2　　2000

DECENTRALIZATION IN UGANDA
—— Toward a Positive-Sum Solution ——

Fumihiko Saito[*]

ウガンダの地方分権化政策
—— ポジティブ・サムを目指して ——

斎 藤 文 彦[*]

1980年代以降サハラ以南のアフリカ諸国は構造調整政策のもと，さまざまな制度改革に取り組んできた，地方分権化政策はその中でも主要な課題をなし，政治的には民主化を推進し，社会・経済的には開発をより効果的にするという意図があった，ウガンダは1986年以降，国民抵抗運動政権のもとで地方分権化をすすめてきた，その結果，地方評議会の制度が整備され，女性や少数民族にも配慮した政治参加の仕組みが整いつつある，しかし他方で残された課題も多い，地方自治体の独自財源のさらなる拡充，公共サービスの向上，さらには行政と人々の間に相互信頼を構築するための十分な情報の共有が何よりも求められる，このようなウガンダの経験は現在功罪両面においてアフリカにおける1つのモデルケースとなっている，21世紀にむけて，この経験は途上国全体にとって有意義な政策的指針になると考えられる，

Introduction

Since the late 1980s governments in sub-Saharan Africa have been undertaking various structural reforms, both politically and socio-economically.　Uganda is no exception in a sense the country endeavors for democratization as well as for sustainable development.　One of the pillars for this policy reform has been decentralization, which has been considered to be essential to create a collaborative mechanism between the state and the people.　Uganda, after its recovery from a prolonged internal civil strife, is now to move ahead for democratization and development.

Uganda today is therefore at a critical juncture.　The local governance and its Local Council (LC) structure bears important functions and responsibilities in order to make the current decentralization successful both politically and developmentally.[1]　While the institutional mechanism is in place, both opportunities and constraints it presents are

enormous.　Whether the intended collaboration between the state and the people will be realized or not will influence very much the outcome of the "indigenous" experimentation.[2]　This has implications for the polity as well as for improving the living standard for the people in Uganda.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to identify where the LC system stands now by attempting to highlight both achievements and remaining challenges of the local governance structure.[3]　Decentralization in the past tended to be a zero-sum game: what one stakeholder gains is a loss for others.　If, however, the current decentralization is not a positive sum solution for stakeholders, the LC system will not sustain the support by the people who really wish to grow out of poverty.　The stakeholders for making positive sum include, inter alia, local politicians (Councillors), civil servants, and the people themselves.　Dimensions of gender and ethnicity are also particularly relevant, since the socially disadvantaged including women and ethnic minorities need to be appropriately participated in the governance structure.　This article concludes that although the current system has various serious deficiencies, there are significant possibilities, which can be harnessed by essential stakeholders for creating mutually beneficial outcomes.　These possibilities can form a critical basis for making decentralization as a positive-sum solution for Uganda rather than a zero-sum one as was the case before.

1. Uniqueness of Uganda's Policy Reform

Unlike most of the other sub-Saharan African countries, Uganda is a unique case at least in three viewpoints.　First, the various structural reforms including decentralization that the current administration of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) has been undertaking since it took its power in 1986 were not "donor driven." Instead they were born out of the aspiration of the Ugandans who do not wish to repeat the unfortunate post-independence history.　Donors and international agencies, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have played a very influential role in the reform process, but the government of Uganda has demonstrated a genuine commitment to reform policies.　This kind of commitment has not been so obvious in other African countries.

Second, the NRM asserts that it is adopting an "indigenous" African democracy in the country.　Decentralization in Uganda is a test case for an African style of institutional arrangement.　This is a "movement" in which all kinds of political forces are represented in a united "movement" in order to prevent sectarianism to tear the country into apart.　The movement system allows political parties to exist on paper, but does not allow them to engage in substantial party activities.　Apparently this is criticized by those parties who oppose the current movement.　But the people in Uganda are generally supportive to the current movement system, which brought general peace and eco-

nomic recovery since the late 1980s.

In the movement system, the NRM introduced the Resistance Council (RC) throughout the country when it took power.　This is a hierarchy of Councils and committees at five administrative levels from villages to districts.　The RC system was renamed as the LC system in 1995, and forms one of the important foundations for the current movement polity.　The LC system is a mechanism used by the NRM to deliver its messages to the people, and also a one utilized by the people to express their views by participating in local decision making process.　Without the LC system, the movement system presents few opportunities for popular participation.　The NRM maintains that people can fully participate in politics through the LC and not through competitions by political parties.　Thus, the LC system and the movement polity are two sides of the same coin.

Third, the LC system is not only for political democratization, but also is intended to serve as an effective mechanism for development in Uganda which still suffers from pervasive poverty despite the impressive macro economic growth since the late 1980s. Indeed, the NRM is pursuing a serious decentralization, and the LC system is expected to play a crucial role.　The NRM has learned a lesson that centralized structure did not prove to be effective both politically and developmentally in Uganda just as in other African countries.　Thus, the NRM, since the early days of power, has been directing for decentralization.　In a decentralized structure, it is anticipated that locally elected political leaders (Local Councillors) make visions for development, and these visions are implemented by local administrators.　The people express their views and participate in planning and implementing local development activities.　By so doing, it is hoped that accountability is improved.　Funds are used more effectively and efficiently, and the living conditions for Ugandans is expected to be improved.

Thus, if the LC system can deliver improved public services, it is fully appreciated by the people.　This in turn increases the people's support to the NRM.　The government efforts for decentralization is backed by its political desire that it wishes to stay on power for a long time by proving that they can deliver what people wish.　The political and development aspects of decentralization are therefore indivisible, and this is partly why the government is genuinely interested in the process of decentralization.

