



STRENGTHENING DISTRICT SERVICE COMMISSIONS IN UGANDA

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy brief provides an analysis of performance of District Service Commissions (DSCs) in Uganda's decentralization efforts. It draws extensively from the ACODE (2023) study titled "Beyond Compliance: A Performance Assessment of Statutory Boards and Commissions in Uganda's Local Governments FY 2021/2022" to assess the functionality and performance of DSCs. Furthermore, it integrates insights from ACODE's capacity-building training sessions conducted across 35 districts in Uganda. Building upon these insights, the policy brief offers insights on the performance of the District Service Commissions (DSCs) and policy recommendations aimed at optimizing the effectiveness of Cities/District Service Commissions in Uganda.

2. BACKGROUND

Uganda's Decentralization policy launched in 1992, aimed at shifting power, resources, and decision-making authority from the central government to local entities such as District Local Governments and Local Councils.¹ The key objectives of this policy were to: transfer real power to the districts to reduce the workload on remote and under-resourced central officials; bring political and administrative control over services to the local level, improve accountability and effectiveness while promoting a sense of ownership among residents; free local managers from central constraints, enhancing financial accountability by linking tax payments to service provision; improve local authorities' capacity to plan, finance, and manage service delivery; and boost local economic development to increase incomes.

The policy encompasses three dimensions: administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization. Administrative decentralization establishes structures, procedures, regulations, and directives for implementing national policies and guidelines at the local level. It includes human resource management, planning, coordination, monitoring, communication, public procurement, and overall administration.² Before adopting the decentralization policy, the 1967 Constitution

1 Olowu, D., & Olowu, D. (2001). Decentralization policies and practices under structural adjustment and democratization in Africa. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

2 Ministry of Local Government (2014), Decentralization and Local Development in Uganda. MoLG, 2014, Kampala

centralized human resource management, with senior managers in Local Governments appointed centrally by the Public Service Commission. This centralization led to inadequate prioritization of local government needs and insufficiently met human resource demands, forcing local governments to hire temporary and often poorly qualified staff.³ These challenges prompted the Civil Service Reform program initiated by the NRM government in 1988 and operationalized by the Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission in 1989, fundamentally changing public affairs management.⁴

Following the recommendations of the Public Service Review and Reorganization Commission, Legal Notice No. 1 of 1994 introduced a separate personnel system for local administrative units. With the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution, human resource management was effectively decentralized to local governments. To further this devolution, Article 198(1) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, along with Section 54 of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243 (as amended) established City/District Service Commissions to support the human resource functions of local governments.⁵ The devolution of powers to recruit and manage civil servants led to a significant increase in district-based staff, reaching approximately 35,000 by December 1997. This workforce comprised 23 percent directly employed by local governments, 66 percent transferred from the central government to districts, and 11 percent deployed by the central government in non-decentralized services or temporarily lent to districts.

Setbacks in the decentralized human resource management have also been registered, notably the recentralisation of the recruitment process of Chief Administrative Officers and their Deputies under a constitutional amendment in September 2005. The re-centralization of CAO appointments, despite their mandate as the district's chief executive officer responsible for day-to-day management and administration, signifies a departure from decentralized governance practices.⁶ This reversal contradicts the principles of decentralization through devolution, as it undermines the autonomy and authority of local governments and undermines the accountability of these officials

3 Lubanga, Francis, 1997, *Decentralization Program in Uganda: Results and Problems* (Kampala, Uganda), Ministry of Local Government

4 Olum, Y. (2003). *Public service reform in Uganda (1989-2002): A critical appraisal*. AAPAM Paper. Available at: www.unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/AAPAM/UNPAN025827.Pdf

5 Ibid

6 Section 7(2) and 11(1) of the Public Service Act 2008, Article 188 of the Constitution and Section 63 of the Local Governments Act.

to locally elected councils. Additionally, there are indications of a similar trend toward re-centralization concerning City/District Service Commissions, suggesting a potential further consolidation of power at the central level.

In 2022, ACODE undertook a study to assess the performance of statutory boards and commissions, including the District Service Commissions with three key objectives; i) to explore the extent to which statutory boards and commissions have complied with their roles and responsibilities; ii) to analyze how statutory boards and commissions are accountable to council and citizens; and iii) to explore key issues impeding and or facilitating statutory boards and commissions in delivering on their statutory roles and responsibilities and make appropriate recommendations. Based on the findings of this study, this policy synthesises the importance of district/city service commissions in local governance. It explores their relevance, practices, achievements, and challenges and provides measures to bolster their effectiveness.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE DISTRICT/ CITY SERVICE COMMISSIONS

The District Service Commission's (DSC) mandate in Uganda is established under legal and policy frameworks. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended)⁷, Article 198, establishes the District Service Commissions. In addition, Article 200 of the constitution empowers the DSCs to appoint, confirm, and discipline district public officers. The provisions of the Constitution are operationalised by the Local Governments Act, Cap 243 (1997)⁸, where Section 55 of the Act outlines the establishment and composition of DSCs while Section 56 details the functions and powers of the DSCs. These functions include appointment of persons to hold or act in district service offices; Confirmation of appointments; Exercising disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in any office in the service of a district; Removal of persons from office; reviewing the terms and conditions of service, standing orders, training and qualifications of public officers.

