



TWENDE MBELE

May 2022



FINAL REPORT

Rapid Evaluation of the Challenges in Local Government Staffing:

FILLING OF CRITICAL POSITIONS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS STRUCTURES



Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda

**A Rapid Evaluation of the Challenges in Local Government Staffing:
Focus filling of Critical Positions in the Local Governments Structures**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
HoDs	Heads of Departments
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
TORs	Terms of Reference
DLGs	District Local Government
DSC	District Service Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
NDP	National Development Plan
KIIS	Key Informant Interviews
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FY	Financial Years
LGPA	Local Government Performance Assessments
LG	Local Government
GoU	Government of Uganda
IFMs	Integrated Financial Management System
PAS	Principal Assistant Secretary
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PHRM	Principle Human Resource Officer
SHRM	Senior Human Resource Officer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The assessment was commissioned by Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Partnership with Ministry of Local Government while examining the challenges faced during the recruitment to fill critical positions in the Local Governments.

The study follows assessment results for the Local Government Performance Assessment (LGPA) in the last four financial years that is; (FY2016/17, FY2017/18, FY2018/19, FY2019/20) which revealed that for instance in FY2016/17, Human resource management was the worst performed measure with 45%, followed by revenue mobilization at 47%. Similarly, for FY2017/18, the results still showed that the worst performing areas were Revenue Mobilization (42%) followed by Human Resource Management (51%) hence signaling that Human Resource Management has been the worst performed thematic area in the new revised framework followed by Revenue mobilization.

The Assessment Explored the Challenges in The Local Government Staffing While Focusing On the Filling of Critical Positions in The Local Government Structures in Uganda. The Entry Point to The Assessment Included the Review of LGPA Reports of 2017 - 2019, Particularly with a Focus on Human Resource Management Performance Measure.

STUDY SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

In terms of scope, the study covered four regions of Uganda including; Central, western, Eastern and Northern Uganda where a sample of twenty-seven districts and two Municipal Councils were engaged for primary data collection.

Regarding Methodology, the assessment employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the Challenges in Local Government Staffing while focusing on filling of Critical Positions in the Local Governments Structures. For qualitative data, the team undertook a desk-based review of all relevant documentation guidelines, LG financing strategies, public service LG staffing framework, decentralization and service delivery in Uganda. The approach was participatory and interactive to facilitate the learning process through dialogue and it involved conducting Key Informant Interviews with relevant stakeholders both at national and LG level where selected LG officials were engaged to gain a deeper understanding of the staff recruitment and challenges in Local Governments in Uganda. Feedback was provided at every stage of the assignment which opened opportunities for discussions on the process of change based on the participants' own experiences. An inclusive approach was

applied to allow participation of all key stakeholders in the study, while a collaborative approach ensured a close engagement with key stakeholders.

KEY FINDINGS

i. **The study was set to examine the staffing in Local Governments as per the approved structures.** Staffing levels in LGs remain critical and necessary precondition to the effective service delivery in the country. Currently, the LG is implementing a customized approved staffing structure sanctioned in 2017 by the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS). There are traditional civil servants (i.e. administrative and professional officers (e.g. teachers, Health workers, Agricultural Production workers, Engineering), and non-traditional who are mainly politicians. The assessment explored the current staffing levels and the possible gaps as per the approved staffing structures in the LGs and results clearly noted that staffing issues remain wanting in the LGs.

Overall, among the assessment districts, Mbarara LG reported the highest staffing with 91% and this could be attributed to the availability of wage and the existence of the active District Service Commission. However, Karenga district had the lowest staffing levels (47%) and this was attributed to the fact that the district is still new as per the establishment.

In terms staffing by sector, Education (primary) had the highest number of filled staff in both Rubirizi and Kiruhura districts. Health sector in all the districts visited was above 50% levels of staffing as per the establishment.

The Guiding framework/ strategy of recruiting Staff

In terms of the current framework/ strategy guiding the staffing in the selected districts, findings show that on one hand, some LGs follow Ministry of Public Service guidelines, whereby they put much emphasis on filling the most critical positions as guided by line ministries such as Heads of Departments and Units, Heads of sections e.g. Agriculture extension workers, Health workers like doctors, midwives have to be filled first.

On the other hand, some DLGs recruit staff based on replacement basis by immediately replacing those that are constantly retiring from the service to prevent and minimize on performance gaps at the most strategic level. Other staff are also allowed to serve in acting capacity then later be appointed especially in school settings for the case of head teachers.

Other districts were found to be using linear arrangement (being flexible with staff) for example allow staff to go for further studies especially in Health and Education departments and then recruit them in these vacant positions. This kind of arrangement however is disadvantageous in a way that some staff do not return after their studies in case they get greener jobs elsewhere.

Internal recruitment process is being followed by some DLGs during recruitment. This process has been found to be cost effective and minimizes delays when undertaking the recruitment exercise. Furthermore, it was also noted that districts follow the central recruitment process guided by the ministry of public service through the public service commission, however it this structure does not provide for incentives to attract staff to work in hard-to-reach areas and this leaves high staff turnover and as such, adverts are published, but very few staff apply for the posts a reason as to why some DLGs have failed to attract staff for the position of DHO, 2ADHO and the ADHO-Environment.

Finally, the districts are using the approved structure as the guiding tool to guide the recruitment exercise where by the recruitment depends on available wage and availability of positions.

The Critical Staff gaps existing at the district but not recruited

The critical vacant positions include departmental heads, district engineers Town clerks, sub county chiefs, community development officers, senior Internal Auditors, Senior Treasurers, Physical/ Senior Planners, Veterinary Officers, Fisheries Officers, Entomologists, Municipal Engineers, Principal Health Inspectors, District Planners, Production Officers, Lab Technicians and Natural Resources were found lacking.

THE DISTRICT SERVICE COMMISSION (DSC)

Relevance of the District Service Commission (DSC)

The District Service Commission (DSC) derives its existence from Article 198 and section 55 of the 1995 Constitution and Local Governments Act 1997 as amended 2001 respectively. The functions of the commission are entrenched in Article 200(1) of the constitution and section 56(1) of the Local Governments Act. The District Service Commission is given roles, functions and full mandate to manage the human resources in the Local Governments.

According to Section 55 of the Local Governments Act CAP 243, 1997, the District Service Commission is also responsible for the appointment, promotion, disciplining and removal from office all employees other than the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Deputy CAO, Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk of a City and Town Clerks (TCs) of Municipalities who are appointed by the central government.

The Composition and functionality of the Commission

The Public Service Commission guideline clearly state that the DSC committee should consist of a Chairperson and four Members as the District Council shall determine, at least one of whom shall represent Urban Authorities, one shall represent disability and a third shall represent women.

During the recruitment process of staff for the Health and Education sector, the DSCs do not work in isolation but rather in close collaboration with the Education Service Commission (ESC) and Health Service Commissions (HSC).

In terms of composition, field findings revealed that the commission in majority of the sampled districts is fully constituted with a panel of 3-5 members however in some DLGs like Ntoroko it was found to be having inadequate numbers with only one member at the district.

Challenges Faced by District Service Commission

The study highly noted that the DSC operates in a political environment with limited safeguards against political influence. This is contrary to Article 166(d) of the Constitution, that mandates the commission to be independent from any direction or control of any person or authority. This was found to be a major challenge hindering its performance yet it manages one of the most sensitive components of decentralization. In some LGs the Politicians have influenced this recruitment process by ordering the technical officers to recruit staff based on family background where someone is not qualified but he is a son of a member of the commission or some famous or rich man. The stakeholders consulted felt that it's fair to recruit 60% from the local community and 40% from external.

Similarly, other challenges such as limited and late releases of funds and facilitation for the commission in terms of allowances negatively impacts on the number of times the DSC sits in a year to undertake its activities. This delay in financial releases impedes the recruitment process hence the continued persistent of unfilled positions of some job positions at District Local Government.