2. Progress brought by the LC system

The LC system was originally proposed, in the early days of NRM in power, as a "democratic organs of the people" in order to establish "effective, viable and representative Local Authorities."[1]　Since then a number of important steps have been taken.　In 1993 a first thirteen districts were decentralized, and they were given the authority to retain a proportion of locally generated revenue.　A new Constitution of the country

adopted in 1995 clearly stipulates the principles and structures of the LC system. The Constitution renamed the RC to LC. Following this new Constitution, the Local Government Act 1997 was enacted. This Act provides the legal framework of the LC system today. At the same time, the Act has streamlined institutional relationships between the Council and administrative hierarchies headed by central ministries.[3]

The LC system today is a consultative forum for local decision making. Elected Chairpersons of the Council form executive committees at respective levels, and propose policies for their legislative bodies of the Council, which are formed by the representatives of the people. The decisions are implemented by the civil service staff. This LC system is most clearly structured at district (LC 5) level, where district development plans are made and important policies are decided for respective districts. The actual public services are provided by sub-county (LC 3) level, where extension officers and community development workers are allocated. There are a number of positive contributions by the evolutions of the local government structure.

2-1　Political Involvement

With decentralization, ordinary people have opportunities to participate in decision-making process for the first time since colonial rule was imposed. This is a very significant change because before decentralization people felt little relationship with the administrative offices except being asked to pay taxes and other duties. Now the people have the opportunity to exercise their rights.

One such instance is the local elections, which took place in 1997 and 1998, following the Local Government Act 1997. Earlier in the RC system, it was only the RC 1 Councillors, which the ordinary people could directly elect. Others Councillors at the upper levels of the hierarchy were all elected by the Councillors at one lower level. Now most of the local leaders, including the chairperson of the LC 5 (equivalent to mayors), are directly elected by the people. This universal adult suffrage has increased the people's sense of involvement in policy-making process.

2-2　Development planning

An important change is made in policy-making process based on the LC system. All districts are now expected to compile respective District Development Plans (DDPs) reflecting the needs of the grassroots people. Rakai and Mukono Districts, for instance, are relatively advanced. Under the Rakai District Development Project assisted by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Rakai was the first district to produce the DDP in 1994, a year following the real beginning of decentralization in 1993. Mukono produced a similar DDP in 1997 without much donor support. Throughout the planning exercise, it was the local politicians who had to initiate actions,

including organizing meetings to listen to views of lower administrative units and of local opinion leaders. The Councillors also needed to prioritize activities for coherent planning. The planning process in Rakai in fact became the de fact standard for making similar DDPs in Uganda, and has been emulated by other districts. What is most significant is, therefore, the change of leadership in the planning process. While in the previous centralized system local administrators made the "sector" plans which were reported to the central ministries, now the local administrators report to their Local Council which in turn is held accountable to the people in each jurisdiction. This shift over the relationship of accountability and the style of leadership contributes to enhance that people feel more relevance of the LC system.

2-3 Gender Representation

Society in general is never homogenous, and there are different views on the way in which important decisions are made. Gender and ethnicity, among other dimensions, are really relevant to the process of representation at local level. If, for instance, men consider that women receive too much benefit from the LC system at the cost of men, this sort of zero-sum notion would not improve local governance. Likewise, ethnic diversities may be linked, either justifiably or not, to the same sort of zero-sum ideas. Many African countries suffer from gender inequalities, and Uganda is no exception. In order to reduce such gender imbalances, the NRM government has been taking measures. The new Constitution adopted in 1995 expresses explicitly the concern for gender equality.

The proportional representation of women at the Councils has increased significantly. While in the RC system only one out of nine Councillors has to be women, now one third of the Councillors are required to be women. Especially at the lower LC 1 and 2 levels, the women's representation has increased significantly. When RC included at least one women secretary, it was often reported that women's voices were not seriously heard by male colleagues.[6] Now the number of women Councillors is increased so that more men are exposed to women's views. In Mukono, several women stated:

> In meetings, it is now more comfortable to speak up. But this was not the case before. Husband mistreated wives before. Husbands either did not allow their wives to attend meetings, or did not allow them to speak in meetings.[7]

This is no small improvement, since gender disparities in Uganda is very significant in political, economic and social areas.

2-4 Financial Autonomy

Without a reasonable level of financial independence delegated from the central government to local governments, autonomous local activities, which are based on aspirations of local population, can rarely be carried out. The resource base of local governments is, however, very limited. On national average, only 13.2% of the revenue can be locally generated in the late 1990s.[8] Local governments thus depend heavily on central government transfers. On the other hand, the total amount of funds being transferred from central to local governments has steadily been increasing from FY 1993/94 to 1997/98. For this purpose, financial support by the central government to local authorities include conditional, unconditional and equalization grants.

The way in which the central government transfers finance to sub-national governments is indicative of increasing willingness by the central government to grant more financial autonomy to local governments. For instance, in FY 1998/99, the central government still preferred to conditional to unconditional grants since the former method allowed the central government's more control over local governments.[9] In FY 1999/2000, it was the first time that thirteen selected local governments received the equalization grant from the central government. This is a significant step forward. Although the equalization grant was clearly mentioned as one of the financial assistance schemes in the Local Government Act 1997, this issue has been politically very sensitive and technically difficult to be implemented. Nearly all districts claim that they can be the legitimate recipient of this equalization grant, which was intended to be provided for those districts that fall under the national average of poverty level and public service provisions. This first release of the equalization grant is an important progress for realizing more resources available to local governments. In Uganda where regional disparities are significant, especially between the north and the south, this leads to a new relationship between the central and local governments on financial arrangement.

2-5 Donors Assistance

Another important achievement on the improvement of financial resources by local government is the way in which donor funds are channeled. Previously all donor assistance needed to be based on an agreement between foreign donor(s) and the central government of the Republic of Uganda. The Rakai Project assisted by the DANIDA is very illustrative of a new experiment. In this project the DANIDA, while maintaining the agreement with the central government, also negotiated a parallel agreement with the district authority in Rakai. This allows the DANIDA to channel funds directly to Rakai with the notice to Kampala government. Approximately S 9 million was provided between 1992 and 1995 in the first phase of the project.[10] This increased the financial autonomy of Rakai District, and is very appreciated by various stakeholders.

