Appendix 4: Governance and political structure

**Political accountability:** The Constituent Assembly elections were free and fair: pro-Movement candidates won two-thirds of the seats but multi-partyists won nearly all the seats in the north underlining the degree to which the country remains politically polarized along ethnic lines. The Constituent Assembly is currently working its way through the draft Constitution, agreeing drafting changes. One point that should be noted is that the men out-number the women in the Assembly and on contentious issues, they out-vote them.

Uganda has a clear need for institutions imposing accountability, political integrity, and commitment to public service. "Paradoxically, the independent African state consolidates power at the political centre and extracts considerable economic resources from society; yet it spends much of what it obtains on itself and lacks the capacity to spur the country’s development as a whole.” (Bratton and Rothchild, 1992, p263). Governance requires less administrative management, and more political management which involves particularly developing networks of reciprocity and exchange.

Social and economic groups in civil society should be encouraged to make sure politics works properly. This includes businessmen, trade unionists and professionals as well as representatives of political, cultural, religious and educational organisations and the media. These groups have a role in marshalling information, organising opinion, and monitoring the action of politicians and officials.

**The public debate in Uganda:** Recent controversial issues that have been or will be discussed include the return of the kings, multi-partyism and federalism (which on bears on issues of government and taxation).

Poverty reduction does not figure prominently in public debate. The poor have little political voice and Uganda does not have a political ideology which stresses equity. This has implications for poverty reduction agendas and their "ownership". "In spite of wide distribution of the report, there is little evidence that Growing Out Of Poverty and other Bank poverty-relevant documents such as the agricultural, social sector and NGO reports or the Public Expenditure Reviews, have been the object of continuing debate in policy-making circles, among academics, NGOs, and the press" (Goetz et al, p38). The authors suggest there might be a number of reasons for this including the fact that the documents propose few deviations from existing policy, a sense of alienation from the process or that most policy discussion takes place between the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the World Bank. It may also be that the documents are too long and hard to follow, or that there is not a tradition of debate about economic policy, since for many years Uganda did not really have one. It is still hard to know what priority is being given by government to poverty reduction issues and it has not been made clear why the Government of Uganda should currently have poverty as one of its main foci of attention. This is not the case in most countries now and economic transition and growth in most Western countries involved increasing inequality and considerable poverty. However, given the source of much of the finance for the Ugandan government, which is voters in Western countries, it would be a good idea to integrate poverty-aware procedures and institutions throughout the civil service, local government, reports, and policies.

Current economic policy has not been presented to the electorate for political debate and argument. Rather it is determined by a dialogue between key Ministries and the leading donors and is dealt with and presented as a technical rather than political matter.

**Civil service reform:** The civil service reform is part of a broader restructuring programming involving decentralisation, liberalisation, privatisation, and constitutional reform. To date a considerable reduction in ghost workers (42,000 removed since 1992 including a large number of "teachers") and real employees has been achieved. In July 1990 there were 320,000 civil servants, while by September 1993 there were 177,136 and this should have been reduced to 145,000 or so by July 1994. Group employees, casual workers who could be hired and fired by line ministries have been abolished and 30,000 made redundant. These services are now provided by the private sector.
It will be harder for ghost workers to return to the payroll since the Ministry of Public Service has established ground rules setting the consequences for civil servants if they are caught in the creation of ghost workers, and the payroll is being computerized.

The next stage of the programme involves further reductions in staff, the aim being a civil service with 30,000 traditional civil servants, 90,000 in the teaching service, and 15,000 in the police and prison service. Housing is to be monetised, pool houses sold, and vehicle co-ownership ended. Sensitising seminars and institution-building, particularly at the Uganda Management Institute are being accompanied by the introduction of Results Oriented Management.

Langseth has recently argued that within the civil service there is an overemphasis on technical proficiency and an underestimation of the importance of management rather than general administration. Generalists are in charge of technocrats and neither understands what the other is trying to do. "This division of labour is inconsistent with one of the basic premises of organisational design, that each superior is responsible for the performance of his subordinates" (Langseth, 1994). It also means that each level does not integrate with the next. He has argued that Cabinet Ministers must come out clearly as sponsors of the reform process and make sure it happens in their ministries.

Langseth has proposed that the way to proceed now is to locate those in the government and civil service with a commitment to reform, develop a profile of the competencies required, identify "change champions" from those currently employed and place them in management teams for change which also contain "apprentices" who can learn from the leaders. He argues that if a small core of managers is expected to carry the whole weight of the implementation of the reforms they must given suitable incentives, probably being paid at local consultancy rates. That there is a basis for optimism in identifying "islands of excellence" within ministries is confirmed by a donor's description of the Social Services Unit within the MFEP as having a genuine commitment and acting as a lobby and fighting pretty hard for Government and donor resources for social services.

