

# LOCAL GOVERNANCE BRIEFER

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## Parish Development Model: We Need More Focus On Physical Infrastructure Development

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The government of Uganda under the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) adopted the Parish Development Model (PDM) as a conduit through which household incomes and the quality of life of Ugandans can further be improved with a specific focus on the total transformation of the subsistence households into the monetized economy, as well as eradication of poverty and vulnerability in Uganda.<sup>2</sup> The PDM identifies Infrastructure and economic services is one of its pillars that serves 68.9 per cent of the population still trapped in the subsistence economy.<sup>3</sup> In the local government setting, the parish is the lowest economic planning unit and if adequately supported, it can be pivotal in the transformation of local communities out of poverty. There were 10,595 parishes in Uganda as of July 2021 and the Parliament of Uganda appropriated UGX 200 billion for the implementation of the PDM for the fiscal year 2021/2022 distributed across the 7 pillars of the model<sup>4</sup>, which translates to approximately UGX 11million per parish. This money is inadequate even if it were for infrastructure alone.

Previously, several government interventions for poverty alleviation such as Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), Youth Livelihood Program (YLP),

Development Initiative for Northern Uganda and Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) among others registered modest results. The key factors responsible for this modest performance include poor road infrastructure, lack of access to markets, corruption, mismatch in supply against the local demand, poor monitoring and evaluation among others. Therefore, it is critical that for the PDM is to transform our local communities, more investment in the road infrastructure, water and sanitation, rural electrification, post-harvest handling and market infrastructure ought to be prioritized given their critical role in transformation of the rural communities.

### Road Infrastructure

As of 2019, Uganda had a total road network of 159,364 km which comprised 20,854 km of national roads; 38,603 km of district roads; 19,959km of urban roads and 79,947 km of community access roads.<sup>5</sup> This network accounts for 99 per cent of total passenger flow and 95 per cent of total goods cargo in the country. In 2017, the government of Uganda spent a total of UGX 318 billion to purchase road maintenance equipment.<sup>6</sup> The road equipment was distributed to 118 districts at the time and each one of them received a road unit comprising one motor grader, one vibro roller, one wheel loader, one water bowser and two dump trucks. Districts that were created after this procurement had not yet received road equipment

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<sup>2</sup> GoU. (2021, June). Implementation Guidelines for Parish Development Model. Kampala, Uganda: Ministry of Local Government. Retrieved from [www.molg.go.ug](http://www.molg.go.ug)

<sup>3</sup> GoU. (2020, January). Third National Development plan (NDP III) 2020/21 – 2024/25. Uganda: National Planning Authority.

<sup>4</sup> Correspondence letter by the Permanent Secretary/Secretary to the Treasury addressed to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government on June 14, 2021 on the budget allocation for the Parish Development Model (PDM) for the fiscal year 2021/22.

<sup>5</sup> GoU. (2021). Annual Sector Performance Report FY 2019/20. <https://www.works.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final-ASPR-REPORT-2021.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/fears-as-government-supplies-new-district-road-units-1711382>

under a similar arrangement. Currently, there are 135 districts and 11 cities in Uganda.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the purchase of road maintenance equipment for districts, most district and community access roads are in a sorry state and have affected many farmers greatly. A road user satisfaction survey conducted by Uganda Road fund in 2019 revealed that local governments had the lowest overall service provision rating in 2019 compared to Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) and Uganda National Roads Authority.<sup>8</sup> Local government leaders attributed the failure of the road equipment to improve the quality of roads to many factors such as breakdown of the equipment, inadequate funds to meet the maintenance costs, poor workmanship, among others.<sup>9</sup>

In some districts such as Bududa and Isingiro, whenever there are heavy rains; bridges are washed away, roads become impassable and because of that, farmers are often stranded with their perishable farm produce. Sometimes farmers end up selling their produce at a giveaway price to avoid the produce ripening or rotting. Some studies have revealed that transport constraints were hampering the sellers of agricultural produce and hindering the development of an efficient marketing system.<sup>10</sup> The PDM presents an opportunity to fix some of these challenges at the lowest level of production.

### Electrification at the Parish Level

Uganda is one of the countries in the World that is still experiencing low electrification rates.<sup>11</sup> For instance, nearly 60 per cent of the population in urban areas and 18 per cent of rural had access to electricity in 2016.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, the World Bank noted that 41.3 per cent of Uganda's population had access to electricity with 70.85 per cent of the urban population and 31.8 per cent of the rural population having access to electricity.<sup>13</sup>

Rural Electrification Agency (REA) in its strategic plan (2013-2022) had the mandate to facilitate the government's goal of achieving a rural electrification rate of at least 22 per cent by the year 2022 from 1 per cent which was at the beginning

of the decade.<sup>14</sup> The Parish Development Model which envisages to concentrate all government services at the parish should prioritise rural electrification to achieve more than the 22 per cent REA's target in the last nine years. The gospel of value addition in the implementation of the PDM can only be achieved if there access to affordable electricity in every parish.