Although the project encountered some problems, it undoubtedly contributed to enhance the capacity of local government offices, particularly the district. In the past the central government did not believe that local government could handle a large amount of development budget. Now, the Rakai project experience has demonstrated that local governments can manage this magnitude of resources if appropriate support is provided.

This model in fact is followed by other donors. Encouraged by the DANIDA experience in Rakai, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) is now implementing the District Development Project in five districts since 1998. Under this UNCDF project, the amount disbursed for each community at the grassroots is very small, but it has visible impacts. In the districts, where the project is implemented, local schools received many desks and chairs, for instance. There are other examples of small-scale grassroots development activities organized through the LC system, and are assisted by the project fund. For example, in one village in Mukono, a protected spring well was being constructed. This project was decided through the meeting at the LC. Then, the local people contributed their labour, while the Councillors contacted the higher administrative units for possible assistance. Fortunately it was the time that the project has just started in Mukono District, and the District office allocated a portion of the UNCDF funds to this small-scale project.

The UNCDF project is closely linked with a newly proposed Local Government Development Program funded by the World Bank.[11] The UNCDP project is a pilot phase, and is scheduled to be expanded largely by the Bank assistance. Since the World Bank is one of the most significant donors in Uganda, its involvement in developing local government system further in Uganda is no small implications. It is anticipated that donors are generally more in favor in assisting local governments in building their capacities for improved governance and service delivery.[12]

3. Realities of Decentralization

While decentralization has brought these improvements, it still faces serious shortcomings as well. Most people have heard of decentralization. However, except for those who are in the active leadership positions, people at the grassroots generally do not have clear understanding of it. A group of women said that "we have heard of it, but do not know what it means clearly. But the LC is familiar to us."[13] This succinctly summarizes the current situation, and this appears to be quite common in a number of villages in Uganda.[14] Even if Rakai and Mukono districts, which are the districts considered to be more advanced in the degree of decentralization than other districts, the situation is still the same. Consequently most of the people at the grassroots level do not know what their roles are vis-a-vis their Councilors and administrators.

Some people do not know who their Councillors are.　At LC 1 and 2 levels, because the Councillors and the ordinary people live in the vicinity, they normally know each other.　But, most of the grassroots people do not know their Councillors at LC 3 through 5 levels.　This is mainly due to very limited opportunities for mutual contacts between the people and Councillors for LC 3 through 5 levels.

The hierarchy of the Local Council system is supposed to work in two ways.　It is, on the one hand, to disseminate government policies from the top downwards.　On the other hand, the Councils are supposed to reflect people's views and needs and pass them to upwards.　Yet in reality, it functions more as a top down and less as a bottom up mechanism.　It was often pointed out by people at the grassroots level that the meetings are called often in short notice, and when the gatherings take place agenda is often already decided, and what the ordinary people wish to propose cannot be easily accommodated in these Council meetings.　Farmers in Mukono District expressed that "policy making is a top-down process.　We, the farmers, are not given changes to express our views.　We do not believe that farmers are well represented in the Council."[15]

In addition, people often complain the lack of feed back from previous meetings. Even if they express their views and the Councillors promise to take some kind of actions, in most of the cases nothing happens.　Thus they feel that whatever views they express, there is no change.　The same group of farmers continued that "the concerns raised by the people at the bottom do not seem to attract enough attention for problem resolving.　This makes us to feel that we are ignored."[16]

However, it should also be stressed that people still think it is very useful to gather together, and exchange views with each other.　Thus, majority of the people consider that the LC system is important and they are willing to participate in meetings.　One exceptional category of the people in this is the youth.　Their main concern is immediate income, since the unemployment rate is very high among the youth, particularly those who are not well educated.　Therefore, an attendance ratio for Council meetings among the youth is normally lower than older population.　One Councilor explained that "if we wish to attract the youth to come, we have to organize beer drinking in conjunction with the meetings."[17]

As a result, the ratio of participation by the people to Council meetings is not very high.　It is normally half to one third depending on the area.[18]　A similar study conduced by Tukahebwa reports that 63% of the people he asked said that they participate in the decision making process of the LC.

4. Different Views of Stakeholders

Decentralization involved various stakeholders, and they do not necessarily have

agreed views on decentralization: inter alia politicians, civil servants, international donors, international and national NGOs.　Their view can vary according to the level at which they are active: at a national level or at a local level.　For instance, national politicians may not necessarily support decentralization because it would reduce their influence on policy making at the benefit of local politicians.　Likewise, national and local civil servants may not have agreed views on decentralization.　Civil service staff in the centre tend to be ambiguous.　As long as decentralization does not curtail their influence on decision making, they do not oppose it.　They are already at the centre, and they do not have to be sent to take up local posts.　On the other hand, some may lose their jobs since the central government is undergoing the civil service reform which reduces the number of bureaucrats.　The civil servants at the local level also have mixed views on decentralization.　It, on the one hand, enhances their autonomy, which is liked by all.　On the other hand, they may stay at the current local posts and can no longer be transferred to central ministry posts easily.

The views of stakeholders also vary according to the levels of the Local Council. Generally LC 5 Councilors and administrators are supportive of decentralization since this improves resource utilization.　LC 3 level has mixed views: Councillors are generally supportive.　The technical staff/ administrators are ambivalent.　They are, on the one hand, supportive because their salary payments are more prompt than before. They, on the other hand, are skeptical since district and sub-district offices are not helping them to provide necessary transport, for instance.　LC 1 and 2 levels generally do not have much visible changes in service delivery, and this makes people at these levels skeptical about decentralization.

There are examples of significant perceptions gaps among important stakeholders. One such crucial instance is the frequency of contacts.　LC 5 Councillors maintain that when they are invited to the meetings of lower levels (particularly LC 3 and 1), they attend those.　But, for the ordinary people at LC 1and 2 levels, they rarely see LC 5 Councilors.　Most of the people responded that they see the LC 5 Councilors "maybe once a year." Tukahebwa points out that more than 70% of the people do not interact with their Councillors over the issues of local communities.[19]　The youth in Rakai expressed their views as follows.