In addition, the Public Service Act (2008)⁹ further provides guidelines

7 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended). Retrieved from Uganda Legal Information Institute.

8 Local Governments Act, Cap 243, 1997.

9 Public Service Act, 2008.

on the appointment, discipline, and removal of public officers, which DSCs must follow. At the policy level, the District Service Commissions (DSCs) in Uganda are grounded in policy frameworks such as the National Development Plan¹⁰, which outlines their role in promoting effective public service delivery; the Decentralization Policy¹¹, which emphasises their role in enhancing local governance and administrative efficiency through decentralised human resource management; and the Public Service Standing Orders, which provide detailed procedures and guidelines for executing their duties in recruitment, discipline, and service delivery.

Thus, the DSCs are a central feature in managing Human Resources in Local Governments in Uganda, with their role engrained in the critical national laws and policies. The relevance of the District Service Commissions (DSCs) is underscored by their pivotal role in managing the human resource functions in the local governments as provided for under Article 200(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Section 55 of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243, and Regulation 9(d) of the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders, (2021). These functions include recruitment, confirmation, promotion, and exercising disciplinary control over civil servants of a district or city.

3.1 Recruitment of civil servants

Under Section 55(1) of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243 as amended, a key function of the District Service Commission (DSC) is the recruitment of civil servants. An assessment of the DSCs' performance in this role focused on four criteria: the availability of recruitment plans, evidence of submission of recruitment requests, evidence of conducting recruitment, and availability of recruitment reports. The findings revealed impressive performance across most districts in recruiting during the review year. In 23 of the 26 districts assessed, the DSCs successfully conducted recruitment, as evidenced by the presence of approved recruitment plans, submission of recruitment requests by Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), documented minutes of recruitment meetings, and comprehensive reports on the recruitment activities conducted.

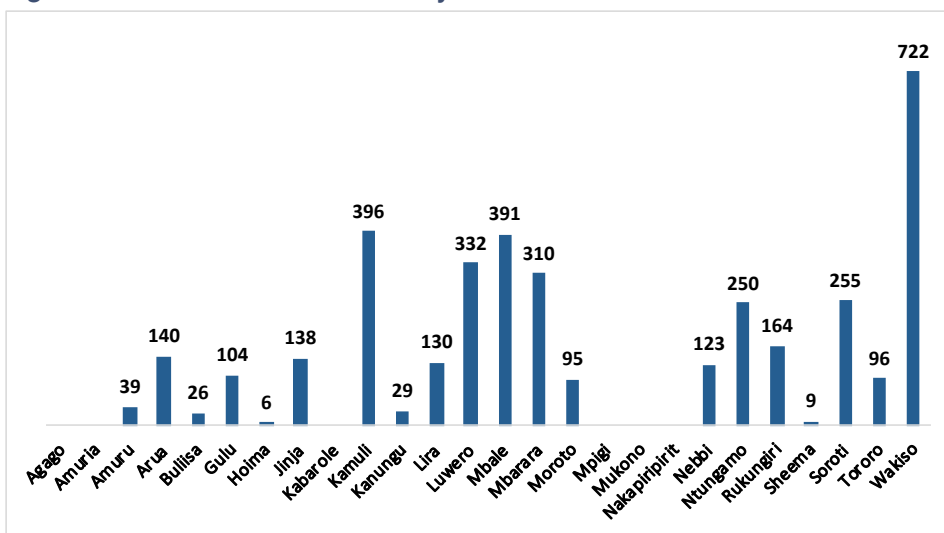
Regarding the availability of approved recruitment plans, all districts assessed, except Amuria, Amuru, Kamuli, and Mbale, had such plans

10 National Planning Authority. (2020). The National Development Plan III (NDP III) 2020/21 – 2024/25.

11 Ministry of Local Government. (2013). Decentralization Policy Strategic Framework. Retrieved from Ministry of Local Government.

in place for the year under review. Overall, 23 of the 26 DSCs assessed managed to recruit 3,755 workers in FY 2021/2022, highlighting the crucial role DSCs play in ensuring efficient and transparent recruitment processes at the local government level.