The issue of limited funding has left the Local Governments stuck and the only way they can get out of this situation is by using their local revenue which are not enough. The districts are concerned that at times they have vacancies but they can fail to invite the DSC to recruit because they do not money to facilitate them. The government needs to look into this whether they should have a separate budget set aside to facilitate the commission if they are to have regularly sittings and execute their mandate.

Through primary data analysis, it was equally noted that the activities of the Committee require more funds than the annual budget received by these Local Governments as evidenced by Key Informant Interviews with some key respondents who were quoted by saying:

“By policy, 170,000 is paid for each commissioner per seating and a secretary to the commission is supposed to earn 100,000. Therefore, per seating Organized a sum of around 2.5m is required to pay the commission members. As a result, there is inadequate funds to finance the activities of the DSC and therefore the money released to cater for the activities of a whole Financial Year is spent in one quarter, KII with one of the Principal Human Resource Western Region.”

“When scrutinizing the applications DSC members work from morning up to around 7pm. This money for this exercise is much compared to the budget received hence we end up working and keep demanding money for the previous seating... We recommend for increase in seating fees since some members of the DSC don't have any other source of income KII with one of the DSC member western Region.”

Other challenges faced by this committee include; poor management related issues where some members have been interdicted while others are suspended as a result of corruption and bribery allegations while undertaking the recruitment process.

There is a gap in performance where by some members of the DSC are taking bribes which is against Section 56 of the Local Governments Act, Cap.243, that prohibits appointment of a member of a District Service Commission who is not of high moral character and proven integrity.

Whereas the Public Service guidelines requires the DSC committee to consist of a chairperson and four Members, findings established inadequate members in some Local Governments. Analysis revealed that in some hard-to-reach districts the DSC was found to be have one active member of the committee. This inadequacy compromises government service delivery by delaying the recruitment process and pending the mandate of the commission at large.

These concerns were pointed by some district officials who narrated that;

“The DSC members are insufficient, we used to have two members but now it has only one member. But the terms of the 2nd member expired DSC, there is need for renewal because renewal of the Contracts of members of the DSC has delayed and this is letting down recruitment processes says a District official during the KII interview in Ntoroko DLG”

CENTRALLY RECRUITING OF STAFF TO LGS

It was noted that before public service decentralization, local government officials were either seconded to local governments or placed in a unified personnel system for all local governments in the country. However, with the introduction of decentralization, Public Service Commission was mandated to take on recruitment of some staff. Public Service Commission is established under the provisions of Article 165(1) of the 1995 Constitution.

Some of the functions of the Public Service Commission include; (i) review terms and conditions of service, standing orders, qualifications of public officers, matters connected with personnel management and development of public service and make recommendations to government; (ii) approve and appoint the Chairpersons and Members of the DSC as stipulated under Article 198(2) of the Constitution; (iii) guide and coordinate the work of the DSC as provided under Article 166(1) of the Constitution; (iv) and determine grievances from persons appointed by the District Service Commissions among others.

The effectiveness of current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs:

The assessment was set out to understand the current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs and its effectiveness so far since its implementation.

Results in the first place revealed that in some districts visited, the arrangement is working and more importantly were optimistic that it will bring sanity to the entire recruitment system. However, in some other districts respondents narrated that centrally recruiting staff to LGs is disturbing because the system doesn't provide for reconciliation of budget allocated and wage provided. It is also associated with other challenges for instance the working environment may not be favorable for new staff and some staff in the far to reach areas and the sustainability of staff on job may be hard. For instance, take an example of someone from Kampala posted to Karamoja, such a job can sustain his demands however this person may encounter resistance from the local people. It would be better if the staff is motivated to stay working in that district.

In addition, centrally recruiting of staff is characterized by delays which hinders the recruitment process and cripples service delivery. It was observed that for instance in Kasese district Education Service Commission delayed to recruit secondary teachers and thus the wage for teachers was taken back to the consolidated fund in FY 2020/21. It would work better if is done at sub regional level.

Some key respondents were however concerned with the challenges associated with this process. They

had this to say;

The current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs poses a challenge whereby there is overlapping of roles and responsibilities. Centrally recruiting staff to LGs hinders tracking of performance management yet at Local Government there is staff to undertake recruitment. KII with one of Human Resource Officer Western Region

“The central recruitment delays. There is no wage deficit in Kasese and the available wage is always released at the beginning of the quarter and as a result, the wage is insufficient but what we normally do to curb this issue is that we request for supplementary funding.”

GAPS IDENTIFIED

Central recruitment of staff does not favor growth and promotional avenues for the for some departments (say Trade, works, Finance and Education). Looking at Education, the structure skips the Principal Education officer thus it hinders the promotion of the Senior Education Officer to District Education Officer;

The process does not provide for incentives to attract staff to work in hard-to-reach areas (e.g. Bundibugyo, Ntoroko). Through central recruitment, adverts are published, but very few staff apply for the posts;

The structure does not cater for adequate job positions at LGs. For instance, under works department, the structure provides for only one Engineer yet there are other sections related to works such as buildings, roads, and water that require specialized skills of engineers. For administration, the entry level is Senior Assistant Secretary and yet there is no position for assistant secretary and under water, the structure provides for only one civil engineer and one borehole maintenance technician which limits performance of the whole district especially for hard-to reach areas;

The process of central recruitment is not familiar to some members of the population. Most of the would-be job applicants are not aware of this process. This is greatly hindering applications for the vacant positions and its more evidenced in newly created DLGs (say Karenga) that has only been operational for few years so far.

Central recruitment delays the transfer process of some staff in some Local Governments. Assessment results show that there has delayed transfer of teachers and their accessing the payroll.

Central recruitment makes management and disciplinary of staff very difficult. Under Education sector usually these secondary teachers cannot be disciplined by LGs because they were not hired from the

Centre and this has led to forgery by staff. A case in point is that most teachers have been found with forged appointment, transfer and confirmation letters. More so, some staff are posted with no wage.

Availability of Staff incentives and satisfaction level with promotion arrangements at District Local Governments:

Field discussions with key informants revealed that there are no uniform incentives for staff apart from mandatory leave. Other incentives vary from district to district for instance some districts allow their staff to acquire loans from banks, others are given recommendations for further studies if funds are available, in other districts certificates of appreciation to officers who are retiring are provided. Some employees are also rewarded for good performance with letters of appreciation.

In terms of staff satisfaction, findings showed that most of the staff in all study districts, are not satisfied with the promotion arrangements due to competition for the few jobs available at Local Government and also the current structure does not allow for promotion.

No incentives for staff and they are not satisfied because the positions at the district are fewer than those who need them. There are also other more work dynamics hence staff can't be satisfied for instance of recent three clinical officer were promoted out of twenty that had applied for the post. KII from a district Officer, Kasese district”

Examining the challenges in recruiting staff

The challenges encountered while recruiting staff at Local Governments were classified into categories of structural, technical/Legal, Political, Social-cultural and financial challenges.

Structural challenges

The central recruitment structure of district staff is not flexible to allow/attract recruitment of new staff and retain critical staff. In addition, the structure makes it difficult to recruit fresh entry than senior staff and more so it does not favor promotional avenues of staff for growth for instance there are positions that require staff to be elevated to principal level for which the structure doesn't provide for meaning that some positions are not available in the structure. In other departments say Education, the structure skips the Principal Education officer thus it hinders the promotion of the Senior Education Officer to District Education Officer. Under HR, the structure provides for Principal Human Resource Manager (PHRM) and leaves out the Senior Human Resource Manager (SHRM). This overwhelms the PHRM since he also acts as the secretary to council.

Poor working environment is another challenge affecting LGs. It has been proved that a good working environment in an institution influences performance in contrary to this, the central recruitment

structure where recruitment is done at the Centre attracts staff to different environments that they may not easily cope up with. Therefore, sustainability of staff on job may be hard. For instance, take an example of someone from Kampala posted to Karamoja because such a job can sustain his demands however this person may encounter resistance from the local people.

Technical/Legal challenges

The current salary disparities within public service under similar departments not only create conflicting scenarios but also demoralizes affected staff. It is of great concern among the staff and this has created a lot of mobility by the employees. Employees keep switching to other jobs where they can find better opportunities.