> For LC 3 Councillors, we do not see them often.　Maybe once a year or even none.　For LC 5 Councillors, we never see them.　They just pass by cars, and never stop and see us.　They are worse than LC 3 Councillors.[20]

When this kind of view by the ordinary people at LC 1 and 2 levels is communicated to LC 5 Councillors, some still insist that such opinions are exaggerated.　One

justification put forwarded by some Councillors is that even if that is the case, they hear views often from Councillors working at lower administrative units.　Therefore they are well informed of the views of the grassroots people despite the limited direct contacts. But, for the people at the grassroots level, they normally do not receive sufficient information nor feed back of past meetings.　Thus they consider that the people at LC 5 levels are not seriously interested in hearing the views of "marginal people" at the grassroots level.　This is an important perception gap, which needs to be recognized by all. Unless stakeholders recognize this gap, corrective measures to utilize the LC system fully cannot be taken.　As long as this significant perception gap remains un-bridged, it is unlikely to create a common ground for positive-sum outcomes in the future.

5. Lack of Sufficient Information

People at the grassroots level desperately need more information.　There are a number of methods by which policy messages can be sent to the public, but most of them have problems.　Newspapers are expensive by the local income standard.　In remote areas such as Rakai, the newspaper vendors are very few.　Radio program sometimes broadcast the announcements of Council meetings, but the timing is not convenient for listeners, particularly farmers.[21]　Notices of meetings can be sent by memos from one hand to another, but this does not ensure that memo reaches the intended people and messages are understood.

Because of these problems, people are eager to receive any explanation of the current decentralization, and their own role in it.　Interestingly enough, people at the grassroots generally have more exposure to national budgets than to budgets of local governments.　Once adequate information is provided, it appears that more people are willing to participate in Council meetings, as well as to contribute their time and energy to group activities, which can improve their lives.　But lack of information including feedback of previous meeting discussions tends to foster people's suspicion that "the leaders are eating our money."[22]　Many people at the grassroots level considered that the leaders are just using them for their own benefits.　Some expressed that "we are used as their ladder."[23]　Some youth even said "we feel that we are neglected.　This is a bad feeling.　We even feel that we should perhaps vote for 'no-confidence' on them."[24]

The discussions held with the people at the grassroots helped them to clarify some possible misunderstandings.　During the discussions, when some explanation was provided over the process of decentralization, it was the first time for some of the people to receive such an explanation.　Additional explanation was, in various instances, also provided over the allocation of locally paid taxes.　A proportion of the tax can now be used by the LC 1 and 2 for the benefit of communities.　This in fact convinced some people to pay tax locally.　One woman expressed that "in the past I was unwilling to

pay my tax, because I was not clear how the money was used. Now, I am willing to pay it since I now know how it is used."[25] The level of understanding that people at the grassroots demonstrate appears to be improving year by year particularly in those areas where local leadership is effective.

The mistrust and suspicion by the ordinary people may be reduced by an improved supply of information. But information is only one of the causes of the mistrust. The attitudes of local leaders also contribute to the common statement of the people saying "our leaders are eating our money." There is a significant mutual discontent between the local leaders, particularly between LC 5 level and people at the grassroots. Both leaders and ordinary people rarely express what they really feel, but their mutual mistrust is not insignificant. The political and administrative leaders are relatively well educated, and many of them speak English. In the current electoral system, one needs to have sufficient financial resources in order to be elected. The leaders are therefore elites in Uganda. The leaders do not often consider that local people are capable enough to understand fully what they hope them to do. On the other hand, people at the grassroots level are less educated, less wealthy, and less confident to talk about public issues. People tend not to trust their leaders who they think are selfish and are only interested in pursuing their benefits at the cost of the people. People do not consider that the leaders are trustworthy.

This is not a conducive situation for making decentralization a positive-sum solution. As long as this kind of mutual distrust continues to be significant among important stakeholders, it is not likely that different stakeholders become more willing to partake joint activities for the benefit of all.

The lack of information, the mutual mistrusts between leaders and the people, together with the fact the agenda is mostly decided by the upper level, convince the people that the authority is hiding something from them. In Uganda's political culture, this sort of information probably still needs to be provided "from the above." People are not used to raise difficult political questions. Then, Councillors themselves need to spend more of their time and energy to explain how the LC system is supposed to work and what kind of roles that people themselves have to play in it.

6. Service Delivery

The picture over the intended improvements of service delivery by decentralization is at best mixed. The ultimate objective of decentralization is to reduce the persistent poverty in Uganda by improving the essential public services like health, education, transport and environmental management. However, this intention has not been fully realized. Generally, service providers, either health workers or teachers, claim that decentralization has brought better control over their resources, and this is one important

reason why civil service staffs are supportive to decentralization.[20]　Yet, on the other hand, service receivers do not express that the services are significantly improved in recent years.　This perception gaps is a critical challenge which needs to be tackled in the near future.

Another challenge is that local politicians prefer to have more visible and short term activities.　Time consuming social development activities are not always popularly pursued by the Councillors.　Environmental projects and primary health care activities are such examples.　This is understandable from politicians' standpoint, but may have a negative effect on appropriate prioritization of LC activities.　This has not attracted much attention among the policy makers yet, but has significant implication over the service delivery.

6-1　Health

Service providers maintain that decentralization has brought significant changes of service delivery.　Under the centralized system, the Ministry of Health used to standardize the health services throughout the country.　But now in collaboration with the LC system, particularly with a committee in charge of health and child welfare, each health unit can work, at least theoretically, according to the local situations.　The hospital managers both in Mukono and Rakai express their satisfaction over the improved management of their hospitals.　The health workers at a small rural health unit in Mukono express mixed views.　On the one hand, the collaboration with the LC system has brought the improvement of the services.　The Councillors can mobilize the people for health education and other services which require public participation.　Yet on the other hand, many, if not all, of these rural health units have some sort of problems, most of which is beyond their capacity to resolve.　They often seek support from LC 3 and occasionally LC 5, but normally it is rare that some remedial actions can be taken.　The views of health service providers are, therefore, not unanimous.　The degree of support to decentralized health services may be reduced as the level of administrative hierarchy reaches closer to the grassroots.