Figure 1: Recruitments conducted by DSCs in 20 Districts in FY 2021/22



Regardless of the poor working conditions and limited facilitation for their functions, DSCs have demonstrated impressive performance in recruitment and other HR functions. For example, in FY 2021/2022, 23 DSCs successfully recruited 3,755 workers, confirming their role in ensuring efficient and transparent recruitment processes. The volume and complexity of the recruitment process—encompassing advertising, shortlisting, and interviewing candidates—demonstrates that no single centralised entity would be capable of effectively managing this function. The DSCs, therefore, remain a cornerstone of Uganda’s decentralisation policy, which aims to transfer decision-making authority and resources from the central government to local entities.

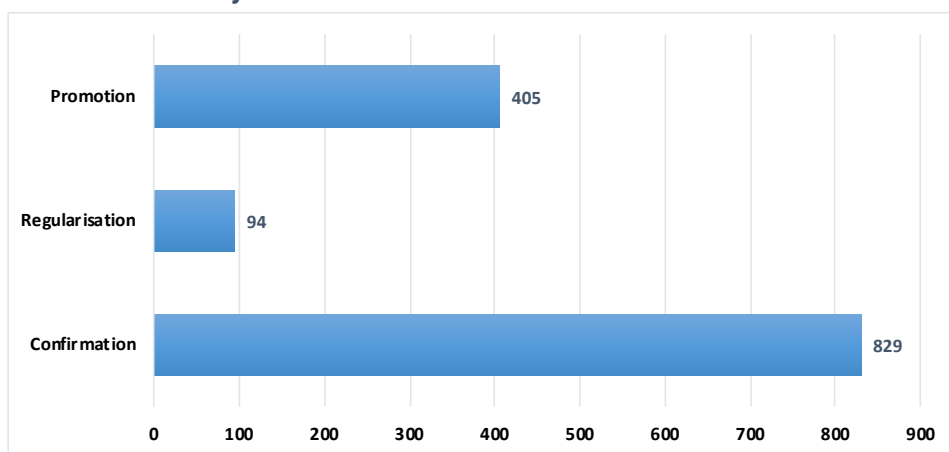
3.2 Confirmation, Regularisation, and Promotion

In addition to recruitment, the District Service Commissions (DSCs) hold the authority to confirm, regularise appointments, and promote civil servants within local governments. An assessment of these functions focused on the presence of staff appraisals conducted by the human resource department, submission of staff appraisal reports to the DSC, and actions taken by the DSC based on these appraisals. These

processes, mandated by the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders 2021, are crucial for maintaining a motivated and skilled workforce within the local government system, ensuring that employees are appropriately recognised, rewarded, and given opportunities for career advancement.

The assessment findings highlighted the impressive performance of the DSCs in this capacity. In 24 out of the 26 districts assessed, there was clear evidence of staff appraisals being conducted and reports being submitted to the DSCs. Based on these reports, the DSCs in these 24 districts had regularised 94 appointments, confirmed 829 staff members, and promoted 405 employees.

Figure 2: Confirmations, regularisation and promotions of civil servants conducted by DSCs in 20 Districts in FY 2021/22



District Service Commissions (DSCs) in Uganda play a pivotal role in public sector governance by managing appointments, employment regularisation, and promotions within local governments.

Their adherence to meritocratic principles and thorough staff appraisal processes ensures that workforce capabilities align effectively with organisational needs, thereby promoting stability and enhancing productivity across administrations. Transparent and merit-based procedures for appointments and promotions foster employee motivation and engagement by offering clear career advancement paths and equitable recognition, thereby improving service delivery and bolstering public trust. While most districts exhibit strong systems for ensuring fairness in personnel decisions, there is room for improvement in standardising staff appraisal systems and reporting mechanisms across all districts. Compliance with the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders 2021 underscores DSCs' commitment to

governance integrity and legal adherence, which are essential for addressing potential challenges and ensuring sustainable development in Uganda's local government sector.

