



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN UGANDA'S LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

HANDBOOK

November 2013

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Foreword

Uganda's decentralised service delivery framework provides for a mixture of approaches to service delivery. Thus, are direct provision by Local Governments; private sector and civil society. These are guided by various instruments.

The Ministry of Local Government has now developed principles to guide service delivery in Uganda's Local Governments as contained in this handbook.

I would like to thank the United Nations Development Programme that financed the development of these principles. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions from the sampled Local Governments that participated in the study.

In the some, The Decentralisation Management Technical Working Group (DMTWG) is also appreciated for the input they made and for validating the compilation of the principles.

I would, therefore, like to recommend and urge Local Governments together with our partners to use this document as a resource for effective service delivery.



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1.0 Introduction

Uganda's decentralized service delivery framework provides for a mixture of approaches to service delivery. These are: direct provision by local governments; private sector delivery; and civil society service delivery. These are guided by various instruments. However, there are no harmonized principles to guide service delivery. The Ministry of Public Service has developed *Guidelines for Service Delivery Standards* and the Ministry of Local Government has developed *Local Governments Annual Performance Review Guidelines*. The principles we have developed here are meant to complement these above stated guidelines.

1.1 Public service

A public service is a product delivered or activity that is carried out that meets the needs of a wide section of users. An effective public service is one based on an undertaking by the provider to understand needs of the users by providing information, products and advice are tailored to the specific needs of the users.

1.2 Service delivery

Service delivery refers to a relationship between policy makers, service providers, and consumers of those services, and encompasses both services and their supporting systems. Service delivery is a mechanism used by an organization to meet the needs and aspirations of the people it is meant to serve. Political and Technical Assessments of the effectiveness of public organizations such as Local Governments (LGs) occur continuously in most Countries. These review how effectively local governments meet the service delivery standards of the country. Confidence in local governments derives from demonstrated capability to deliver services in a way that meets national and public needs. These should address the needs of the community by providing quality services.

The ability of a local government to meet national service delivery needs is a source of credibility on their part. Conversely, local governments face a critical test when they fail to meet peoples' expectations. At the centre of service delivery is accountability, value for money, efficient and effective use of resources, improved communication and decision-making processes. If the accountability process is weak, value for money will not be realized. Effective service delivery is about providing the services that meet the

needs of the users in the most efficient and effective ways. Sharing best practices leads to effective and efficient service designs and implementation.

1.2.1 International Principles guiding effective service delivery

- i. **Availability:** A service should be available at the time and scale that the user needs it.
- ii. **Dependability:** A service should be delivered regularly and on time.
- iii. **Usability:** A service should be presented in user specific formats so that the client can fully understand.
- iv. **Usefulness:** A service should be designed to respond appropriately to user needs.
- v. **Credibility:** A service be designed in such a way that the user can confidently and conveniently apply it in solving his/her problem or need.
- vi. **Authenticity:** A service should be delivered in such a way that entitles it to be accepted by stakeholders in given decision-making contexts.
- vii. **Responsive and flexible:** A service should directly respond to the evolving user needs.
- viii. **Sustainability:** A service should be affordable and consistent over time.
- ix. **Expandability:** A service should be applicable to different kinds of approaches.

1.2.2 Elements of service delivery Designs in Local Governments

Local governments (LGs) should improve service delivery as part of their responsibility to the people. Hence, local governments should:

- i. Evaluate citizens' needs, priorities and decisions;
- ii. Increase understanding and act upon socio-economic needs of the citizens in order to design appropriate service delivery mechanisms;
- iii. Improve decision-making capacity of leaders at all levels;
- iv. Continuously improve service delivery mechanisms to meet changing needs and demands of the citizens;

- v. Provide relevant, timely, cost-effective and useful services that are beneficial to the people;
- vi. Increase collaboration and cooperation between local governments and central Government agencies;
- vii. Define the outcome, effectiveness and relevance of each mechanism to be used;
- viii. Effectively use performance management approaches, tools and methods to evaluate the services delivered;
- ix. Ensure that the information received is acted upon;
- x. Increase participation of people in decision-making for service delivery;
- xi. Learn from successful and unsuccessful outcomes;and
- xii. Share responsibility with all actors engaged in local government service delivery.

