens of the three villages in Nalwanza Sub-county felt empowered and did not require direct assistance from ACODE but rather replicated a strategy that they had learnt from a CEAP meeting that was held in their locality to constructively engage their leaders to resolve issues affecting them. Aware that citizens have several options at their disposal to express dissatisfaction regarding the delivery

<sup>32</sup> Bainomugisha, A., Mbabazi, J., Muhwezi, W., W., Bogere, G., Atukunda, P., Ssemakula, E.G., Otile, O., M., Kasalirwe, F., Mukwaya, N., R., Akena, W., Ayesigwa, R., The Local Government Councils Scorecard FY 2018/19: The Next Big Steps; Consolidating Gains of Decentralisation and Repositioning the Local Government Sector in Uganda. ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No. 96, 2020. Available here: <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS96.pdf>

of public services such as demonstrations, we see that in this story, the strategy that the citizens of the three villages applied and the response by the district council to address their demand might have averted a possible conflict either among communities or confrontation with law enforcers in case the citizens decided to express themselves through violent means such as riots.

### **Bududa District: Citizens of Nalwanza, Nakhamosi and Masikye villages Protest being annexed to Bushigayi Town Council in Bududa district**

#### **Background to the issue in Nalwanza Sub- County**

In 2018, while defining the boundaries of the newly created creating new lower local governments and administrative units, Bududa district council had made proposals to annex three villages of Nalwanza, Nakhamosi and Masikye to Bushigayi Town Council. Since then, citizens through approaches had made it clear that they did not want to be included in the boundaries of the town council.

One of the objectives of decentralization adopted by Uganda in 1992 was to encourage citizen participation in local governance and the delivery of public services. The decision by the district council to annex the three villages to Bushigayi Town Council was an Indication that local leaders did not consider their involvement (citizens) on matters that concern them as important. In their petition, the citizens raised several critical issues that, some of the issues raised include that they (citizens of the three villages) were not widely consulted by the respective leaders before a decision to annex them to Bushigayi Town Council was made. They also noted that the three villages in Nalwanza formed part of Lutsetshe County while Bushigayi Town Council which annexed them belonged to Bushigayi Constituency. They observed that the three villages had their ancestral linkages to Nalwanza Sub- County and the decision to annex them to Bushigayi Town Council would deprive them of their historical belonging. The annexed villages happened to contribute the biggest part of local revenue to Nalwanza Sub-county and adding them to the Town Council would cause the Sub-county to lose out on local revenue. They observed that the villages in question were hosts to different cultural sites.

#### **Action taken by citizens.**

In a community meeting that was held on August 17, 2020, citizens of three villages of Nalwanza, Nakhamosi and Masikye in Nalwanza Sub-county applied knowledge of the CEAP methodology that they had acquired from a CEAP meeting facilitated by ACODE and on their own volition wrote a petition dated August 24, 2020 to Bududa district council protesting the annexure of their villages to the newly created Bushigayi Town Council. In their petition, they prayed that the district council rescinds its decision to add these villages to Bushigayi Town Council. That community meeting attracted attendance from citizens of the three villages and some leaders of Nalwanza Sub-county led by the Chairperson LC III Honorable David Weswa who were invited to participate at the meeting and provide technical guidance and direction. The Chairman LC III for Nalwanza Sub-county was selected at the meeting to be the lead petitioner since he had also previously participated in CEAP meetings facilitated by ACODE.

#### **The outcome**

In a council meeting for Bududa district council that sat on October 28, 2020 under Minute number MIN. DLC. 131/10/2020 (See Figures 26 and 27) the council resolved that the three cells of Nalwanza, Nakhamosi and Masikye that were annexed to Bushigayi town council be taken back to Nalwanza Sub-county. This decision of the District Council was implemented and by the time of documenting this story the three villages were in Nalwanza Sub-county.

Figure 26: A copy of the citizen petition demanding that the three villages be withdrawn from Bushigayi Town Council