The Public Service Standing Orders provide for induction to integrate newly recruited officers into the service. However, it was noted that there was a need for orientation and mentoring of new staff who were recruited. It was also noted at times the requirements for recruitment of some professions doesn't look at the technical knowledge they have rather than looking at qualifications which necessitates a lot of training the staff.

There are a lot of court cases resulting from complaints and dissatisfaction with the recruitment exercises. So many people feel they have been left out and more so there are candidates that have been invited for interviews but don't qualify for the job hence leading to wastage of resources.

Delays in recruitment in Local Governments has been noted during the assessment. Findings show that some positions such as Heads of Departments require Local Governments first writing to the center for approval before they can be filled. This process at times takes long leaving these positions unfilled for some time.

The renewal of the Contracts of members of the DSC has delayed in some districts like Ntoroko and this is letting down recruitment processes. This is contrary with Article 198 (4) of the Constitution and Section 54 (3) of the Local Governments Act, Cap.243 which stipulates that members of the District Service Commission are to hold office for a period of four years and are eligible for re-appointment for only one further term.

Political challenges

Political rifts with the technical wing where by politicians' influence recruitment processes because some appointments are based on political affiliations and politicians also may prefer their relatives and have a tendency of thinking that the jobs should be taken up by local people from within the district.

Social-cultural challenges

Majority of the locals have not interested themselves in the recruitment process and as such, they miss out on the opportunities associated with working at the DLG as the case was with Karenga district Local

Government.

Some districts face several tribal conflicts due to the presence of many tribes. This has led to development of a negative attitude where some tribes think that they have been marginalized and left out in the recruitment process.

The recruitment process is at times interrupted with political Influence hence fairness and justice are not exercise while selecting employees to work at DLGs. The District Service Commission is more often biased due to cultural pressures imposed on them by politicians and cultural leaders.

Financial challenges

Inadequate funding to facilitate the recruitment process by District Service Commission. Similarly, late releases of funds to facilitate the commission in terms of allowances was noted which negatively impacts on the number of times the DSC sits in a year to undertake its activities.

The underfunding is also affecting by the HR department and this compromises the efficiency and monitoring of projects. Where there is inadequate funding, work is compromised for instance for works that require specific expertise such as district engineer, Bills of Quantities cannot be perfect a reason why some buildings don't last long and others end up collapsing.

There is poor reward and compensation policy arrangement that confine local government staff to the central government's single-spine salary structure, with hardly any allowance or incentives considering peculiar difficulties faced by people serving in remote and hard-to-reach areas, the rate of staff turnover and the inability to attract and retain a good caliber of employees in local governments is high. Several districts found it difficult to attract and retain staff in key positions. In hard-to-reach areas, it was noted that employees especially teachers and Health workers who were recruited did not report for work at their respective duty stations.






Exploring strategies in improving recruitment of LG staff.

Through stakeholder engagement and desk review of secondary information, the results reveal that there are no new key strategies they are employing while addressing staff issues. The districts follow the recruitment structure as guided by Ministry of Public Service as well as internalization of staff recruitment for purposes of filling the vacant positions.

Local Governments are also requesting for waivers for positions that cannot be filled in terms of accelerated promotion in addition to Lobbying for supplementary wage to be able to recruit the missing staff and cater for payment of staff.

Below we provide the key issues identified and recommendations suggested to improve and address the staffing issues both at National and Local Governments levels.

KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key issues identified	Recommended actions
NATIONAL LEVEL	
Inadequate wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase and balance the wage across all government MDAs, this will enable district recruit all key critical staff. Similarly, there should be interventions to harmonize salaries of all government workers because you find someone in UNRA earning more than a district official yet they all have the same qualifications. This will help in retaining the available staff; ❖ If the District Service Commission are to be maintained, then their funding should be increased, the allowance of these members needs to be revised since they play an important role in recruitment of public servants at local government level. ❖ Provide and increase on staff incentives for example provide lunch, breakfast which will also help in attracting and retaining the staff at LG; ❖ There is need to look into the issues of tied wage especially for tertiary, secondary and Health workers which is sometimes returned back to treasury. This will allow LGs relocate these funds to other votes rather than being returned; ❖ There is need to provide funding which is in line with recruitment and at the same time the budget line and recruitment plans submitted by the district. ❖ Lobbying for more wage to recruit the missing staff and be able to pay off staff; ❖ Widening the tax base to increase funds available for implementation of LG activities for example, provide funding for capacity building of LG staff.
LG structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Review LG structure to provide for career growth in other different positions  Revise the minimum qualifications for recruiting staff in sectors lacking such key personnel e.g. engineering to attract applicants in job positions.  Some DLG staff should all be considered under the Hard-to-reach policy for instance Ntoroko  DSC be abolished and replaced with Regional Service Commissions to prevent political and cultural influences  Some districts are still big hence they should be split to cater for the existing recruitment structure e.g. Kasese
Lack of incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The ministry of public service ought to put in place incentives scheme in addition to the wage provisions to be able to attract persons to apply, work and retain staff in Local Governments especially for critical positions. ❖ There should be rewarding of good performers and conducting of employee satisfactory exit

	interviews for staff retiring. This will provide more insights on how to improve staff recruitment in Local Governments.
Key issues identified	Recommended actions
LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL	
Central recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The institutional and legal position of the DSC should be kept independent from any other interference especially the prevailing political influence. Line ministries should also synchronize guidelines on recruitment of technical staff to avoid situations where the DSC has to follow different guidelines for the different technical staff. ❖ There is need for a comprehensive review of the centrally recruitment process, if possible, it can be done at regional level other than national Level. ❖ Let the hard-to-reach policy be fully implemented to attract and retain staff in these districts.
Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There should be continuous trainings so as to handle critical skills gap in LGs in form of continuous refresher courses. ➤ Political leaders should have detailed induction (2 days provided not enough).

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INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE ASSIGNMENT

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has in the last four financial years (FY2016/17, FY2017/18, FY2018/19, FY2019/20) implemented the Local Government Performance Assessment (LGPA) system, one of the key elements of the intergovernmental fiscal transfer reforms. The LGPA has been focusing on: (i) accountability requirements; and (ii) crosscutting and sector (education, health and water) functional processes and systems, focusing on areas which were impediment for effective service delivery and bottlenecks in organization, administration and execution.

The foregoing performance improvements notwithstanding, Government has noted that to address the existing constraints to the delivery of sufficient and quality services to citizens requires not only increased adequacy and equity of transfers but also strengthened: (i) Central Government oversight and support; (ii) capacity of Local Governments in the management of services; and (iii) service delivery performance at the facility level.

The performance assessment results for FY2016/17 per thematic area showed that Human resource management was the worst performed measure with 45%, followed by revenue mobilization at 47%. In the FY2017/18, the worst performing areas were Revenue Mobilization (42%) followed by Human Resource Management (51%). Akin to previous assessments, Human Resource Management has been the worst performed thematic area in the new revised framework followed by Revenue mobilization.

Therefore, the OPM in partnership with Ministry of Local Government undertook a rapid evaluation to examine the challenges faced during the recruitment to fill critical positions in the Local Governments. The rapid evaluation report therefore provides evidence of the challenges in filling of critical positions in the Local Governments which will also be used to inform the Ministry's decision on the best way forward in implementing the recommendations from the assessment reports. In addition, this report will also help inform the relevant Ministries in making adjustments in the recruitment procedures to improve performance of the Local Governments.

1.2 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

1.2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The study aimed at assessing the staffing in Local Governments and the challenges faced during the recruitment to fill critical positions in the Local Governments.

1.2.2. Evaluation Objectives

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Examine the staffing in Local Governments as per the approved structures,
2. Examine the challenges in recruiting staff,
3. Explore strategies in improving recruitment of LG staff.