Health services in Uganda are heavily funded by donors, for example by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). There are variety of "vertical programmes." For example, local newspapers often carry articles in which in many parts of the country, Local Councillors brought some 80 to 90% of the children for polio immunization during the campaign period.　Although this is no small improvement in Uganda, these vertical programs often controlled by the Ministry through donor funding are not yet fully integrated with other services which are increasingly decentralized.　Additionally, the Ministry of Health has recently launched a new National Health Policy and Health Sector Strategic Plan, which appear to indicate

it's "half-hearted" position with decentralization.[27]

Probably encouraged by the reported progress, the Ministry of Health in 1998 started a new policy to promote decentralization of health services even further. This is called "health sub-district." The Ministry until recently controlled curative services of district hospitals directly under its supervision, while preventive services have been brought under the control of District Medical Office (DMO) by the government decentralization policy. Now the Ministry is putting the district hospitals also under the supervision of DMO, and the hospitals are to look after both curative and preventive services. They are to supervise and support the lower level medical units. For this purpose, each County (equivalent to MP constituency) is supposed to have a hospital. This "health sub-district" policy is significant at least in three aspects. First, the integration of curative and preventive services, including primary health care, is sough at the level of actual local service delivery. Second, this transfers some of the functions and responsibilities away from the DMO to lower levels where hospitals are actually located. Third, the hospitals which are proposed to work as a institutional pillar in this system can be publicly or privately managed. While in the past the public medical units and private clinics are operated more or less as a parallel system, this new policy seeks the collaboration of public and private medical service providers.[28]

For service recipients, the government health facilities still do not have sufficient medicines, and it is not satisfactory for most of the patients to go to government health centres and clinics to receive unsatisfactory treatment. If they can, they prefer to go to private clinics, particularly in urban areas. Thus, the recipients of health services have not yet realized the "decentralization dividends."

This presents an important policy issue. It may be a right time to reconsider whether the new policy of "health sub-districts" should be pursued now as the Ministry intends to do. There may be some tradeoffs of this policy. Before consolidating the decentralization of health services, it may not prove to be prudent to engage in a new policy to deepen it. With the public support, it is much easier to deepen the policy change. But without it, it may cause criticisms against it.

6-2　Education

Like the health services, education service providers generally support decentralization, because it has improved the management of resources allocated to districts and schools. Each Local Council has an education committee to discuss matters related to education and schools. This is a committee of local politicians, but works closely with the administrators. Each school has a school management committee, and the members include teachers, PTA representatives, and members of the education committee of the LC. While this arrangement is generally welcomed by district offices and the local

population, teachers are ambiguous on this.　Before the decentralization, teachers together with the PTA had more control over the management of schools.　Now the school management committee is in charge, and the degree of influence that teachers have on this process is reduced than before.　Thus, some teachers express disapproval to decentralization.　This means that, as in the case of health, the among the service providers there is no unanimous view on decentralization of education.　While district offices tend to be supportive, teachers are generally not fully convinced of the benefits of decentralized services.

Along with decentralization, another significant policy change in education is the Universal Primary Education (UPE).　Since its inception as a campaign promise of the presidential election in 1996, education is perhaps the most controversial policy arena. Under the UPE, a household can send up to four children to school without paying tuition, which is provided as a government subsidy.　As a result, the number of students who go to schools has increased dramatically.　The classrooms are crowded with new and returned students.　This resulted in an increased expenditure by households to put their children at schools (although the cost per student has declined by the government support due to the UPE).

Yet the views express by service recipient are not necessarily in line with this view. For those who were already at school, the quality of education has deteriorated due to the massive increase of pupils at schools.　Those who could not be at school before, the UPE has brought a significant improvement.　But parents almost unanimously complain that they are now asked to pay much more than before despite the government subsidy.[20]　They complain that the teachers are asking various kinds of payment now which was not the case before.　The exact amount of payment requested by teachers obviously varies from one school to another.　But the general tendency is that teachers now demand more payments justifying it with various reasons which range from a need to cater for increased pupils to a special support for examinations.　In addition, job prospects after primary schooling are not promising, and the unemployment rate for the youth is very high.　Thus, the parents are very dubious of the concrete benefits of decentralized educational services and the UPE.

This wide gap of understanding between the service providers and recipient undoubtedly creates a context in which some schools are accused of embezzling the subsidy for the benefit of teachers at the cost of students.　In 1999, the newspapers often reported articles in which principals and teachers were accused of embezzlement of UPE related funds.　After the Ministry of Education released the guidelines on the UPE funds, this kind of misuse appears to have been reduced significantly.

6-3 Environment

"Service providers" in environment commonly express that they are frustrated. In the overall management of the Council affairs, environmental issues do not attract high priority because people's awareness including the Councillors is not very high. There is an executive committee within the LC in charge of production, marketing and environment. But it appears that the committee is generally more interested in development than environment. Consequently, any environmental activities which need financial support cannot be easily carried out.

Within the administration, the positions of district environmental officer are newly created.[30] They normally do not have a required means of transport to inspect environmental issues locally. At the service delivery level of LC 3 administration unit, usually there is no specifically designated environmental officer. Thus, they often have to depend on other extension staff (for instance veterinary doctor and agricultural extension officer) at LC 3 level, who already face transport constraints.

The officers acknowledge challenges in the future. They consider that community based management approach through the LC to local environmental issues is probably the most promising way to tackle environmental degradation. For this to take place, awareness needs to be improved over the environmental issues, particularly among the Councillors who should be a good model for the local population.

There is no clearly definable "service recipient" not only because environment is a multi-dimensional issue, but also because the government has not been able to provide visible environmental services, unlike, for instance, educational and health services. Local people are aware of specific environmental issues like the reduction of forestry and air pollution. But unless real alternatives are provided for most of the people, especially for the poor, it is very difficult to change their current life style.