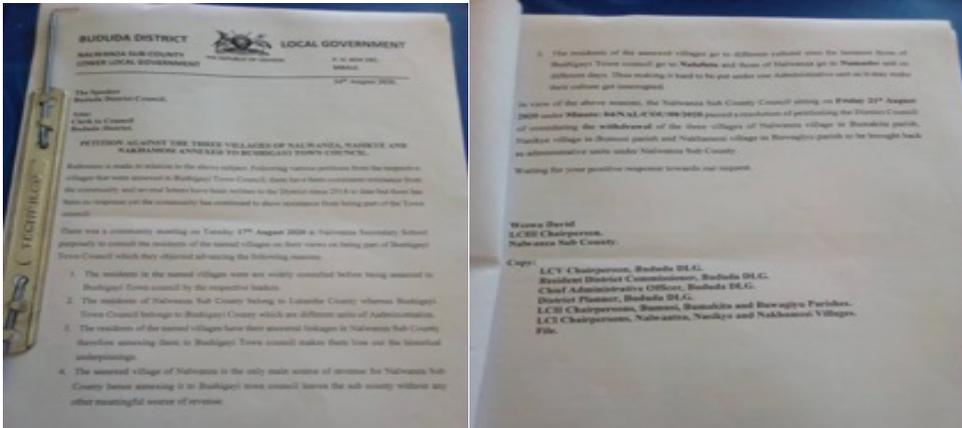
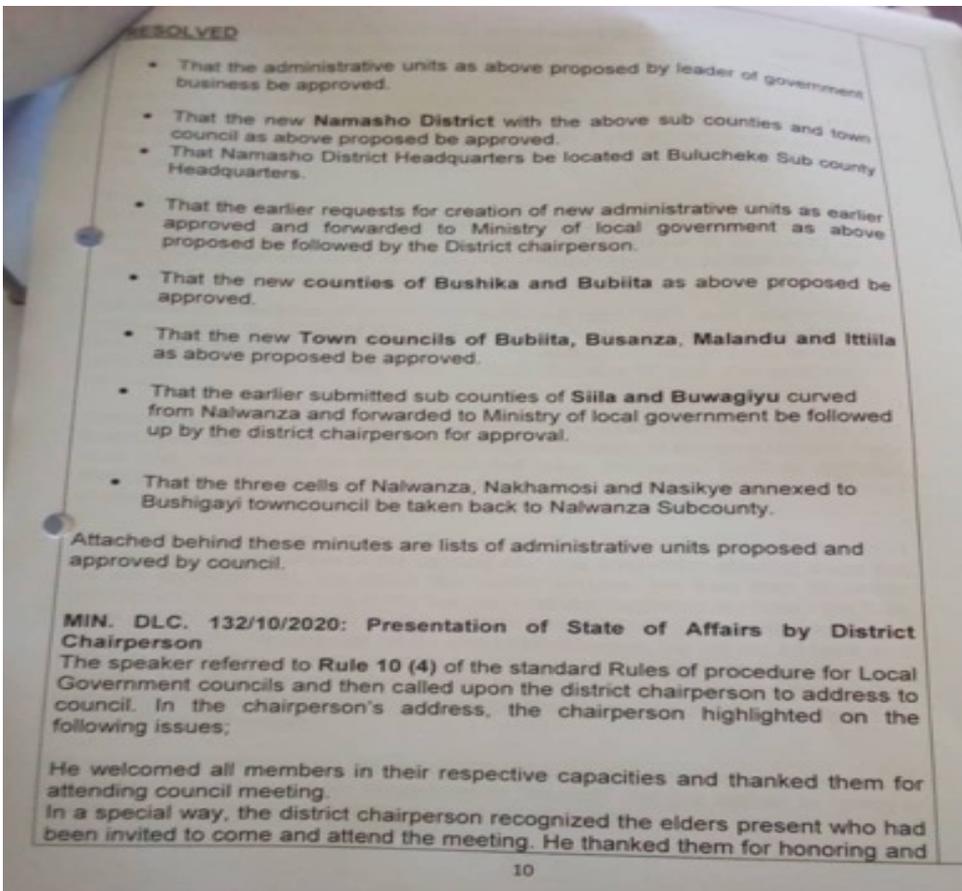


Figure 27: Evidence of minutes of Bududa District Council where it resolved to address the demands in the citizen petition submitted before it



## 2.5 At the Institutional Level

### 2.5.1 ACODE ranked among the Top Think Tanks in the World.

ACODE ranked among the world’s top Think Tanks in the 2019 Global Ranking. Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) has for the eighth time been ranked among the top 100 think tanks in the world. The 2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index (GGTTI) Reports was released on January 30, 2020. The reports were launched through events in over 150 cities across the globe, including New York, Paris, Washington DC and London.

ACODE was ranked under 3 different categories in the report. In the category of Top Think Tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa category, ACODE was ranked 19th out of 94 thinks. In the category of think tanks with the Best Advocacy Campaign in 2019, ACODE was ranked 8th of the 93 Think Tanks assessed globally and 1st out of 6 think tanks assessed in Africa and Uganda respectively.

In addition, ACODE’s report “Financing Local Governments in Uganda: An analysis of the Proposed National Budget FY2019/20 and Proposals for Re-allocation” was recognized as one of the best policy study reports produced by a think tank in 2019. ACODE has also been recognized in the recent publication (Muhumuza and Staffan, 2020) as one of the key think tanks in Uganda that has produced research outputs that have shaped public policy development and implementation. For further details please see tables 2 and 3.

*Table 2: ACODE’s Positioning in the Top Think Tanks by Special Achievement: - Best Advocacy Campaign*

Region	Rank
Globally	5 out of 92
Africa	1 out of 12
East Africa	1 out of 4
Uganda	1 out of 2

Ever since ACODE started to be ranked in the Global Go-To Think Tank Index Reports, the ranking trajectory in Sub-Saharan Countries’ Category has also continued to improve.