1.3. SCOPE AND COVERAGE OF THE EVALUATION

The assessment was carried out in the sampled local governments (LGs) across the country as stated in **Table 1 in the Annex**. The sampling was informed by the previous performances of these LGs during the LGPA reviews of 2017 – 2019. The team consulted a broad range of stakeholders comprising the technocrats and recipients of public services from LGs. At LG level, the selected districts were visited as representatives of the regions of the country. Some of the respondents included the district officials e.g. CAO, Human Resource Personnel, Planners, Heads of Departments, CFO, LCV, DEC, DSC among others.

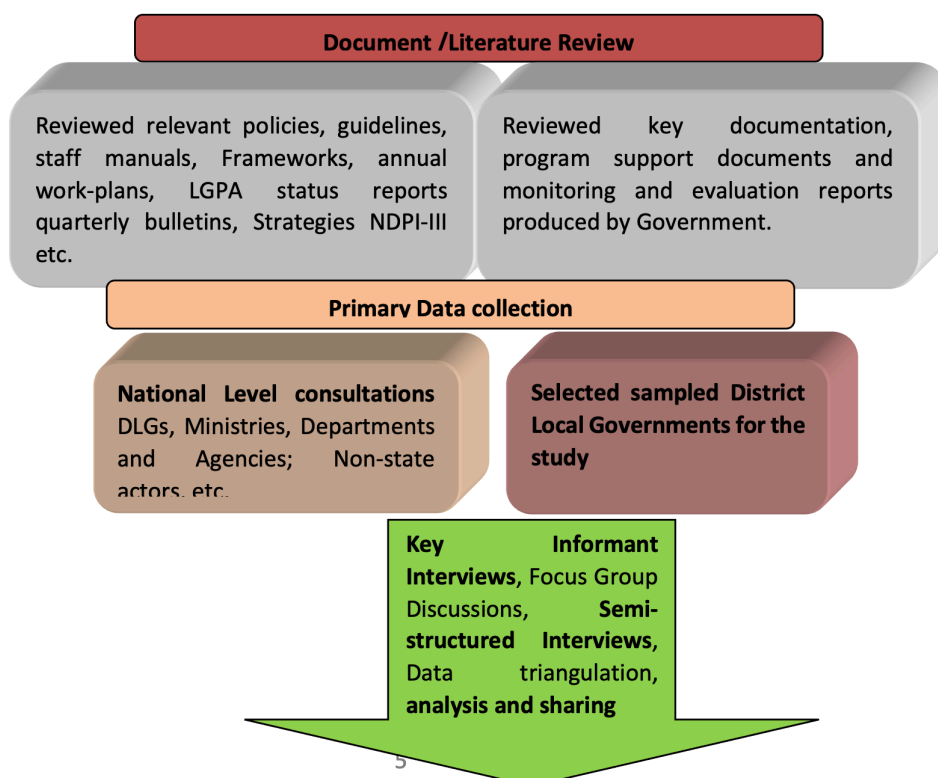
METHODOLOGY

2.1. EVALUATION APPROACH

The assessment employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches for the Rapid Evaluation of the Challenges in Local Government Staffing: Focus filling of Critical Positions in the Local Governments Structures. In terms of qualitative, the study undertook a desk-based review of all relevant documentation guidelines, LG financing strategies, public service LG staffing framework, decentralization and service delivery in Uganda in addition to conducting of Key Informant Interviews with selected LG officials and relevant stakeholders.

The approach to the assignment utilized a participatory approach in nature involving consultations with key stakeholders at national and LG level. This involved engaging the stakeholders through interactive meetings to gain a deeper understanding of the staff recruitment and challenges in Local Governments in Uganda. Feedback was provided at every stage of the assignment. The interview methods were interactive to facilitate the learning process through dialogue. This approach opened opportunities for discussions on the process of change based on the participants' own experiences. An inclusive approach was applied to allow participation of all key stakeholders in the study, while a collaborative approach ensured a close engagement with key stakeholders.

Figure 1: Evaluation Process



Therefore, the evaluation methods for the Rapid assessment were executed through a process involving secondary data collection and review of relevant documents followed by primary data collection using a number of methods and tools as explained in Figure 1 above and lastly data analysis/synchronization and report preparation.

The **Desk-based review** focused on National implementing mechanisms, and evidence Uganda literature and evidence generated reports. It also involved a review of reports from National Taskforce entities as summarized in the **Figure 1 above**.

The study mainly employed the key informant interviews as agreed upon with the GoU Evaluation Subcommittee and Twende Mbele working closely with OPM and MoLG. Stakeholder involvement during the study reinforced ownership, learning and sustainability of results.

The study was led by a team leader who provided guidance, instruction, direction, management and coordination of the team of evaluators that were trained for purpose of achieving key results by:

- a. Ensuring the independence and integrity of the evaluation
- b. Managed the team of trained evaluators, their contributions and specific outputs
- c. Managed information sharing and day to day dialogue with OPM and other key stakeholders
- d. Prepared fieldwork schedules, meetings and introductory materials, in cooperation with OPM and MoLG

Among the specific deliverables are:

- ❖ Regular progress reports to the OPM and Twende Mbele
- ❖ Organize introductory and wrap-up workshops in collaboration with OPM and MoLG.

2.2. DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS AND EXTENT OF THE CONSULTATION

A generic tool aligned to the objectives and questions of the evaluation was developed to capture each and every aspect contribution of the study. In order to solicit information peculiar to the various key stakeholders of Government, specific questions were extracted from the generic tool to formulate tools pertaining to each of the stakeholders.

2.3. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ANALYSIS OF THE TOOLS

The sets of questionnaires used to collect data for this study were created to ensure they have content validity by allowing adequate coverage of the objectives under study. In addition, the evaluation team also ensured the existence of construct validity by creating the research instrument (questionnaires)

which had a sound base in theory and conforming to the theoretical body of knowledge that showed a relationship among the variables of other empirically tested constructs in similar studies.

2.4. FIELD DATA COLLECTION

There were 8 field teams led by the team leader to guide the data collection. On each team were 2 more research assistants that collected the field data for 7 days in the sampled LGs. During the actual field data collection exercise, the field supervisor leading each of the teams in the various areas on regular basis checked on the performance of the enumerators to ensure that they were on course and capturing the correct data. The team also conducted daily review of the collected data, shared experiences and challenges experienced by the enumerators and supervisors to provide opportunity for joint problem solving while, in the field such that similar experiences can be avoided in the subsequent field visits.

2.5. DATA CAPTURE AND ANALYSIS

Data was captured in MS. Excel and analyzed based on the requirements as per the understanding of the objectives of the assessment. Quantitative data was analyzed in form of tables, graphs, percentages while the qualitative was in form of themes and contents in response to the objectives.

2.6. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

This plan focused on minimizing the failure of the study through such occurrences as, non-response of the respondents giving genuine responses to the questions, suspicion from the community about the aim of the questions that are posed by strangers.

The study team undertook the following:

- Introduced the team to the responsible people and heads of government installations such that they were the ones to introduce them to the respondents;
- The team was pleasant and cordial to all the respondents;

This assignment takes place at a time when Uganda is grappling with the deadly pandemic of Covid-19. We were therefore cautious towards ensuring strict adherence to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) put in place by the Ministry of Health for the protection of all Ugandans against the infection and spread of Covid-19. **These SOPs include;** -

- Ensuring social distancing of at least 2 meters: - Throughout the operations of the evaluation especially in KIIs, by ensuring that all participants in evaluation activities were spaced from each other in a distance of 2 meters.