2.0 Principles of Service Delivery in Uganda's Local Government System

Principle 1: Conscious Strengthening of Service Standards. This refers to services in terms of quantity, quality, time and cost of service delivered.

Best practices:

Local Governments should:

- i. Follow established procurement guidelines;
- ii. Acquaint themselves with PPDA Act;
- iii. Follow Financial and Accounting Regulations;
- iv. Follow the Local Government Act as the key to governance in LGs;
- v. Follow works / service guidelines issued by service sectors;
- vi. Inspects and advise on services;
- vii. Adhere to Bills of Quantities in contract management; and
- viii. Implement agreed Client Charters.

Principle 2: Uncompromisable Quality of Service. This refers to clients' expectations and satisfaction with the quality of service delivered.

Best practices:

Local Governments should ensure:

- i. Effective technical supervision;
- ii. Effective political monitoring;
- iii. Sticking observance of the laws and regulations;
- iv. Work plans match with outputs of the contracted services;
- v. Receipt of citizens' complaints and offer of feedback;
- vi. Establishment of effective project committees;
- vii. Knowledge of procurement rules;
- viii. Competitive bidding for contracts;
- ix. Adequate capacity of local contractors;
- x. Contract/bid amount match with available budget line;
- xi. Effective use of Force Account reduces cost of service;
- xii. Best evaluated contractor gets contract; and
- xiii. Existence of and adherence to procurement plans.

Principle 3: Professionalism and technical adequacy of contracting firms. This refers to degree to which firms providing services adhere to their ethical and technical competencies.

Best practices:

Local governments should ensure:

- i. Scrupulous identification of competent firms;
- ii. Ensure enforce ethical practices of the contracting firms;
- iii. Issuance of certificate of completion of contract to companies;
- iv. Works are launched and commissioned to increase public scrutiny;
- v. Appreciation of excelling contractors before the council meetings of local governments;and
- vi. Non- performing firms are blacklisted.

Principle 4: Effective and rigorous supervision of contracts. This refers to the extent to which technical and political leadership holds service providers accountable.

Best practices:

Local governments should ensure:

- i. Technical personnel are well facilitated to supervise contracts;
- ii. There is an in-built supervision fund in all project funding portfolios;
- iii. Local citizens are involved in monitoring contracts;
- iv. Existence of schedule of supervision in local government;
- v. Retention of a percentage of contract sum improves contractor's compliance;
- vi. Six months defect liability increases contractors' compliance;
- vii. Registration of local citizens' concerns in a 'site book' to enhance feedback;
- viii. Involvement of management committees in school facility grants projects;
- ix. That cooperation is rendered to the Resident District Commissioners who are facilitated by the Office of the President to monitor projects;
- x. Central Governments projects /services in local governments be managed by local governments; and
- xi. A high completion rate of local projects.

Principle 5: Citizens' Satisfaction with Service Delivery. This is meant to ensure that the ordinary citizen is the focus of service delivery and realizes the value for money.

Best practices:

Local governments should:

- i. Issue Quarterly reports on projects to local constituencies;
- ii. Display project bids on public notice boards;
- iii. Hold budget conferences to increase visibility of projects;
- iv. Increase popular accountability through local *barazas* / village public dialogues between the citizens and local government officials;
- v. Ensure public suggestion boxes are available in accessible places;
- vi. Raise consensus on project implementation through participatory decision making;
- vii. Citizens' issues and complaints are the centre of debate in project management;
- viii. Citizens Service Charters are implemented in all local governments;
- ix. Public – Private partnerships have improved service delivery;
- x. Use of consultants helps improve technical aspects of projects; and
- xi. Insist on Bank guarantees on large contracts to increase contract security.