The RC system and decentralisation: Proof that decentralisation is increasing transparency in some areas is found in this recent New Vision report. "Fort Portal municipal council will open up vote books in all its departments as a new measure to check financial irregularities in the municipality. ...the RC4 chairman said that following decentralisation proper accountability in the council would be taken seriously to enhance development and make good use of the taxpayers’ money. (NV Aug 31, 1994). One possible bone of contention is that, following the decentralisation of budgetary control, NGO income will be taken into account in government disbursements. The District Authorities may then feel entitled to some control of the use of NGO funds.

Councillors, especially at lower levels, are expected to execute policy as part of their voluntary service because officials no longer do their jobs because of the collapse of the state; Low salaries and non-existent budgets for execution have led to the collapse of service provision with the partial exception of education which depends largely on the PTAs and health which depends on external donors. Councillors are politician, magistrate and administrator rolled into one; districts cannot appoint adequately trained professionals because of the fiscal crisis. However, people will work for the good of all because of the prestige and satisfaction it brings; in Uganda now there is a widespread belief in the value of community work for "development" and much voluntary participation in service provision, income-generating activities, and politics. The relatively favourable food situation and the subordination of women means that few high status men have to work directly economically or domestically; women normally do not have time for voluntary activities unless they are from relatively wealthy homes and can hire labour for domestic and economic tasks.

Brett concludes that the present RC system is not an effective basis for policymaking, planning and implementation and there is no point in training people in planning techniques until these problems are dealt with. The Public Service Commission has recommended that District Development Committees should be made smaller and their functions reviewed. The effects of decentralisation on the RC system need to be monitored.
In Kampala the problems of councils and the decentralization of powers is similar. One problem is the overlap of central Ministry activity with that of the KCC and increasing autonomy for the latter will help. It is important to try to rationalise expenditure at the lowest level possible.

The RC system has a very important economic role in providing the basis for broadbased economic growth. It must establish effective economic regulation which supports the rights of both buyers and sellers, enforces environmental controls, and regulates access to public goods and services. The regulations must be economically rational and RCs must be made to carry out role efficiently and honestly. Some current regulations are not efficient or fair.

There are political implications resulting from allowing RCs an active economic role; experience shows that where governments control enterprises the politically powerful will get the lion’s share of the resources and that power will be used to allocate resources to win elections. Also there are many small entrepreneurs able to provide commercial services including transport and tractors. The competition is intense and the costs low; the key problem is shortage of capital and the narrowness of local markets.

Brett found evidence that councillors are seen as legitimate representatives of local people while Burkie found that people are sacked from RC positions. Councils where lower levels have had some degree of financial responsibility have registered successes: in Mbole a successful water and tree nursery project; in Rakai there are many selfhelp projects based on funds collected from public. Brett concludes that the RC system has stimulated an immense growth in social responsibility and creativity. Because people expect little help from central government they are using the RC system to improve local services and stimulate economic activity often co-operating with NGOs. However there are serious problems, including: ignorance of what goes on at all levels, misappropriation, and favouritism, while popular resentment of taxation without adequate services is increasing. The lower RCs have limited functions, virtually no resources, and people devote huge amounts of time. There are signs that in some areas RCs are withering away. At the RC5 and NRC levels, contact with the voters is least and the resources available for “eating” are the most giving opportunities for the powerful to acquire support through patronage and corruption. The new constitution is proposing universal franchise and secret ballots for RC5 although it yet unclear whether this will be accompanied by open party competition.

Decentralisation may give some local authorities the opportunity to adopt policies the government would not approve of and there may be an end to old forms of central dominance by the national elite.

Integrating the structures and activities of government, the new civil service and the new local government: Civil service reform aims at improving the managerial capacity and technical skills of line ministries to improve service delivery and enhance planning capacity thus centralising features of policy-making and resource allocation. On the other hand decentralisation makes different demands on the central administration. There is a danger that local governments will not be involved in contributing to national decision-making and local poverty-reduction efforts will be undermined. There is also the question of the extent to which central government will be able to monitor the accountability of local governments to their constituencies.

The relationship between the Constituent Assembly and the NRC is not clear. For example the Assembly recently passed a motion authorising parliament to establish an Equal Opportunities Commission to take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom for the purpose of redressing the imbalances which exist against them.

Civil society: Uganda’s press is flourishing, but there are worries about legislation which might be used to reduce their freedom to hold the government accountable. Some members of the press have recently argued that freedom of the press should be entrenched in the Constitution, as it is in the US, by a provision that parliament should not make any law that is inconsistent with press freedom.