- Mandatory wearing of facemasks that was compulsory for the entire research team and the respondent's/key informants.
- Hand washing with water and soap or a sanitizer: - Quite often during the engagements for the evaluation, we were able to ensure to wash hands with water and soap in addition to having a sanitizer. The water and soap was positioned at the entrance of every meeting room we used while there were sanitizers inside the meeting rooms to sanitize the equipment and furniture used. The quality control and ethical considerations are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Quality Control and Ethical Considerations for the Study

Quality Control	Consultant Support Role	Action point
Call backs and documentation of contacts	For all the contacts the data collector made with the respondent, they were documented.	If there was no record of 3 attempts, respondent is called and appointment scheduled
Accompaniment & Sport checks	Interviews were accompanied by the supervisor to ensure that the interviews were being conducted according to protocol.	Debriefing and retraining as needed
Editorial checks	The data management team made 100% checks on the interviews conducted immediately after completion of interview with respondent. At minimum, the checks were done to ensure completeness and accuracy.	Interviewer made correction as necessary & discrepancy addressed with interviewer;
Back checks	Back-checks were conducted by phone calls to confirm the interview took place as per protocol. During the call, the back-checkers randomly picked questions on the questionnaire and confirm the responses	Discrepancy resolved with the interviewer, if resolvable interviewer dismissed and interview redone or replaced
Field updates	Research team reviewed the daily updates template to assess field work progress	Advising teams on how to handle unforeseeable challenges
Quality control	The study team extended an invitation to OPM to participate in reviewing and checking the quality of data during the study implementation.	Liaised with study team on joint quality control field visits

FINDINGS

3. Presentation of Study Findings

3.1 OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN LGs

The assessment explored the challenges in the Local Government staffing while focusing on the filling of Critical Positions in the Local Government Structures in Uganda. The entry point to the assessment included the review of LGPA reports of 2017 - 2019, particularly with a focus on human resource management performance measure. It was generally noted that performance assessment results improved from FY2016/17 - FY2019/20 per thematic area (**Table 2**). Both the crosscutting, education and health performance results improved during the period under review. However, for specific sampled districts, there are variations in the performance scores largely indicating variations in the staffing requirements.

Table 2: Human Resource Management Assessment Results of the sampled districts

District	Cross-cutting (/14pts)			Education			Health		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Mbarara	9	12	11	24	13	41	14	26	26
Kabarole	7	9	12	15	19	25	18	22	26
Ntoroko	6	7	2	18	17	19	14	12	14
Nebbi MC	8	7	9	24	18	13	10	22	22
Bundibugyo	7	9	2	20	21	11	22	18	22
Rubirizi	7	9	7	24	21	21	8	22	26
Kasese	7	9	3	21	21	14	11	16	14
Pakwach	NA	2	4	NA	14	8	NA	18	10
Kiryandongo	9	7	7	30	21	27	19	12	22
Kiruhura	7	9	9	26	21	41	12	18	26
Nwoya	7	9	6	20	24	6	11	26	18
Kaabong	6	8	9	18	16	19	11	4	26
Average	7	8	7	22	19	20	14	18	21
National Perf.	45%	51%	52%	65	73	79	57%	73%	82%

Source: LGPA (2017 – 2019) Synthesis Reports

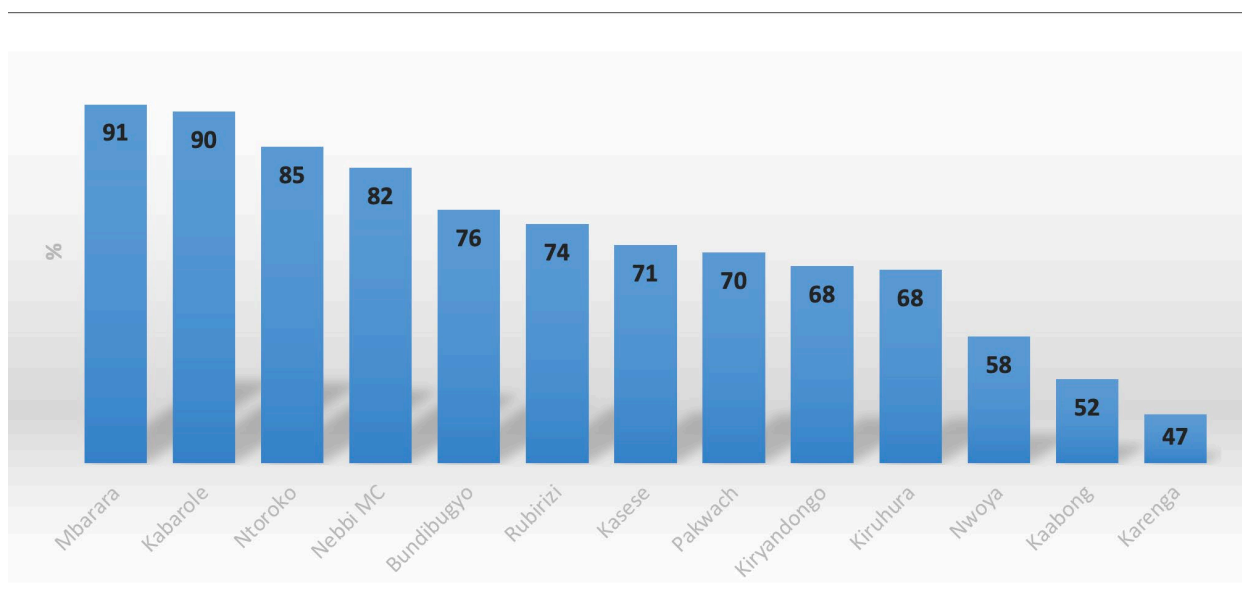
Overall performance for all the LGs assessed continued to improve in say Health with an average score of 82% in 2019, up from 73% in 2017 and 57% in 2017. According to Table 2 above, the marginal improvement was in crosscutting area, with an average score of 52%, up from 51% in 2018 and 45% in 2017.

3.2 STAFFING LEVELS IN THE LGs

According to primary information, the different categories in staffing levels identified under Local Governments involved three categories including; Professional, Supervisory and Managerial and operational & Technical. These different categories staffing levels in LGs remain critical and necessary precondition to the effective service delivery in the country.

Currently, the LG is implementing a customized approved staffing structure approved in 2017 by the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS). There are traditional civil servants (i.e. administrative and professional officers (e.g. teachers, Health workers, Agricultural Production workers, Engineering), and non-traditional who are mainly politicians (Figure 2). The assessment explored the current staffing levels and the possible gaps as per the approved staffing structures in the LGs and results clearly noted that staffing issues remain wanting in the LGs. For instance, Mbarara LG reported the highest staffing of 91% (of the 136 established staff) and this could be attributed the availability of the wage and the existence of the active district service commission. However, Karenga district had the lowest staffing levels (47%) and this was attributed to the factor that the district is still new as per the establishment overall.

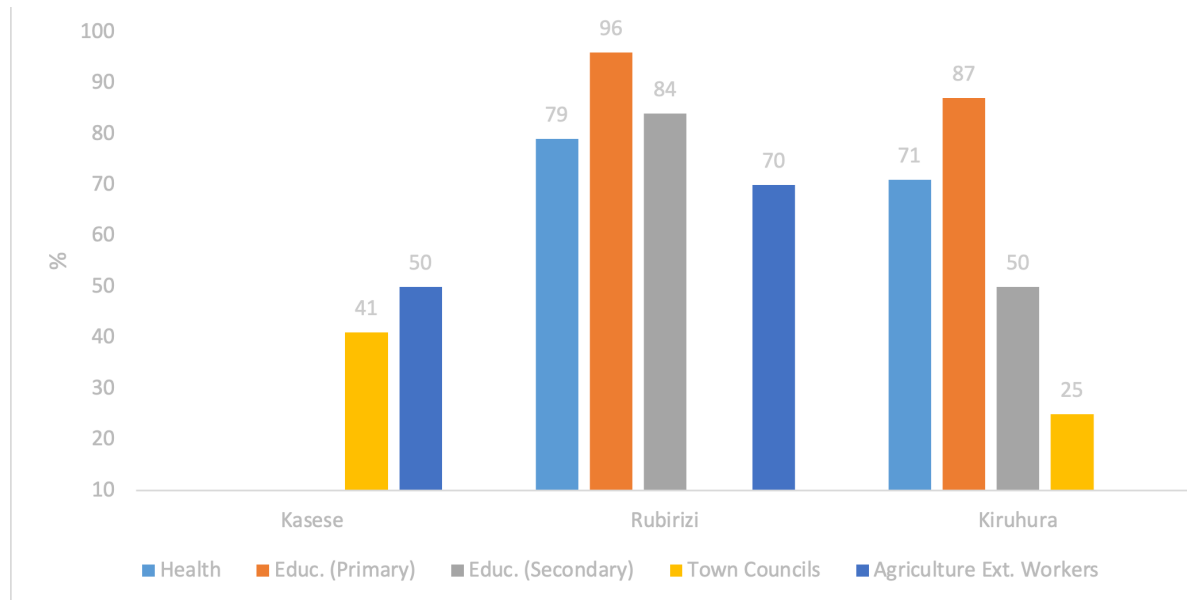
Figure 2: Overall Staffing levels as per staff establishment