Principle 6: Transparent and open outsourcing of services. This refers to fair play in business and public procurement of service providers.

Best practices:

Local Governments should:

- i. Outsource services that are not directly delivered by local governments;
- ii. Ensure high level trust between local government and private firms;
- iii. Increase their capacity to lobby for partnerships;
- iv. Ensure smooth principal-agent relations;
- v. Ensure efficiency, cost-cutting and quality gains are sustainable;
- vi. Encourage answerability and “value for money” in private-public partnerships;
- vii. Measure the magnitude of risks, size of investment, capacity of partners and responsibilities expected from each partner; and
- viii. Strengthen transparency and accountability in the contractual arrangements in private-public partnerships.

Principle 7: Accountable and equitable civil society services. This refers to civil society taking lead in delivering services in an exemplary manner to all clients and stakeholders.

Best practices:

Civil society organizations should:

- i. Practice international standards in service delivery;
- ii. Have some form of Memorandum of Understanding with local governments;
- iii. Encourage effective citizen participation in their programs;
- iv. Genuinely deal with issues of vulnerability and social equity;
- v. Work jointly with local governments in development projects;
- vi. Encourage sister CBOs to register and get a certificate;
- vii. Present their work plans and financial status to local governments; and
- viii. Consult local governments on priority services needed in their area.

Principle 8: Good governance-focused institutional framework for service delivery. This refers to good service delivery processes and practices.

Best practices:

Local governance institutions and processes should:

- i. Ensure accountabilities for political and technical leaders in all local governments;
- ii. Ensure all stakeholders act transparently, with clear information flows and feedbacks;
- iii. Facilitate statutory bodies to effectively do their work;
- iv. Encourage joint meetings / monitoring sessions to promote good relations between elected leaders and centrally appointed officials;
- v. Ensure sector committees fulfill their oversight functions;
- vi. Preserve independence of committees and Council decisions; and
- vii. Create a platform to harmonize relations among local government leaders.

Principle 9: Adequate mobilization of resources for service delivery. This refers to intergovernmental fiscal relations and local revenue raising mechanisms in local governments.

Best practices:

Central Government should:

- i. Allocate a constitutionally determined percentage of the national budget to local governments;
- ii. Allow flexibility to local governments' use of conditional grants;
- iii. Ensure timely release of funds to local governments;
- iv. Allow local governments to roll-over unutilized funds into the next financial year;
- v. Ensure timely auditing of local government finances and activities;
- vi. Leave more taxable sources of revenue to local governments;

- vii. Make new laws to effectively support collection of local revenue;and
- viii. Avoid interference in local tax collection.

Local governments should:

- i. Avail funds for project implementation.
- ii. Explore new areas for local income generation.
- iii. Intensify effort to improve local revenue collection.
- iv. Generate adequate data to support local revenue collection.
- v. Sensitise citizens on tax compliance.
- vi. Increase capacity and motivation for local tax collection.

Principle 10: Efficient and frugal utilization of resources. This refers to prudent use of available resources by local governments.

Best practices:

Local Governments should:

- i. Build strong capacity for financial management;
- ii. Institute financial discipline;
- iii. Strengthen capacity for political supervision of finances;
- iv. Ensure effective use of integrated financial systems;
- v. Ensure effectiveness of oversight institutions; and
- vi. Avoid spending on non-priority items.

Principle 11: Inclusive and participatory planning in local governments. This refers to popular participation of the ordinary people in deciding their choices of service delivery.

Best practices:

Local governments should:

- i. Support inclusive and participatory planning process for ordinary citizens;
- ii. Provide capacity building for local leaders in planning skills;
- iii. Ensure availability of finances to facilitate participatory planning;and
- iv. Ensure use of Output Budget Tool in all local government budgets.

Principle 12: Socio-economic empowerment of ordinary citizens through national and local programmes. This refers to effectiveness in implementation of poverty reduction projects that benefit citizens at the local level.