7. Gender Dimension

The proportional representation of women at the Councils has increased significantly. While in the RC system only one out of nine Councillors has to be women, now one third of the Councillors are required to be women. Although this is a significant improvement, the numerical increase of female representation in decision-making process does not automatically guarantee that the decisions are more gender sensitive. There appears to be a significant perception gap between men and women in general, and male Councillors and female counterparts in particular. Some male Councillors would not say this openly but privately acknowledge that we have already enough women Councilors in the Council, and we are very careful to women's issues. But female Councillors contend that although men have demonstrated improved understanding of women's and children's issues, women still wish men to become more sensitive on

gender issues. This is not a subject which can be resolved in a very short time, and therefore gradual but consistent improvement is really needed by the efforts of both men and women.

One effective approach is through the contributions by women Councillors at the LC meetings. But many of the women Councillors still need more training and support, and this is acknowledged by Councillors, including women Councillors themselves. They particularly need more skill training on leadership, lobbying and budgeting. The budgeting seems to be an extremely difficult subject for most of the Councillors. This is probably the single most important area which many women Councillors would really wish to be trained. Budgeting is like a particular kind of language. As a language, unless one is not used to it, one cannot understand it. There is no particular "smartness" required to "master" it, but one needs to be reasonably "fluent" with it.

Additionally the degree of complexity of issues, which the Councillors are asked to discuss, varies from one level to another. At LC 1 and 2 levels, issues are less complex, and they are familiar with the issues since most of the problems are related to their own communities. Here, Councillors including women do not necessarily face an acute psychological barrier to raise their voices, because the fellow Councillors are their neighbors. At the level of LC 5, for instance, issues are much more complex. Some of the Councillors have little experience in travelling throughout the district, and find difficult to understand fully some issues which originated from remote areas of the district. The issues also tend to have complicated political, economic and social implications. It needs a lot of courage for Councillors, especially for women, to express their views on these complex issues in front of other Councillors and senior civil service officers. It is natural for women, who do not have much exposure to these issues as well as to the way in which the public meeting such as Councils are managed, to feel hesitant to be vocal.

There have already been some training programs provided to Councillors including women in leadership, and presentation of their views. For instance, the training programs provided by the Decentralization Secretariat of course include women Councilors as a part of targeted beneficiaries. But as it happened before, training for women needs to be catered for their needs and responsibilities which they bear inside and outside of their houses. The women's double burden of being Councillors and of being a mother and/or a wife at home is really demanding, and designing of training programs should be catered for this. Unless somebody at the houses of female Councillors shares the household duties, women find it difficult to attend training away from home.

Women at the grassroots level generally confirm the kinds of difficulties indicated by women Councillors. The grassroots women expressed that generally it is easier to approach women Councillors when they have problems. On the other hand, the frequency of contacts between the grassroots women and the Councillors (including women

but not restricted to women) is not very often.   When women do not know female Councillors, it is not easy for women at the grassroots level to visit the offices of LC 3, let alone LC 5.   On the occasions of elections, women do not necessarily vote for women candidates only because the candidates are being women.   Women acknowledge that while they feel more comfortable with fellow women candidates, being a woman is not a determining factor for choosing suitable representatives in elections.   Other factors like personality, education, and opinions expressed by candidates are very influential in the voting process.   Capabilities and qualifications matter more than a gender factor.

In one grassroots meeting several women agreed to the following observation:

Generally, men do not understand women's issues.   For instance, some men refuse their wives to attend project meetings.   But the understandings by men seem to have improved than before.   It is slightly better now.   In the past, men suppressed women a lot.   It is still happening, but it is less now.[31]

This statement appears to indicate that the society in Uganda is now undergoing an important transition on gender issues, and the LC system is closely related to such transition at local level.

8. Ethnicity Diversities

Ethnicity is another element which may divide the society in addition to gender. One study reports that 20% of the Councillors witnessed ethnic related controversies in the management of Council affairs.   There have been some incidents complicated by ethnicity.   According to this study, although ethnic rivalries and/or prejudices may not surface in normal circumstances, once unsatisfactory decisions are being taken, or elections are considered to be biased by ethnic background, then ethnicity can create negative influences over the day to day management of Council affairs.[32]

But generally the ethnic element is not overwhelming the LC system.[33]   The same study concludes that the ethnic element does not significantly come into the management of LC.   When group discussions are held at the grassroots level, the people unanimously rejected that ethnic differences influence how people form their views.[34] However, one needs to be careful to read this discourse.   In one meeting, a local school teacher was presenting his views.   What is very interesting is that it took a long time for a relatively well educated person to realize how the same situation can be interpreted differently by looking at a viewpoint of different ethnic groups.   This appears to indicate that in the future it may be possible that ethnic rivalries may come into the process

of decentralization and complicate the LC system.　For instance, some areas become better of by managing their resources effectively, while other areas cannot improve the living conditions significantly.　If this unequal development is linked to ethnic reasons, then this can be a dangerous background against which politicians may justify unhealthy actions.　In fact the political stalemate at Tororo District Council in the middle of 2000 is at least partly related to the complicated multi-ethnic society in this area.

9. Zero-sum or Positive-sum Solution

An important question is whether the people in Uganda comprehend the notions of zero sum and positive sum, and apply them to decentralization.　If these notions are understandable, they themselves can devise some actions to make decentralization an even more positive-sum solution.

A question was asked to groups of people at grassroots level whether the decentralization has so far created a more zero-sum situation or a positive-sum one.　People generally grasped the idea of zero sum and positive sum quite easily if a simple example is used for explanation.　These concepts were apparently very appealing to the people. Then, most of the people responded that it is closer to a zero-sum situation.　This, however, does not necessarily mean that the people are not getting any benefits at all from the decentralization process.　Instead, they express their complaints that even if they gain some benefit, it is too small compared with what others are gaining.　The common expression of "our leaders are eating our money" may symbolizes inequity that people at the grassroots level do not receive as much benefit as "big people get." Farmers thought that they receive too little compared with what business people get.　The farmers say that they are ignored while urban traders are well treated.