3.3 Exercising Disciplinary Control over Civil Servants

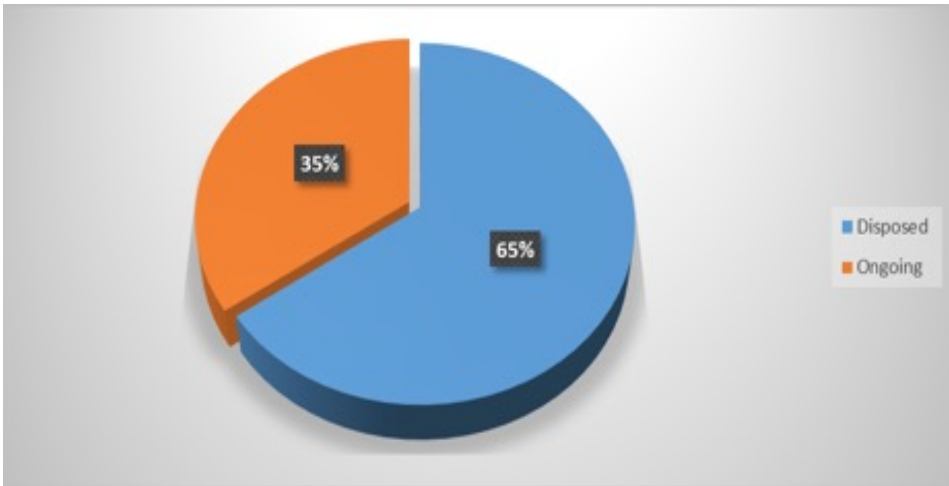
District Service Commissions (DSCs) by enforcing disciplinary control over civil servants contribute significantly to maintaining accountability, upholding standards, improving performance, promoting fairness, protecting public interest, and ensuring legal compliance within the local government system. The Reward and Sanction Committee, established by law to incentivize good performance and penalize poor performance, supports this function.

The assessment focused on several key indicators to measure the DSCs' ability to exercise disciplinary control; the existence and functionality of Rewards and Sanctions Committees; Evidence of meetings held by these committees to discuss disciplinary issues among civil servants; Actions taken by the DSCs regarding disciplinary cases and; Efforts made by the committees to reward best-performing employees.

Findings from the assessment indicate commendable performance by the DSCs in most areas. Across the 26 districts assessed, 46 disciplinary cases were referred to the DSCs for consideration. Notably, all districts, except Kamuli, had functional Rewards and Sanctions Committees. These committees regularly convened to deliberate on disciplinary matters and submitted comprehensive reports to the DSCs for further action.

Regarding disciplinary actions, the DSCs exhibited proactive management by resolving 30 out of the 46 cases referred to them. The remaining 16 cases were under active consideration during the assessment period. This proactive approach underscores the DSCs' commitment to addressing disciplinary issues promptly and effectively.

Figure 3: Disciplinary issues handled by the DSCs in FY 2021/22



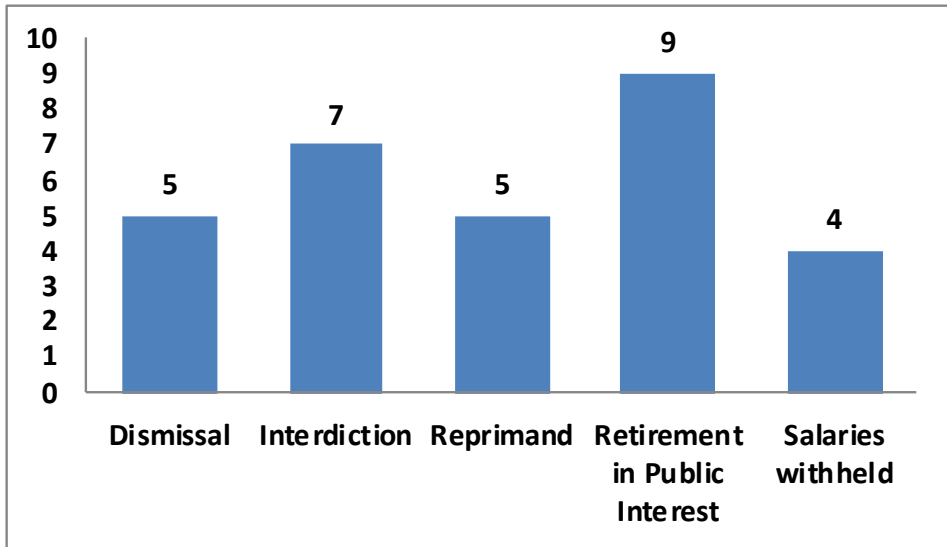
According to the Uganda Public Service Standing Order 2021, a variety of disciplinary measures are specified for different cases, encompassing actions such as removal from office, retirement in the public interest, dismissal, reprimand, demotion, and withholding of annual increments. In the preceding year, service commissions implemented disciplinary actions in line with these guidelines, which included the dismissal of five employees, interdiction of seven individuals, issuance of reprimands to 5 employees, withholding of salary increments for 4 individuals, and retirement of 9 employees in the public interest.

In Ntungamo (2), Soroti (1), and Rukungiri (2), five employees were dismissed for offences such as submitting false documents and committing fraud. Additionally, seven employees were interdicted in Lira (2), Amuru (2), Sheema (1), Soroti (1), Amuria (1), and Mukono (1) for absenteeism, absconding from duties, and habitual drunkenness. Furthermore, five employees were reprimanded in Sheema (1), Moroto (1), Rukungiri (1), and Ntungamo (2). Four employees had their salary increments withheld due to disciplinary issues, specifically in Sheema (1), Amuria (1), Luwero (1), and Mukono (1). Nine employees were retired in the public interest, located in Ntungamo (2), Kamuli (2), Nakapiripirit (1), Rukungiri (2), and Soroti (2). These actions reflect adherence to established disciplinary protocols aimed at maintaining standards, accountability, and organisational integrity within Uganda's public service framework.