*Table 3: Positioning in the 2020 Top Think Tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Year	Rank
2012	25 out of 50
2013	24 out of 50
2014	23 out of 65

Year	Rank
2015	23 out of 92
2016	23 out of 94
2017	22 out of 90
2018	19 out of 97
2019	19 out of 94
2020	18 out of 92

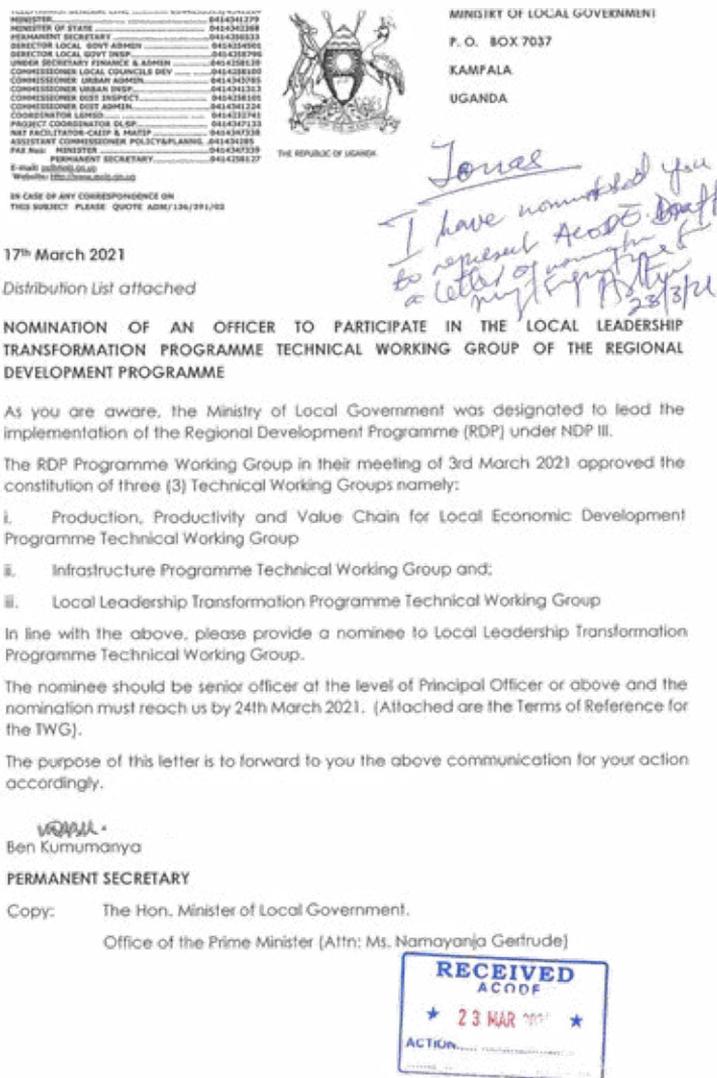
### 2.5.2 Partnerships

Through the gains made in LGCSCI, ACODE has attracted like-minded organisations that have expressed desires to work within areas of governance, decentralisation and advocacy. ACODE signed memorandums of understanding with; MoLG, ULGA, UAAU, MoFPED and LGFC. The MoU with MoLG led to ACODE being nominated by the Ministry of Local Government to participate in the Sector Working Group and 4 technical Working Groups of the Local Government Sector.

### 2.5.3 ACODE invited to the MoLG Sector Working Group

In 2019 when the Ministry of Local Government was made a sector, ACODE was invited by the Ministry to be a member of 4 Technical Working Groups (TWGs) of the local government sector. This was informed by the work that ACODE has previously done in policy research, capacity building and policy advocacy in local governments. In 2021, there was a policy shift from Sector Wide Approach to Program Based Approach. With this policy shift ACODE was invited to participate in the 2 Technical Working Groups. See Figure 28 for the invitation to participate in the Local Leadership transformation programme technical working group by the Ministry of Local Government.

Figure 28: A letter from the PS MoLG inviting ACODE to the Local Leadership Transformation Programme Technical Working Group



Invitation by the Ministry of Local Government to participate in the Technical Working Groups demonstrates the relevance that the organisation has had in local governments and confidence from the Ministry of Local Government about the value of the contribution that ACODE has been making and continues to make to ensure effective and efficient local governments.

### 2.5.4 Strategic Partnerships

At the inception of the LGSCSI, ACODE conducted a mapping of policy issues –what worked and what needed further work. Bottlenecks in Local Government financing, accountability, participation, and service delivery were reviewed and

filtered, and various MDAs and Other national stakeholders – were selected for strategic partnerships to ensure the success of policy advocacy efforts. Thus, ACODE has been able to sign Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with targeted Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Local Government Associations including the following:

- a. The Ministry of Local Government.
- b. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED)
- c. The Local Government Finance Commission.
- d. The Uganda Local Government Association (ULGA).
- e. The Urban Authorities Association of Uganda (UAAU).

Developing and signing MOU with these national-level institutions has played a major role in clarifying expectations and defining partnerships and greatly influenced the level of engagement, commitment, and responsiveness from national institutions.

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## ABOUT ACODE

The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda. ACODE's work focuses on four programme areas: Economic Governance; Environment and Natural Resources Governance; Democracy, Peace and Security; Science, Technology and Innovation. For the last eight consecutive years, ACODE has been ranked as the best think tank in Uganda and one of the top 100 think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally in the Global Think Tanks Index Report published by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP).



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