

# LOCAL GOVERNANCE BRIEFER

A Product of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative

## The Parish Development Model: Implications For Local Governments And Service Delivery In Uganda

By Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA)<sup>1</sup>

As Local Governments were grappling with conceptualization of the new Program-Based Budgeting approach whose aim was to transform the budget from Output-based to a more result and performance-based approach (in line with the Third National Development Plan, at the beginning of this Financial Year 2021/22); Local Governments witnessed the rollout of the Parish Development Model (PDM). The PDM is given as a service delivery mechanism intended to facilitate the transformation of an estimated 69% of households by bringing them out of poverty into a money economy. The Model is presented as seeking to localize Vision 2040 as well as the National Development Plan III, for the effective measurement and management of government development programs. It is presented as one the strategies for accelerating wealth, jobs and improving service delivery in the 10,694 parishes in Uganda. The program is presented as being intended to trigger development in respective parishes as the lowest level planning and development unit in effectively deepening decentralization. The PDM has seven pillars that include; production, infrastructure and economic services, financial inclusion, social services, community mobilization and mind-set change, data collection and governance and administration. It is envisaged by Government that this Model will be a strategy to transform Local Governments structures from being mere platforms of governance, representation and delivery of services to engines of sustainable

development. The program is hoped to enable citizens to decide on what interventions they need in place to foster development and thus boost household income.

Whereas as the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Hon. Matia Kasaija during the reading of the Ministerial Statement declared that government is convinced about the fact that nothing can better guarantee inclusive growth and employment for Ugandans than equitable participation of more Ugandans in the monetized economy, the proposed PDM raises a lot of questions to the Local Government actors who are mandated to deliver services to citizens within their respective Local Governments.

The main question looming at the back of these Local Government actors is whether the PDM structure will be any different from the Parish Development Plans and the Parish Development Committee structures that were once famous in early to Mid-2000. The reason behind this argument is that it is the same proposed governance structure that existed at that time; where each Parish was headed by a Parish Chief who was mandated to support communities to develop Parish Development Plans in a participatory process and also elect a Parish Development Committee (PDC) to ensure the implementation of the laid-out plan.

It's imperative to note that the transition period of this PDM is planned to last a maximum of two years and the model is to be operated under SACCOs at the parish level. In this arrangement, each parish is required to have an approved Parish SACCO for lending funds from the Parish Revolving Fund to eligible households in a parish. Key among the concerns is the state of readiness or preparedness

<sup>1</sup> Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA) is a voluntary membership organization and representative voice that brings together all District and Lower Local Governments in Uganda

of the Local Governments to roll out this Model in the wake of the weak governance structures; in particular Parish Chiefs being the primary drivers of any government program at the parish level with mandate to coordinate the program at parish level reporting to the Senior Administrative Assistant/Sub County Chief. Section 69 of the Local Government Act speaks clearly about the mandate at hand and continues to be an area for advocacy by Uganda Local Governments Association-ULGA.

Currently, Local Governments do not have functional Parish Development Committees (PDC) which is responsible for providing oversight roles to the Parish Chief. This is anomaly coupled with the absence of Parish Co-operative Associations (PCA) through which Central Government support will be channelled to enable households to access the funds at a concessional interest rate as well as the absence of the conceptual guide, and implementation framework to support the rolling out of the PDM in the Local Governments. This is a clear indicator that the stage is set for serious implementation challenges that will negatively impact the programme objectives.

For any successful program, awareness building among communities is very crucial to enable them to embrace the program even before it's rolled out. This will contribute to its successful implementation as any form of resistance would have been handled at the onset. ULGA observes that there have been inadequate preparations around the community and local Government awareness on the benefits of this program and the benefits that come with it for transforming the economy. The mobilization of communities to embrace the Model across all LGs including the LC 1 structure must be prioritized to level the ground for the smooth implementation of the program and avoid unnecessary sanctioning of people who may fail to comply in future.

The PDM calls for viable and adequate funding investment that will be responsive to the community demands. Today, the provision of a total National Budget provision of a paltry UGX 200 Billion Uganda Shillings in total for the 10,594 Parishes, with a total of an average population of 4,000 people per parish renders the programme a non-starter of sorts. Local Governments are equally

concerned that funds already earmarked for programs like the Youth Livelihood program, the Women Entrepreneurship program and Emyooga will be channelled to finance this program yet these programs have different interventions and target beneficiaries.

The slow progress towards the full operationalization of new administrative units is a clear signal that not all parishes in Uganda are set to benefit from the program this financial year. Today, there are Town Councils and Sub Counties that are yet to secure codes for funding purposes and as such are not funded by the Central government. The question of how soon these units will be operationalized is before the concerned Ministries. It is also important for the central Government to ensure equitable allocation of the funds to the respective parishes putting in mind that some parishes are quite big with many villages as compared to others, and also conduct further consultations with the local leaders on how best they can support the program implementation for improved service delivery within local governments.

By and large, Central Government has over years been designing poverty alleviation programs, and the latest being the Parish Development Model. However, the number of Ugandans slipping in poverty has increased from 8 million to 8.3 million, with the majority living in Busoga, Bukedi and Acholi sub-regions. This status quo calls for a review of the National Planning process that must reflect the bottom-up approaches where communities are engaged in the identification of suitable and preferred interventions that are responsive to the drive against poverty.

## END NOTES

1. The Local Government Act as amended
2. The Parish Model Presentation by Ramathan Ggoobi during the Capacity Building workshop for Chairs, Vice Chairs of Committees and NRM Regional Whips of parliament of Uganda, August 4, 2021.
3. The Daily Monitor 29 April 2021
4. Ministerial statement on the Parish Development Model Fund-MFPED