> In decentralization, farmers are marginalized.　The business community earns a lot at the cost of the farmers.　Thus, the government intervention is needed.　Some politicians are very business oriented, and do not understand the issues faced by the farmers.　Society generally may have little knowledge of the farmers.　Farmers' associations generally are not assisted by the government but by donors.[35]

Similarly, people in rural areas also considered that their benefits are too small compared with those of the people in cities, particularly in Kampala.　Rural people complained that "our tax is used mostly by the people in town, and we receive little benefits."[36]　People at the grassroots also express that it is mainly the rich who do not pay tax, while the poor would pay their tax.　Women insist that men are still getting more than what women deserve.　People in one area think that other areas are receiving too much government support.　Although ethnicity is not at the moment a signifi-

cant factor, this can be a crucial element to change the game into a zero sum or even to a negative sum. Therefore, the disproportionate distribution of the benefits makes them feel that it is more appropriate to describe it as a zero sum.

The degree of the people's notion of zero-sum increases as the level of administrative hierarchy moves upward. At LC 1and 2 levels, people are more familiar with each other. Therefore, chances are more likely that rules of the game can be more positive sum. But as for the district level (LC 5), ordinary people feel that the situation is more like a zero sum. The people at the grassroots tend to believe that they suffer while the LC 5 leaders are prosperous. This situation cannot form the basis for positive sum, and again highlights the importance of information dissemination to convert zero-sum situation to positive-sum ones.

Conclusions: Toward a more positive sum

Based on the findings of this research, some lessons can be drawn. First, decentralization is a learning process. The administrative and financial structural change from centralized to decentralized governance involves many different kinds of stakeholders. All of them need to redefine their role in a new system. This is by no means a trivial task particularly where little information and explanation is made available.

Because the current system has been in place for a relatively short period of time, and the people experience of the local election is only for one time, apparently it still has various kinds of shortcomings. Some of them are manipulated by the short-sighted people. For example, it is not surprising that some people did not "wisely" elected their leaders.[37] But the fact that the people grasped the notion of zero sum and positive sum itself is a step for creating positive-sum situations.

Decentralization changes the relationship of all stakeholders, especially between the people and the state. Before the LC was in place, people in Uganda generally are not used to raise questions on public policies. This attitude may tend to be found more clearly in Buganda area. At one meeting, women in Mukono said that because of this past legacy, "we normally fear to talk about the government policies and their problems."[38] This appears to be a common perception. Historical experiences in Uganda have taught them to be "quiet" in public issues. It is only recently that participation at LC meetings are encouraged and in fact welcomed by the state. It undoubtedly takes certain time to realize that it is up to people themselves to use these opportunities meaningfully.[39] The learning process has begun, and is encouraging people to think carefully what they did not consider before. As the LC system becomes more familiar and acceptable to the people, there is a possibility that the LC system can become a good example of "African democracy."[40]

Second, although it still faces formidable remaining issues which need to be re-

solved in the near future, the LC system has also created some genuine positive signs, which are appreciated by the people at the grassroots level.   In some instances of small-scale development activities at the grassroots level, people have started to demonstrate that they are more willing to work together for mutual benefits than before.   These are very small examples, yet for the people at grassroots level they are the really visible signs for positive changes.   People at the grassroots level have just started to learn how the LC system and decentralization can benefit them.   As concrete activities can demonstrate changes, people are expected to become more collaborative in joint activities for positive sum.   Some people in Mukono considered that:

> Development should be done both by the government and us, the people.   Collective efforts may be good.   Mutual cooperation may be helpful.   So far, it has been largely individual efforts.   We need to bring people together.   Collective efforts tend to work more easily in other areas of Uganda.   Maybe there people have less resources.   In the central area, it still tends to be very individual efforts.[11]

What is particularly hopeful is that these attempts may illustrate that ideas and attitudes can compensate for the financial and other constraints that most, if no all, of the LC face.   In the near future even if the donors are more willing to assist the local governments, financial and other difficulties will remain.   Then, what may be crucial is the people's ideas and aspirations that can make up the missing resources yet at the same time can create positive-sum solutions.   Decentralization in Uganda is still facing formidable challenges, but it has at least some possibilities that the country can enjoy its better future.

Endnotes

1) Apter 1997 Introduction, particularly on page lxxii.
2) This movement polity backed by the LC hierarchy received support by the majority of people in Uganda in the National Referendum held on 29 June 2000.   In the referendum, people preferred the continuation of the current non-party democracy to multiparty democracy.
3) Less weight is placed on the achievement than the challenges, since my previous article has already focused on the positive gains.   See Saito 2000.
4) Republic of Uganda, 1987.
5) For the background of decentralization see Saito, 2000.
6) Aili Mari Tripp, 1998b and Tabitha Mulyampiti, 1989.
7) Lunbugu, Rakai 25 August 1999
8) Information by the Local Government Finance Commission.
9) Republic of Uganda, 1998a.
10) Rakai District Council, 1994.
11) See http://www.worldbank.org/pics/pid/ug2992.txt.   Assessed 21 March, 2000.
12) The UNCDF project has an incentive mechanism for better performance.   If one district performs satisfactorily, then in the next fiscal year, it can receive an additional financial sup-

ز(

ша

List of References

Apter, David E. *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study of Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Frank Cass, 1997)

Ake, Claude *Democracy and Development in Africa,* (Brookings Institution , 1995)

Brett,E. A. *Providing for the Rural Poor: Institutional Decay and Transformation in Uganda* IDS Research Reports 23 (Institute of Development Studies, 1992)

Chabal, Patrick and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (The International African Institute, 1999)

CITF International, 'Uganda National Integrity Survey 1998 Final Report' (Kampala, 1998)

Clayton, Andrew ed., *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies,* (INTRAC, 1996)

Clayton, Andrew "NGOs and Decentralised Government in Africa," INTRAC Occasional Papers Series No. 18 (INTRAC, 1998)

Chambers, Robert, *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last,* (Intermediate Technology Pulications, 1997)