Best practices:

The Central Government and local governments should strengthen programmes like LGMSD, NAADS, LED and others to:

- i. Help empower ordinary citizens develop skills to cater for their needs;
- ii. Help establish successful income generation projects for ordinary citizens;
- iii. Introduce projects to provide employment opportunities to ordinary citizens;
- iv. Empower citizens to benefit from government programmes; and
- v. Improve ordinary citizens' engagements with the service deliverers.

3.0 Implementation Framework for these Principles

Service delivery principles have been developed in line with the mandate of the Ministry of Local Government. The Ministry develops sector policies, coordinates, monitors, guides, supervises, mentors and supports local governments in implementation of decentralized services.

The decentralization policy is guided by the Constitution, the Local Government Act (cap 243), the Decentralisation Policy Strategic Framework (DPSF), the Fiscal Decentralization Strategy (FDS), the Local Government Sector Strategic Plan (LGSSP), the Public Sector Management Strategic Investment Plan (PSM-SIP) and the National Development Plan (NDP). PSM-SIP outlines strategic coordination and investment in key strategic sectors of government. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) coordinates the sectors. Strategic public sectors under PSM-SIP include: Ministry of Local Government, Local Government Associations, Local Government Finance Commission, Ministry of Public Service, Public Service Commission, and Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA). PSM-SIP recognizes that in local Governments “Public service delivery challenges are currently very serious”. It points at key decentralization challenges including: a high rate of district creation, lack of implementation capacity, understaffing, revenue shortfalls, waste and corruption, poor funding, and low local revenue generation. On its part, the NDP calls for streamlining of the planning processes and harmonization of service delivery sectors.

3.1 Service delivery and programme management approaches

Service delivery in government especially at the local government level has been evolving, and various approaches adopted depend on the context and decisions of each local government.

Service delivery is slightly different from *service provision*. Service provision refers to the whole process of planning public services while service delivery refers to mechanisms of policy implementation. In Uganda's local government system, service delivery approaches include: direct provision by the local government, public-private partnerships (PPPs), participation of civil society (CSOs) and privatization (letting individuals or companies to provide the services). Much of the service provision is done by the stakeholders, either independently or in partnership with local state institutions.

3.2 Approaches to management of service delivery:

(a) *Direct provision:*

This is the traditional approach to service provision. A local government takes up the responsibility of providing services direct to the community. Thus, a local government plans, executes, monitors and evaluates the service. This has worked successfully to some extent. For example, the government of Uganda has given road maintenance equipment to most of the local governments, anticipating that they will directly service the roads in their areas. This is intended to be cost-saving. There are a number of limitations to this approach such as inadequate transparency and accountability, corruption, local capture, low levels of efficiency, red tape bureaucracy, low levels of job completion and many other challenges.

(b) *Public-Private Partnerships:*

Public private partnerships are now a national strategy for service delivery¹. These are arrangements between Government and the private sector for the purpose of providing public infrastructure, community facilities and services in general. The partnerships include the private sector, public sector and civil society organizations. The partners share investments, risks and the benefits among themselves.

There are contractual relationships between local governments and profit organizations (either companies or individuals giving a service with a motive of profit). Other arrangements are with non-profit organizations or civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs are partners because they either provide or monitor on behalf of the local government or the public to ensure that people's interests are taken care of by the service providers.

1 See The National Development Plan pp.64-66.

4.0 Application of Principles

The principles should apply as follows:

- a) **Adequacy:** this applies to quantities, number or volume of service and output to be delivered or provided.
- b) **Excellence:** the extent to which the output, performance or service satisfies the client and or meets the required quality or standard.
- c) **Economy:** this applies to unit cost in relation to use of resources to deliver a specific output or service.
- d) **Service process:** the necessary steps to be taken before actual service delivery.
- e) **Time management:** the time taken by the service deliverer to accomplish a given task or assignment.
- f) **Ease of access:** applies to convenience, choice, relevance, timeliness, discipline, affordability and distance involved in obtaining a service.
- g) **Propinquity:** the level at which planned services reach the targeted beneficiaries, especially at the grassroots.

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