However, sixteen cases remain unresolved, primarily in Soroti (3), Sheema (1), Lira (2), Moroto (1), Mukono (1), Nakapiripirit (2), Buliisa (1), Hoima (2), Ntungamo (1), and Luwero (1). In some instances, District

Service Commissions have granted additional time for the concerned officers to be heard. In contrast, in other cases, the affected officers have yet to respond to summonses issued by the District Service Commission.

Figure 4: Actions taken by the DSCs on disciplinary cases received in FY 2021/22



The Service Commission's review of 46 disciplinary cases, resulting in action on 30 of them, underscores their robust commitment to maintaining accountability and standards within the local government system. This highlights their pivotal role in ensuring adherence to regulations and upholding integrity among civil servants. Strengthening these commissions goes beyond mere administrative enhancement; it is integral to safeguarding transparency, fairness, and public trust. Their effective management of disciplinary cases not only demonstrates their importance in promoting good governance and organisational excellence but also positions them as crucial overseers of civil service conduct. By safeguarding public trust and ensuring reasonable allocation of resources, these commissions play a vital role in fostering professionalism and upholding the highest ethical standards within local government public service.

4. FACTORS ENHANCING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DISTRICT SERVICE COMMISSIONS

4.1 Regularity of Service Commission meetings

As mandated by law, regular meetings significantly boosted DSCs' performance, with 25 out of 26 commissions holding at least two meetings. These gatherings provided vital platforms for the DSCs to fulfil their duties, particularly in recruitment processes and reviewing sanction and rewards committee reports. Additionally, sharing meeting minutes with chief administrative officers (CAOs) expedited action on recommendations, such as issuing appointment letters to new hires, thus streamlining recruitment processes and enhancing collaboration between DSCs and CAOs for improved organisational efficiency in local governance.

4.2 Submission of reports

Under Section 58(2) of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243 (as amended), District Service Commissions (DSCs) are mandated to submit regular reports on their performance to various entities, including the District Council and relevant service commissions. The study highlights the compliance levels of DSCs in submitting these reports, with varying degrees of adherence observed across districts. Thirteen Districts (13) out of 25 DSCs scored above 50 possible points, while 13 districts' scorecards were below average. A total of 10 districts of Mukono, Amuru, Buliisa, Agago, Kamuli, Mbale, Arua, Luwero, Wakiso, Hoima, and Mpigi had no evidence of submitting three performance reports to the council. Moreover, evidence of actions taken by DSCs based on resolutions or guidance from these bodies underscores their responsiveness and proactive approach to governance. However, challenges remain evident, particularly regarding the limited implementation of guidance provided by these oversight bodies, as indicated by the study's findings. Nevertheless, adherence to the legal framework regarding report submission and seeking guidance from relevant authorities has undoubtedly contributed to enhancing the performance of DSCs by fostering accountability, transparency, and alignment with regulatory standards.

4.3 Qualification of members of the District Service Commissions

The district service commissions' performance was significantly bolstered by the strict adherence to educational qualification requirements as outlined in Section 56 (1) (d) of the Local Government Act, Cap 243 (as amended). Across all 26 districts, there was a remarkable level of compliance with these stipulated requirements, with each member of the service commission meeting the mandated educational qualifications. Findings also revealed that 15% of the DSC lacked the technical capacity necessary to perform their functions, especially concerning human resource management and public service standing orders.

5. CHALLENGES OF DISTRICT SERVICE COMMISSIONS

Despite their critical role in ensuring accountability and efficiency within the local government system, District Service Commissions (DSCs) grapple with a myriad of challenges that impede their ability to fulfil their functions effectively. From issues of incomplete constitution to external interference, lack of independence, instances of corruption, and insufficient funding, these obstacles pose significant hurdles to the proper functioning of DSCs.

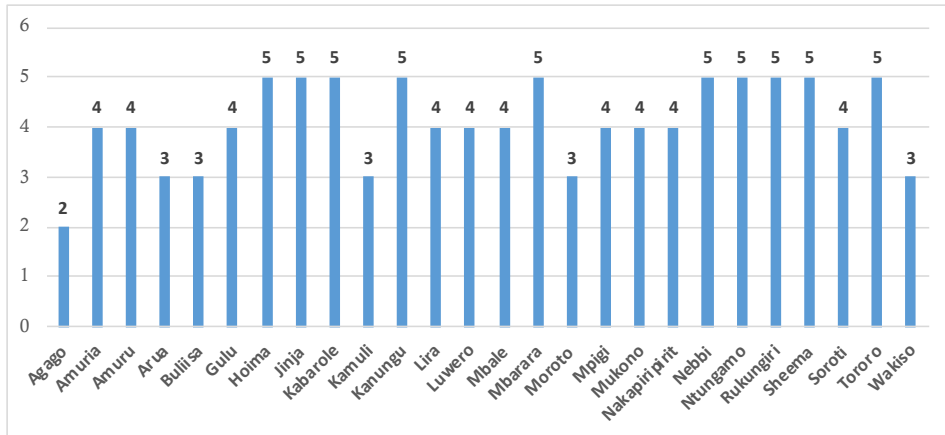
5.1 Composition of the District Service Commissions