Source: Field Data (2022)

In terms staffing by sector, Education (primary) had the highest number of filled staff in both Rubirizi and Kiruhura districts. Health sector in all the districts visited was above 50% levels of staffing as per the establishment (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Staffing levels by sector as per staff establishment



Source: Field Data (2022)

3.3. THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK/ STRATEGY OF RECRUITING STAFF

In terms of the current framework/ strategy guiding the staffing in the selected districts, findings show that on one hand, in liaison with the Ministry of Public Service, some districts are putting much emphasis on filling the most critical positions as guided by line ministries such as Heads of Departments and Units, Heads of sections e.g. Agriculture extension workers, Health workers like doctors, midwives have to be filled first.

On the other hand, it was revealed that some districts recruit staff based on replacement by immediately replacing those that are constantly retiring from the service to prevent and minimize on performance gaps at the most strategic level. Replacements are usually done when an employee retires or dies and this has led to successful maintaining of key staff since replacement is based on experience and skills required for the job. Other staff are also allowed to serve in acting capacity then later be appointed especially in school settings for the case of head teachers.

Other districts were found to be using linear arrangement (being flexible with staff) for example allow staff to go for further studies especially in Health and Education departments. This kind of arrangement

however has got its own disadvantages for instance, some staff do not return after their studies in case they get greener jobs elsewhere.

Internal recruitment process is being followed by some districts during recruitment. This process has been found to be cost effective and minimizes delays when undertaking the recruitment exercise. Furthermore, it was also noted that districts follow the guides by the ministry of public service through the public service commission, however it does not provide for incentives to attract staff to work in hard-to-reach areas and this leaves high staff turnover and as such, adverts are published, but very few staff apply for the posts a reason as to why some districts like Ntoroko has failed to attract staff in for the position of DHO, 2ADHO and the ADHO-Environment.

Finally, the districts are using the approved structure as the guiding tool to guide the recruitment exercise where by the recruitment depends on available wage and availability of positions.

3.3.1. Staff categories critical to the day-to-day operations of Local Governments

With regard to the different categories in staffing levels under Local Governments, three categories were established under Local Governments and these were Professional, Supervisory and Managerial and operational & Technical staff in nature.

When it came to which category is regarded as the most critical, results of the assessment showed that all categories in the LG are critical because absence of say one category hinders implementation of activities in time. However, it was noted that the most critical ones are supervisory / Managerial level staff followed by operational / Technical level staff.

3.3.2. The Critical Staff gaps existing at the district but not recruited

The assessment results revealed that all study districts have critical staff gaps which have not been filled up by employees. The critical vacant positions include departmental heads, district engineers Town clerks, sub county chiefs, community development officers, senior Internal Auditors, Senior Treasurers, Physical/ Senior Planners, Veterinary Officers, Fisheries Officers, Entomologists, Municipal Engineers, Principal Health Inspectors, District Planners, Production Officers, Lab Technicians and Natural Resources were found lacking. The districts expressed the urgency in filling up of these staff gaps as it has affected performance in one way or another. Some positions are still vacant because of high level education requirements and expertise required by applicants who want to take up these positions. Taking an example of the minimum requirements for one to qualify for a district engineer, it was noted that the

salary scale set for this position doesn't match with the expertise needed therefore, Engineers who have such job specifics require higher pay that is not in line with LG's budget and salary scale. In other words, the people who can easily take on such an engineering position with the current salary scale is a fresh graduate (Engineer). However, it's sad that such a fresh graduate Engineer doesn't possess these minimum job requirements. This has kept these vacancies unfilled for a long time which has to some extent hindered service delivery at district level.

Desk review further revealed that Human Resource is still faced with major challenges regarding human resource management (LGPA synthesis Report 2017/18). According to the report, only 2% of the LGs in Uganda, that is Kalangala, Kiboga and Mayuge Districts had all Heads of Department positions filled. The positions where LGs are grossly understaffed include: District Commercial Officers with vacancies in 102 out of 121 districts; District Engineers with vacancies in 95 out of 121 districts; District Health Officers with vacancies in 59 districts; Chief Finance Officers and District Planners with vacancies in 56 districts each; and District Education Officers with vacancies in 36 out of the 121 districts.

There is a gap in providing on time feedback among the different stakeholders. Findings revealed that there are currently issues in Health where government is upgrading Health and LGs have written to public service and MoH to provide guidance which has not been done and they are being blamed for the funds not being utilized yet they have no guidelines for them for utilizing that fund. This further explains why some of the positions not filled.

3.4. THE DISTRICT SERVICE COMMISSION (DSC)

3.4.1. Relevance of the District Service Commission (DSC)

The District Service Commission (DSC) derives its existence from Article 198 and section 55 of the 1995 Constitution and Local Governments Act 1997 as amended 2001 respectively. The functions of the commission are entrenched in Article 200(1) of the constitution and section 56(1) of the Local Governments Act. The District Service Commission is given roles, functions and full mandate to manage the human resources in the Local Governments.

According to Section 55 of the Local Governments Act CAP 243, 1997, the District Service Commission is also responsible for the appointment, promotion, disciplining and removal from office all employees other than the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Deputy CAO, Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk of a City and Town Clerks (TCs) of Municipalities who are appointed by the central government.

3.4.2. The Composition and functionality of the Commission

The Public Service Commission clearly states that the DSC committee should consist of a Chairperson and four Members as the District Council shall determine, at least one of whom shall represent Urban Authorities, one shall represent disability and a third shall represent women.

During the recruitment process of staff for the Health and Education sector, the DSCs do not work in isolation but rather in close collaboration with the Education Service Commission (ESC) and Health Service Commissions (HSC).

In terms of composition, field findings however revealed that the commission in majority of the sampled districts is majority is fully constituted composed of a panel of 3-5 members and in some districts like Ntoroko it was found to be having inadequate numbers with only one member at the district. In terms of sittings, the commission sits per quota and is largely involved in recruiting staff with the exception of Education or Health Service the Commission uses the guidelines provided by the Education or Health Service Commission.

3.4.3. Challenges Faced by District Service Commission

The study highly noted that the DSC operates in a political environment with limited safeguards against political influence. This is contrary to Article 166(d) of the Constitution, that mandates the commission to be independent from any direction or control of any person or authority. This was found to be a major challenge hindering its performance yet it manages one of the most sensitive components of decentralization. In some LGs the Politicians have influenced this recruitment process by ordering the technical officers to recruit staff based on family background where someone is not qualified but he is a son of a member of the commission or some famous or rich man. The stakeholders consulted felt that it's fair to recruit 60% from the local community and 40% from external.

Similarly, other challenges such as limited and late releases of funds and facilitation for the commission in terms of allowances negatively impacts on the number of times the DSC sits in a year to undertake its activities. This delay in financial releases impedes the recruitment process hence the continued persistent of unfilled positions of some job positions at District Local Government.

The issue of limited funding has left the Local Governments stuck and the only way they can get out of this situation is by using their local revenue which are not enough. The districts are concerned that at times they have vacancies but they can fail to invite the DSC to recruit because they do not money to facilitate them. There government needs to look into this whether they should have a separate budget

set aside to facilitate the commission if they are to have regularly sittings and execute their mandate.