### Market infrastructure

Government of Uganda has been investing in Market infrastructure aimed at improving market access through projects such as Project for the Restoration of Livelihood in the Northern Region (PRELNOR), Community Agriculture Infrastructure Improvement Programme (CAIIP) and Markets and Agricultural Trade Improvement Programme (MATIP) among others. However, in most cases these projects are not implemented in all districts across the country. For example MATIP-2 was only targeting 12 Municipalities while PRELNOR was focusing on the Northern region. While it is true that the PDM will be implemented in tandem with other government programs, it worth noting that there was no specific fund from the UGX 200 bn appropriated for the PDM by the parliament of Uganda that was directly allocated for development of market infrastructure in each of the 10,595 parishes in Uganda. Under the LED framework, local governments were encouraged to construct markets, however, a scan through budgets of some of the local governments revealed that they were not allocating funds to construct markets.

### ICT Infrastructure

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is among the priority sectors of the government of Uganda to drive economic development and the middle income status (NITA Uganda, 2018). Tangible infrastructure includes fiber optic cables, satellites, masts/ towers and related transmission facilities that provide intercity/ region connectivity among others. Through funding from the World Bank in 2015, the government of Uganda commenced implementation of the Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (RCIP)

7 <https://molg.go.ug/>

8 GoU. (2019). The Road User Satisfaction User Survey. Kampala: Uganda Road Fund.

9 Ibid

10 AfDB. (2013). The Beacon for Sustainable Income Generation and Rural Growth; Uganda: Community Agricultural Infrastructure Improvement Programme, Project -1, (CAIIP -1). African Development Bank Group.

11 Ankunda, O. D., & Smith, R. P. (2021). Increasing Grid Connections Through Public Information Campaigns: The Electricity Connections Policy In Uganda. USAID and Power Africa. Retrieved August 6, 2021, from <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/uganda-electricity-supply-accelerator-increases-energy-access-uganda>

12 SEforALL. (2016). Uganda at a glance. Retrieved August 6, 2021, from SEforALL: <https://www.se4all-africa.org/seforall-in-africa/country-data/uganda/>

13 World Bank . (2019). Access to electricity (% of population) - Uganda. Retrieved August 6, 2021, from World Bank Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS?locations=UG>

14 <https://www.rea.or.ug/index.php/about-us/>

designed to deliver coverage for IT infrastructure in the country; government cloud infrastructure to support efficient delivery of public services; integration of Government IT systems; building capacity in management of IT programs and projects; and improve policy and regulatory environment for ICT in the country.

However, despite these undertakings by the government of Uganda, a study report by ACODE on access and use of ICT in budget transparency and accountability in local governments, revealed that ICT access and affordability are still a challenge for large sections of the population such as the poor, rural populations, women, and PWDs. Recently, the government allocated UGX 600 million in the National Budget for the fiscal year 2021/22 for ICT under Parish Development Model. While this is plausible on the part of government, there is need for government to commit more funds for ICT infrastructure in the subsequent fiscal years so as to bring local governments that are lagging behind on board.

## Recommendations

Much as the Parish Development Model is being implemented under the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) as the coordinating ministry, there are different ministries, departments and agencies as well as other stakeholders that have been implementing programs and will continue implementing them at that level. I would like to therefore make the following recommendations for the successful implementation of the PDM:

- Government should procure road equipment for districts and regional cities that were not part of the 118 districts that benefited from equipment purchased by government of Uganda from Japan.
- Uganda Road Fund should increase funds to local government to meet the maintenance costs of road equipment.
- The ministry of works and transport should organise regular regional training for road equipment operators in local government so as to address the challenge of poor workmanship.

- Local Governments should prioritise funds in their budgets to improve on the market infrastructure.
- Government should establish programs in other region and sub regions of the country similar to those in the Northern part of the country such as PRELNOR to improve on market and road infrastructure.
- Government should allocate more funds under rural electrification in the national budget from the current UGX 527,113, 847,000 in the FY 2021/22 to at least UGX 1 trillion for each of the five subsequent fiscal years, so as to scale up the speed of rural electrification in the country.
- Electricity Regulation Authority should intensify rural electrification and ensure a reduction in power tariffs have to it affordable for the rural folk and the private sector players at the parish level to facilitate value addition in agriculture.
- The government should extend the ICT infrastructure network to cover the entire country to ensure digital inclusion.

## Conclusion

Considering that the implementation of the Parish Development Model will be undertaken at the lowest planning unit under the local government set-up, which is the parish; more funds should be allocated towards infrastructure development in the national budget over the next five fiscal years. Recently, there was a call by President Museveni to have UGX 100 million allocated to each Parish every fiscal year as a revolving fund. While the proposal by the President is plausible, important factors that will stimulate development at the parish level such as infrastructure development should not be forgotten. Government should employ a multi-pronged approach.