Under Article 198(2) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as amended and Section 54 (2) of the Local Governments Act, Cap. 243 (as amended), a district service commission shall consist of a chairperson, and such other members as a district council shall determine. Section 54(2a)(a) specifies that in appointing members of the District Service Commission, the district council shall ensure that the number of members of the District Service Commission, apart from the chairperson, does not exceed four. The average composition of the service commission in 26 districts for the FY 2021/2022 was four members.¹² Nine districts of Arua, Mbale, Buliisa, Nakapiripirit, Amuru,

12 Bainomugisha, A., Muhwezi, W. W., Akena, W., Mbabazi, J., Mukwaya, N. R., Ssemakula, E. G., Otile, O. M., Atukunda, P. K., and Ayesigwa, R. (2023). Beyond Compliance: A Performance Assessment of Statutory

Mukono, Tororo, Gulu, and Moroto were found to be without fully constituted district service commissions. Agago (2), Arua (3), Buliisa (3), Kamuli (3), Moroto (3), and Wakiso (3) were districts with the least number of members of the district service commission.

Figure 5: Number of positions filled on the different DSCs in FY 2021/2022



Source: ACODE 2023

When the District Service Commission (DSC) lacks full membership, it impedes their ability to convene and carry out their duties effectively. Although the Local Governments Act, Section 55 (7), specifies a quorum of three members for meetings, this requirement is contingent upon the commission being fully composed. Initially, districts had the option to hire service commissions; however, this practice was discontinued following an amendment that abolished interim councils. Consequently, districts are deliberately no longer engaging service commissions from other local governments for recruitment purposes. As a result, the incomplete constitution of service commissions renders local governments unable to conduct recruitment processes.

5.2 Inadequate oversight role by the District Councils

Under the Land Act, Cap 227 (as amended), and Local Governments Act, District Councils are responsible for supervising statutory boards and commissions. However, the findings from this assessment reveal a notable deficiency in district councils' ability to ensure these organs' accountability. This deficiency is evidenced by the infrequency with which the reports of these entities were presented to and deliberated

Boards and Commissions in Uganda's Local Governments FY2021/2022, Kampala, ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No.112.

upon within the council. Most district councils (88 per cent) have not received reports from the District Service Commissions. This state of affairs persists due to the absence of an enforcement mechanism compelling the District Executive Committees to submit the reports of the boards and commissions to the council. Consequently, the district council's ability to obtain and scrutinise reports from statutory boards and commissions is severely limited, impeding its capacity to hold these entities accountable.

5.3 Inadequate technical support

The efficiency and effectiveness of the statutory boards and commissions rely on the nature and level of support they receive from the district's technical officers. The laws mandate technical officers to support the functions of the statutory boards and commissions. For instance, DSCs rely on the human resource department for appraisal of staff, handling disciplinary issues through the rewards and sanction committee, and requests for recruitment on which to base its decisions for recruitment, confirmation of appointments, promotions, and exercise of disciplinary control as provided for under Section 55 (1), (2), and (4) of the LG Act. However, the assessment revealed that the statutory boards and commissions received limited support from the technical officers in the district which has had a significant impact on their ability to carry out their functions effectively. The findings show that 70 per cent of DSCs did not have access to technical support from technical officers in the district. Further, the results from this assessment indicate that due to minimal technical support, the DSC scored an average of 10 points out of 30. This is manifested by delays in communicating vacant positions, failure to share reports from the Rewards and Sanctions Committees, delays in compiling lists of staff due for retirement, tardiness in producing and submitting commission reports and minutes to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and failure to implement the commission's recommendations, among other issues. Moreso, the level of coordination between statutory bodies and related national institutions was lacking.

5.4 Inadequate Skills and Technical Capacities of Members

The lack of skills and technical capacity of members appointed to statutory bodies is a significant challenge that affects their effective functioning. In many cases, the individuals nominated to these bodies lack the necessary expertise, experience, and knowledge to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Findings from the assessment

reveal the following challenges: a) Lack of specific requirements for academic qualification relevant to roles and responsibilities of each board and commission. Findings revealed a significant gap in the skill sets of members of the statutory boards and commissions. Findings also revealed that 15 % of the DSC lacked the technical capacity to perform their functions, especially concerning human resource management and public service standing orders. Despite the law providing qualification criteria for the members of statutory boards and commissions, it does not specify whether they should possess any specific technical qualification relevant to the different roles.

