Chapter 12

Multilayered Political Systems and the Politics of Monitoring Local Government Programmes for Engendered Service Delivery: A Case of Apac District in Northern Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This chapter assessed the multilayered nature of Uganda’s polity. It examines how the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) led local government in Apac district relates with the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led central government in service provision from a gender perspective. The latter provides funds to the local government and is supposed to monitor service provision, the former implements. This has led to tensions and affected service provision. Both the centre and the opposition in Local Governments (LGs) in Apac district want to be the face of successful service provision. Both parties try to undercut each other’s support by sometimes sabotaging, delaying or failing service provision. This means that no gender issues will be addressed since there are no services, and if they are there, they are so poor. The conflicts have created room for NGOs to step in to do the monitoring so as to help the communities access services to a good degree of success.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the implications to service delivery, of the working relationships between a dominant central government political party and opposition parties that control LGs. The chapter is cognizant of the fact that LGs are mandated to provide services to the populations but their relationship with the centre may greatly influence the success of fulfilling this mandate. Strained relationships be-
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tween the central government and other actors make the delivery of engendered services hard. Focusing on Apac District LG that is predominantly Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) dominated yet mandated to implement National Resistance Movement (NRM) policies; the chapter examines the dependence on the central government budgetary allocations to pursue both the national and local agendas by the local opposition politicians and technocrats. The objective of the chapter thus is to offer an assessment of the impact of multilayered political systems on the delivery of gender sensitive social services by specifically looking at subvention/funding from the central government; implementation of national policies and priorities as well the politics of the monitoring function at the LG level.

BACKGROUND

Since 1986, Uganda had been under a de facto one party rule known as the movement system. Under the one party system also popularised as ‘Individual Merit’, the central government did not have to seriously worry about the organisation of other contending individuals since party organisation was in abeyance and later restricted to only the capital city Kampala. Thus LGs enjoyed a fair level of autonomy since ‘everyone’ was in the movement system. This was however overturned through a referendum that paved way for a multi-party political dispensation in 2005 (Mugabi, 2004). Consequently, things changed and political parties were freed to actively compete for political power at both national and LG levels.

Whereas the NRM has continued its dominance at the national level, the opposition parties have made inroads in various districts, creating a near rivalry situation. Kampala has been the most obvious scene for this political drama alongside a few districts in the Northern and the West Nile regions of Uganda. The rivalry, characterized by bickering, posturing and populism, between the ruling NRM and the Democratic Party (DP) in Kampala has had adverse effects on the quality of service provision. This same sad story has been glaring in the face of service delivery in other far flung opposition controlled LGs. This offers a classic example of a multilayered political system and its potential baggage despite presence of clear regulatory frameworks. Such power splits and political baggage have a bearing on delivery of social services to citizens (Weber, 2010).

Gender and Service Provision Tracks from the Centre to the Local Governments

Governance in Uganda is organized in such a way that there is a central government, districts, sub counties, parishes and villages. All these centers are charged with the planning functions of the country as a whole and have explicit legal avenues for gender inclusion. Under Uganda’s multilayered political system, provision of engendered services has been a priority for the central government for a long time as envisioned in the Uganda National Gender Policy 2007 (Government of Uganda GoU, 2007). The Government of Uganda embraced the GRB in 2003/4 financial year as a collaborative initiative between Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) and Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) and thus issues an addendum in 2004 to all ministries to engender their budgets (MoFPED, 2012). Through the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) of the MoFPED, a Budget Call Circular detailing gender budgeting is often issued calling upon sectors and LGs to demonstrate how gender objectives will be put into action through a clear demarcation of
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