Cockcroft, Anne *Performance and Perceptions of Health and Agricultural Services in Uganda. A Report Based on the Findings of the Baseline Service Delivery Survey, December 1995.* (World Bank, 1996)

Dicklitch, Susan *The Elusive Promise of NGOs in Africa: Lessons from Uganda* (Macmillan, 1998)

Flanary, Rachel and David Watt "The State of Corruption: A Case Study of Uganda," *Third World Quarterly* 20(3) 1999

Gershberg, Alec Ian 'Decentralisation, Recentralisation and Performance Accountability: Building and Operational Useful Framework for Analysis,' *Development Policy Review* (London, 1998)

Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick *Decentralisation, democracy and Developmen Administration in Uganda, 1986-1996.* Doctoral Dissertation submitted to the London School of Economics and Political Science, 1999

Hansen, Bernt and Michael Twaddle ed. *Developing Uganda* (James Currey, 1998)

Hansen, Bernt and Michael Twaddle "Uganda: The Advent of Non-party Democracy" in John A. Wiseman ed. *Democracy and Political Change* (Routledge, 1995)

Hyden, Goran and Michael Bratton ed. *Governance and Politics in Africa* (Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1992)

Karlstrom, Mikael "Imagining Democracy: Political Culture and Democratisation in Buganda" *Africa* 66 (4) 1996

Langseth, Peter 'Civil Service Reform in Uganda: Lessons Learned,' *Public Administration and Development,* 15(4) (1995)

Langseth, Peter, J. Katorobo, E. Brett, and J. Munene ed. *Uganda: Landmarks in Rebuilding a Nation* (Fountain Publishers, 1995)

Migdal, J. S. *Strong Societies and Weak States,* (Princeton University Press, 1988)

Ministry of Gender and Community Development, 'Country Report in Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995' (Kampala, 1995)

Mulyampiti, Tabitha 'Political Empowerment of Women in Uganda: Impact of Resistance Councils and Committees' MA Thesis for the Department of Women Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Makerere University (Kampala, 1989)

Neilsen, Henrik A. 'Decentralisation Experience: From Noakhali to Rakai' in Villadsen and Lubanga ed. (1996)

Obbo, Christine "Healing Cultural Fundamentalism and Syncreticism" *Africa* 66(2) 1996

Okuonzi, Sam A. and Francis X. K. Lubanga 'Decentralization and Health Systems Change in Uganda' A Report on the Study to Establish Links between Decentralization and Changes in

the Health System. (Kampala, 1995)

Ottemoeller, Dan "Popular Perceptions of Democracy: Elections and Attitudes in Uganda' *Comparative Political Studies*, 31(1) 1998

Rakai District Council, 'Rakai District Development Plan', (Kyotera, 1994)

Regan, Anthony 'A Comparative Framework for Analysing Uganda's Decentralisation Policy' in Langseth, Katorobo, Brett, and J. Munene ed. (1995)

Regan, Anthony 'Decentralisation Policy: Reshaping State and Society' in Hansen and Twaddle ed. (1998)

The Republic of Uganda, *Commission of the Inquiry into the Local Government System* (Kampala, 1987)

The Republic of Uganda, *Background to the Budget 1998/99*, (Kampala, 1998a)

The Republic of Uganda, *Poverty Eradication Action Plan Volume I Final Draft*, (Kampala, 1998b)

Republic of Uganda, the Ministry of Health, "Health Sub-district in Uganda: Concept paper" (Entebbe, 1998c)

Republic of Uganda, the Ministry of Health, National Health Policy (Kampala, 2000a)

Republic of Uganda, the Ministry of Health, Health Sector Strategic Plan (Kampala, 2000b)

Ribot, Jesse C. "Decentralisation, Participation and Accountability in Sahelian Forestry: Legal Instruments of Political-Administrative Control" *Africa* 69 (1) 1999

Saito, Fumihiko "Decentralization for Participatory Development in Uganda: Limitations and Prospects," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Ryukoku University (2000)

Sedigh, Shahrzad and Augustine Ruzindana "The Fight Against Corruption in Uganda," in Stapehhurst, Rick and Sahr J. Kpundeh ed. *Curbing Corruption: Toward a Model for Building National Integrity* (World Bank 1999)

Semakula, Vicent 'Rakai District in Development: Consequences of Decentralilsation,' in Soren Villadsen and Francis Lubanga ed. 1996

Soren Villadsen and Francis Lubanga, *Democratic Decentralisation in Uganda: A New Approach to Local Governance*. (Fountain Publishers, 1996)

Stapehhurst, Rick and Sahr J. Kpundeh ed. *Curbing Corruption: Toward a Model for Building National Integrity* (World Bank 1999)

Tripp, Aili Mari, 'Expanding 'Civil Society': Women and Political Space in Contemporary Uganda,' in Nelson Kasfir ed. *Civil Society and Democracy in Africa: Critical Perspectives* (Frank Cass, 1998a)

Tripp, Aili Mari 'Local Women's Associations and Politics in Contemporary Uganda,' in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle, ed. (1998b)

Tukahebwa. Geoffrey B. 'The Role of District Councils in the Decentralisation Programme in Uganda,' in *The Quest for Good Governance: Decentralisation and Civil Society in Uganda*, (Kampala, 1997)

UNDP, *Uganda Human Development Report 1997*, (Kampala, 1997)

Uganda Participatory Development Network, *Decentralization: What Opportunities for Participation?* (Kampala, 1999)

Villadsen. Soren 'Decentralization of Governance,' in Villadsen and Lubanga ed. (1996)

Villadsen, Soren and Francis Lubanga ed. *Democratic Decentralisation in Uganda: A New Approach to Local Governance*. (Fountain Publishers, 1996)

Wallman, Sandra *Kampala Women Getting By: Wellbeing in the time of AIDS*, (James Currey, 1996)

Widner, Jennifer and Alexander Mundt "Researching Social Capital in Africa" *Africa* 68(1) 1998

World Bank, *Rethinking Decentralization in Developing Countries* (Washington, D. C., 1998)

World Bank, *World Development Report 1999/2000* (Washington, D. C., 1999)