This has been worsened by inadequate induction, orientation and training: Findings from the assessment revealed key gaps in the induction of members for the statutory boards and commissions across the 26 districts assessed. Findings showed that 13 out of the 26 DSCs were inducted. Furthermore, for those inducted, district leaders raised concerns that the induction for the boards and commissions was inadequate and that many skills were still lacking.

5.5 Corruption

Corruption within District Service Commissions (DSCs) poses significant challenges to the integrity and efficiency of recruitment processes, as revealed by citizens' perceptions and experiences. Demands for bribes and favouritism during recruitment exercises undermine public trust and erode the credibility of DSCs. In Soroti, citizens reported instances of the DSC demanding bribes from potential job applicants through their agents. Similar cases were reported in Buliisa, Agago, and Nakapiripirit districts, where job applicants faced exorbitant bribe demands, making the recruitment process inaccessible to many deserving candidates. In several districts, including Apac, Rukungiri, Sheema, Kabarole, Mbarara, and Wakiso, interactions with commission members and technical officers revealed the presence of brokers/third parties positioned themselves within the district. These brokers work with other technical officers and support staff to solicit bribes allegedly on behalf of the commission members without their knowledge, further tarnishing the reputation of the DSCs. The financial burden imposed by these corrupt practices creates barriers to entry based on financial capacity rather than merit, perpetuating inequality and injustice in employment opportunities. Moreover, the prevalence of corruption undermines the efficiency of DSCs. It hampers the delivery of quality public services, as positions may be filled based on bribery rather than qualifications and suitability for the role. Addressing the challenge of corruption within DSCs is imperative to restore transparency, fairness,

and accountability in recruitment processes. This will ultimately ensure the integrity of the civil service and restore public trust in local governance structures.

5.6 Lack of independence by the DSC

The lack of independence among District Service Commissions (DSCs) represents a significant obstacle to their efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling their mandated roles. As per the provisions of Article 166 (1) (d) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and Section 58 (1) of the Local Governments Act, DSCs are expected to operate independently, free from external influence or direction. However, the study findings reveal pervasive interference from political leaders during recruitment processes, compromising the independence of DSCs. This interference is cited as a major factor undermining their autonomy, with political leaders exerting influence over the appointment of DSC members and manipulating recruitment decisions to favour individuals identified by the political elite. Furthermore, citizens and local government officials echoed perceptions of political influence on DSCs across various districts, including Tororo, Hoima, Buliisa, and Amuria. Participants in focused group discussions consistently raised concerns about the lack of independence within DSCs, highlighting instances where political leaders pressure commission members to recruit individuals aligned with their interests. The reported claims of political interference undermine the credibility and impartiality of recruitment processes and erode public trust in the integrity of DSCs. Addressing this lack of independence is essential to safeguard the autonomy and integrity of DSCs, ensuring they can fulfil their mandate impartially and transparently, free from external influence or manipulation.

5.7 Inadequate funding

Inadequate funding poses a significant challenge to the performance of District Service Commissions (DSCs), as highlighted by the study's findings. Pursuant to Section 57A of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243, as amended, DSCs rely on the consolidated fund for salaries, allowances, and operational expenses. However, the study reveals glaring instances of underfunding, severely constraining the ability of DSCs to fulfil their mandates effectively. Limited funding affects the frequency of meetings and other functions that DSCs are obligated to conduct annually. In FY 2021/22, DSCs received an average of UGX 28,084,000 as non-wage. For example, in the Amuru DSC case, the actual cost of holding one recruitment session and field monitoring is

UGX 14,845,000, yet the commission received only UGX 28,084,000 in FY 2021/2022. Thus, this study underscores how limited funding adversely affects various aspects of DSC operations, including recruitment, monitoring, and disciplinary control over civil servants. Insufficient resources hinder the induction of DSC members, with only a limited number of districts able to provide adequate training and support, leading to irregular meetings and a lack of office space and appropriate equipment and tools, among others.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Despite encountering challenges, District Service Commissions (DSCs) are crucial in facilitating district human resource functions and assisting councils in recruitment, discipline, and overall civil servant management. Their efficiency and effectiveness are vital for ensuring the presence of competent personnel to deliver essential services to local communities. Additionally, as statutory bodies, DSCs contribute to accountability and oversight within the decentralisation framework, offering regulation, oversight, and citizen representation to promote transparency and good governance at the grassroots level. While corruption and external interference pose significant challenges, efforts should be made to strengthen oversight and ensure the independence of DSCs. Addressing these challenges is critical to maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of DSCs, decentralisation, and local governance in Uganda. It requires measures to safeguard their independence from external influences, particularly political interference while improving their efficiency in human resource management. Implementing recommended reforms can revitalise DSCs, enabling them to play a more significant role in advancing decentralisation and promoting good governance at the local level in Uganda.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