Through primary data analysis, it was equally noted that the activities of the Committee require more funds than the annual budget received by these Local Governments as evidenced by Key Informant Interviews with some key respondents who were quoted by saying:

“By policy, 170,000 is paid for each commissioner per seating and a secretary to the commission is supposed to earn 100,000. Therefore, per seating Organized a sum of around 2.5m is required to pay the commission members. As a result, there is inadequate funds to finance the activities of the DSC and therefore the money released to cater for the activities of a whole Financial Year is spent in one quarter, KII with one of the Principal Human Resource Western Region.”

“When scrutinizing the applications DSC members work from morning up to around 7pm. This money for this exercise is much compared to the budget received hence we end up working and keep demanding money for the previous seating... We recommend for increase in seating fees since some members of the DSC don't have any other source of income KII with one of the DSC member western Region.”

Other challenges faced by this committee include; poor management related issues where some members have been interdicted while others are suspended as a result of corruption and bribery allegations while undertaking the recruitment process. In some districts it was mentioned that the DSC committee members ask for bribes or are offered with bribes in favor of some candidates in addition, these acts are attracted by political pressure amounted on the commission by the politicians.

There is a gap in performance where by some members of the DSC are taking bribes which is against Section 56 of the Local Governments Act, Cap.243, that prohibits appointment of a member of a District Service Commission who is not of high moral character and proven integrity.

Whereas the Public Service guidelines requires the DSC committee to consist of a chairperson and four Members, findings established inadequate members in some Local Governments. Analysis revealed that in some hard-to-reach districts for instance in western Uganda such as Ntoroko the DSC was found to be have one active member of the committee. This inadequacy compromises government service delivery by delaying the recruitment process and pending the mandate of the commission at large.

These concerns were pointed by some district officials who narrated that;

“The DSC members are insufficient, used to have two members but now it has only one member. But the terms of the 2nd member expired DSC, there is need for renewal because renewal of the Contracts of members of the DSC has delayed and this is letting down recruitment processes says a District official during the KII interview in Ntoroko DLG”

3.5. CENTRALLY RECRUITING OF STAFF TO LGs

Analysis of literature review shows that before public service decentralization, local government officials were either seconded to local governments or placed in a unified personnel system for all local governments in the country. However, with the introduction of decentralization, Public Service Commission was mandated to take on recruitment of some staff. Public Service Commission is established under the provisions of Article 165(1) of the 1995 Constitution.

Some of the functions of the Public Service Commission include; (i) review terms and conditions of service, standing orders, qualifications of public officers, matters connected with personnel management and development of public service and make recommendations to government; (ii) approve and appoint the Chairpersons and Members of the DSC as stipulated under Article 198(2) of the Constitution; (iii) guide and coordinate the work of the DSC as provided under Article 166(1) of the Constitution; (iv) and determine grievances from persons appointed by the District Service Commissions among others.

3.5.1. The effectiveness of current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs:

The assessment was set out to understand the current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs and its effectiveness so far since its implementation.

Results in the first place revealed that in some districts visited, the arrangement is working and more importantly were optimistic that it will bring sanity to the entire recruitment system. However, in some other districts respondents narrated that centrally recruiting staff to LGs is disturbing because the system doesn't provide for reconciliation of budget allocated and wage provided. It is also associated with other challenges for instance the working environment may not be favorable for new staff and some staff in the far to reach areas and the sustainability of staff on job may be hard. For instance, take an example of someone from Kampala posted to Karamoja because such a job can sustain his demands however this person may encounter resistance from the local people. It would be better if the staff is motivated to stay working in that district.

In addition, centrally recruiting of staff is characterized by delays which hinders the recruitment process

and cripples service delivery. It was observed that for instance in Kasese district Education Service Commission delayed to recruit secondary teachers and thus the wage for teachers was taken back to the consolidated fund in FY 2020/21. It would work better if is done at sub regional level. It was also noted that some districts recruit staff locally to supplement the central recruitment process especially in hard-to-reach districts.

Some key respondents were however concerned with the challenges associated with this process. They had this to say;

The current arrangement of centrally recruiting staff to LGs poses a challenge whereby there is overlapping of roles and responsibilities. Centrally recruiting staff to LGs hinders tracking of performance management yet at Local Government there is staff to undertake recruitment. KII with one of Human Resource Officer Western Region

“The central recruitment delays. There is no wage deficit in Kasese and the available wage is always released at the beginning of the quarter and as a result, the wage is insufficient but what we normally do to curb this issue is that we request for supplementary funding.”

In terms of the effectiveness of the strategy, “yes, the strategy is effective however, this is realized at Local Government level though one of the disadvantages is that it has caused a lot of disabilities in maintaining positions by employees at work. As a result, Staff keep switching to other job positions in comparison to line growth. The staff want to switch to positions where there are high avenues of growth.... “KII by a Principal Human Resource Officer Western region”

Gaps Identified

Central recruitment of staff does not favor growth and promotional avenues for the for some departments (say Trade, works, Finance and Education). Looking at Education, the structure skips the Principal Education officer thus it hinders the promotion of the Senior Education Officer to District Education Officer;

The process does not provide for incentives to attract staff to work in hard-to-reach areas (e.g. Bundibugyo, Ntoroko). Through central recruitment, adverts are published, but very few staff apply for the posts;

The structure does not cater for adequate job positions at LGs. For instance, under works department, the structure provides for only one Engineer yet there are other sections related to works such as

buildings, roads, and water that require specialized skills of engineers. For administration, the entry level is Senior Assistant Secretary and yet there is no position for assistant secretary and under water, the structure provides for only one civil engineer and one borehole maintenance technician which limits performance of the whole district especially for hard-to reach areas;

The process of central recruitment is not yet well known to the population. Most of the would-be job applicants are not aware of this process. This is greatly hindering applications for the vacant positions and its more evidenced in newly created DLGs (say Karenga) that has only been operational for few years so far. Thus, few people even know of their existence to be able to apply.

Central recruitment delays the transfer process of some staff in some Local Governments. Assessment results show that there has delayed transfer of teachers and their accessing the payroll.

Central recruitment makes management and disciplinary of staff very difficult. Under Education sector usually these secondary teachers cannot be disciplined by LGs because they were not hired from the Centre and this has led to forgery by staff. A case in point is that most teachers have been found with forged appointment, transfer and confirmation letters. More so, some staff are posted with no wage.

3.5.2. Assessment of the wage bill in terms of adequacy, timely availability

The assessment also ascertained the timely availability of the wage bill and its adequacy in the study districts. The analysis of the results revealed that the wage bill in the selected districts is not adequate and at times there are delays in releasing it. The bill structure still has issues which cannot allow compatibility and more so, the current structure is rigid and cannot allow flow of money from sector to another say money from Education being used in Health hence (Money is tied to a specific department) and that's why some sectors have returned funds back to treasury. **Some of the comments that came in from respondents were;**

“Some LGs at the end day return wage and are blamed yet they have no control over that wage that has been returned”.

“In Kasese it's not enough however in those cases when it's not sufficient, we submit requests and justify the cause” KII Kasese district

The wage bill is lacking, infective and demoralizing KII Ntoroko district

3.5.3. Skills gaps among some key staff in the district

The research team probed for presence of skills gaps for the various key categories among the key staff at district level. The findings on this aspect showed that skills gaps do exist especially in the areas of Health where some Health centres lack staff with the required skills to work on the population for instance it was observed that Mityana lacked an Anesthesiology. More gaps were also prevailing in Education due to the introduction of the new curriculum. The current available staff in some schools do not match with the skills required. Similarly, in some schools, teachers with certain specialties are deficient. A case in point is lack of Kiswahili teachers and other new additions.

In addition, some districts revealed to be missing Heads of departments and other skilled personnel in handling IFMs and PBS at local governments. Inadequate funds at district have led to lack of team building, time management are still lacking. Thus, stakeholders pointed to the need for fresher trainings for instance in Communication Management and Diseases surveillance.