Guidance on the composition of the District Service Commissions

Only 9 out of 26 districts were found to have fully constituted service

commissions. This is partly attributed to non-compliance with Section 54 (2e), which requires local government councils to renew the term of office of members of DSC within 3 months after expiry, lack of clarity on the interpretation of Section 54 (2c) with regards to the nomination of members of the representative of urban authorities on the DSC. Therefore,

- a) The MoLG should enforce compliance with section 54(2e) of the LGA to ensure that the District Councils follow timelines for appointment and renewal of the term of office of the members of the District Service Commission, remedying the vacuum created by delays by district councils and political leaders.
- b) The MoLG and Solicitor General should guide the interpretation of Section 54 (2c) of the Local Governments Act, Cap 243, which relates to the nomination of representatives of urban authorities to the district service commission.

Enhance funding for the Service Commission.

The assessment revealed that the district service commissions are grossly underfunded. The allocations for their operations in the LG budgets were found to be inadequate. Thus, this can be achieved through.

- a) Prioritizing financing for operations of district service commissions: The Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED) should increase the financing for the activities of the DSC. The MoFPED should increase indicative planning figures for the commissions.

Enhance the technical capacity and support to district service commissions.

The Chief Administrative Officer should mandate technical officers in the Human Resources Department to furnish District Service Commissions with sufficient technical support, guaranteeing efficiency and effectiveness. This entails proficient document analysis, meticulous report compilation and production, consistent and punctual reporting to respective councils, strict adherence to relevant processes, regulations, policies, and laws, and ensuring stakeholder accountability. Where feasible, officers impeding the functions of the service commission should face appropriate sanctions. Specifically;

- a) There is a need to create a Unit as a secretariat with officials at U2, U3 and U4 to support the DSCs.

- b) The MoPS should regularly undertake induction and orientation of the DSCs to ensure that they are adequately skilled to undertake their responsibilities.
- c) The Local Governments should provide office space and tools for the DSCs to facilitate them effectively undertake their work.
- d) The MoLG should amend section 56 (1) (b) and (d) the Local Governments Act to elevate the minimum academic qualifications from an advanced level certificate or its equivalent and a diploma to a degree or its equivalent for the members of these statutory boards and commissions.

Address Corruption in the DSC

The assessment highlighted the detrimental effects of corruption within DSCs on the recruitment process, the integrity of the civil service, public trust, and overall governance within the local government system. Addressing corruption is crucial to ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in DSCs' recruitment and employment practices.

- a) There is a need to strengthen the council's oversight of the DSC. To effectively combat corruption within DSCs, district councils must actively scrutinise received reports, ensuring thorough review and discussion within the council. This proactive involvement enables the council to assess the performance and compliance of service commissions, fostering greater accountability.
- b) The job adverts should state that the jobs are free for those who qualify and pass the interviews.
- c) Local district governments should regularly educate the public about the recruitment process and ensure transparency.
- d) Councils and the Public Service Commission should strictly adhere to Section 54(4) regarding members of service commissions involved in corruption scandals. Furthermore, Section 54 (4) of the Local Governments Act needs to be amended to suspend the service commission upon allegations of corruption and dissolution after investigation and confirmation that the entire commission is involved in corruption.
- e) The Public Service Commission needs to regularly monitor the district service commissions to ensure adherence to the regulations and guidelines provided under the Public Service Commission Guideline to District Service Commissions, 2021.

- f) The Public Service Commission should regularly assess the DSCs' performance to ensure that they take corrective action where necessary.

Strengthen the Oversight Function of the District Councils

To rectify the shortcomings in the oversight responsibilities of district councils regarding statutory boards and commissions, it is imperative to establish a robust framework that mandates the regular submission of comprehensive reports from these entities to the council and checks the powers of the district executive. This would require an amendment of the LGA to provide for a clause that gives the council power to recall members of the DSC with questionable integrity and performance. It is also vital to prioritise capacity-building initiatives for members of statutory boards and commissions and members of district councils, providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their oversight responsibilities effectively.

ABOUT ACODE

The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda. ACODE's work focuses on four programme areas: Economic Governance; Environment and Natural Resources Governance; Democracy, Peace and Security; Science, Technology and Innovation. For the last eight consecutive years, ACODE has been ranked as the best think tank in Uganda and one of the top 100 think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally in the Global Think Tanks Index Report published by the University of Pennsylvania Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP).



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