“Yes, skills gaps do exist here in areas where you find other entirely new reforms and new interventions such as parish model. Staff is just learning new ideas on how best they can implement it. KII from a Principal Human Resource Officer, Eastern region”

“LG staff need to undergo short training courses on; Leadership, Public relation, Communication skills, Basic ICT and general patriotism for purposes of mindset change. KII from a Human Resource Officer, Northern region

3.5.4. Availability of Staff incentives and satisfaction level with promotion arrangements at District Local Governments

Previous studies through literature review show that there is a correlation between staff retention and provision of incentives at work place. The assessment therefore ascertained whether there are staff incentives and if the staff are satisfied with promotion arrangements in the study districts. Field discussions with key informants revealed that there are no uniform incentives for staff apart from mandatory leave. Other incentives vary from district to district for instance some districts allow their staff to acquire loans from banks, others are given recommendations for further studies if funds are available, in other districts certificates of appreciation to officers who are retiring are provided for instance this practice was observed in Kabarole. Some employees are also rewarded for good performance with letters of appreciation.

Important to note is that incentives are provided for under the Local Revenue arrangement but the Local Government has consistently failed to hit quarterly targets and thus the realized funds are used for other priority areas. In terms of staff satisfaction, findings showed that most of the staff in all study districts, are not satisfied with the promotion arrangements due to competition for the few jobs available at Local Government and also the current structure does not allow for promotion for example if the CAO is there, there is no way for the deputy CAO can be promoted, you just need to wait for the opportunity come. Some promotions according to them don't make sense for example to Assistant CAO, PAS because they don't have the budget to control just like Heads of Departments. In addition, the majority of staff in town councils are working in acting position and also there is bureaucracy in the process.

No incentives for staff and they are not satisfied because the positions at the district are fewer than those who need them. There are also other more work dynamics hence staff can't be satisfied for instance of recent three clinical officer were promoted out of twenty that had applied for the post. KII from a district Officer, Kasese district"

3.6. CHALLENGES/BOTTLENECKS IN RECRUITMENT

The challenges encountered while recruiting staff at Local Governments were classified into categories of structural, technical/Legal, Political, Social-cultural and financial challenges. These were found to be having a bearing on the district performance and the quality of the delivery of public services, some of which included, but not limited to the following:

Structural challenges

The central recruitment structure of district staff is not flexible to allow/ attract recruitment of new staff and retain critical staff. In addition, the structure makes it difficult to recruit fresh entry than senior staff and more so it does not favor promotional avenues of staff for growth for instance there are positions that require staff to be elevated to principal level for which the structure doesn't provide for meaning that some positions are not available in the structure. In other departments say Education, the structure skips the Principal Education officer thus it hinders the promotion of the Senior Education Officer to District Education Officer. Under HR, the structure provides for Principal Human Resource Manager (PHRM) and leaves out the Senior Human Resource Manager (SHRM). This overwhelms the PHRM since he also acts as the secretary to council.

Poor working environment is another challenge affecting LGs. It has been proved that a good working environment in an institution influences performance in contrary to this, the central recruitment structure where recruitment is done at the Centre attracts staff to different environments that they may

not easily cope up with. These working conditions may not be favorable new staff posted in districts that are totally new to them for instance the hard-to-reach areas yet if the locals were put to such places they could easily cope up and adapt because they are familiar with these areas. Therefore, sustainability of staff on job may be hard. For instance, take an example of someone from Kampala posted to Karamoja because such a job can sustain his demands however this person may encounter resistance from the local people. It would be better if the staff is motivated to stay working in that district.

Technical/Legal challenges

The current salary disparities within public service under similar departments not only create conflicting scenarios but also demoralizes affected staff. It is of great concern among the staff this has created a lot of mobility by the employees. Employees get switching to other jobs where they can find better opportunities. Respondents revealed that their colleagues under same departments but working in different institutions get more pay than them yet they all have the same qualifications.

The Public Service Standing Orders provide for induction to integrate newly recruited officers into the service - it is compulsory for each grade of public officers and must be conducted within the first three months of entry into the service. However, it was noted that there was a need for orientation and mentoring of new staff who were recruited. It was also noted at times the requirements for recruitment of some professions doesn't look at the technical knowledge they have rather than looking at qualifications which necessitates a lot of training the staff.

There are a lot of court cases resulting from complaints and dissatisfaction with the recruitment exercises. So many people feel they have been left out and more so there are candidates that have been invited for interviews but don't qualify for the job hence leading to wastage of resources.

Delays in recruitment in Local Governments has been noted during the assessment. Findings show that some positions such as Heads of Departments require Local Governments first writing to the center for approval before they can be filled. This process at times takes long leaving these positions unfilled for some time.

The renewal of the Contracts of members of the DSC has delayed in some districts like Ntoroko and this is letting down recruitment processes. This is contrary with Article 198 (4) of the Constitution and Section 54 (3) of the Local Governments Act, Cap.243 which stipulates that members of the District Service Commission are to hold office for a period of four years and are eligible for re-appointment for only one further term.

Political challenges

Political rifting with the technical wing where by politicians' influence recruitment processes because some appointments are based on political affiliations and politicians also may prefer their relatives and

have a tendency of thinking that the jobs should be taken up by local people from within the district. This political influence in the implementation of public programmes always results into conflict of interests that may weaken performance and service delivery.

Social-cultural challenges

Majority of the locals have not interested themselves in the recruitment process and as such, they miss out on the opportunities associated with working at the DLG as the case was with Karenga district Local Government.

Some districts face several tribal conflicts due to the presence of many tribes. This has led to development of a negative attitude where some tribes think that they have been marginalized and left out in the recruitment process and yet in actual sense the exercise is done based on merit. This was mainly witnessed in Kasese district.

The recruitment process is at times interrupted with hence fairness and justice not exercise while selecting employees to work at districts. The District Service Commission is more often biased due to cultural pressures imposed on them by politicians and cultural leaders.

Financial challenges

Inadequate funding to facilitate the recruitment process by District Service Commission. Similarly, late releases of funds was noted. This affects the facilitation of the commission in terms of allowances which negatively impacts on the number of times the DSC sits in a year to undertake its activities. This delay in financial releases impedes the recruitment process hence the continued persistent of unfilled positions of some job positions at District Local Government.

The underfunding is also affecting by the HR department and this compromises the efficiency and monitoring of projects. Where there is inadequate funding, work is compromised for instance for works that require specific expertise such as district engineer, Bills of Quantities cannot be perfect a reason why some buildings don't last long and others end up collapsing.

There is poor reward and compensation policy arrangement that confine local government staff to the central government's single-spine salary structure, with hardly any allowance or incentives considering peculiar difficulties faced by people serving in remote and hard-to-reach areas, the rate of staff turnover and the inability to attract and retain a good caliber of employees in local governments is high. Several districts found it difficult to attract and retain staff in key positions. In hard-to-reach areas, it was noted that employees especially teachers and Health workers who were recruited did not report for work at their respective duty stations where there is presence of Islands.

3.7. STAFFING VERSUS SERVICE DELIVERY

3.7.1. How the staffing affects service delivery in critical and non-critical sectors.

The assessment also sought to understand how staffing has affected service delivery in critical and non-critical sectors. Findings revealed that the structure is the guiding principle, therefore, LGs can't recruit beyond what the structure what guides. In districts without heads of departments there was low/slow rate of implementation of work/activities which has forced the DLG to appoint the existing officers to act as Heads of Departments a situation that piles lots of work on the few staff available.

For the Education sector where there is less staff especially in hard-to-reach areas it was noted that performance has been affected through increased absenteeism by staff in such schools. The fact that few employees want to be associated with such poor working conditions, funds are returned to the center at the end of a FY because there are no staff to implement Government projects, there is also inadequate staff for example in the school setting, high Pupil Teacher Ratio was observed (1 teacher: 150 pupils). In addition, districts with no Engineer construction works have been affected especially district roads.

Results from the qualitative study further re affirms these findings by saying;

“Generally, service delivery is compromised where there is insufficient staff in hard-to-reach areas

There has been remarkable improvement in Agricultural activity coverage due to recruitment of 46 Extension Workers. KII with HRO Western Region”.

The study established the most successful and least successful sectors in the selected districts and the reasons for their low and high performance. Analysis shows that some of the cross-cutting factors that contributed towards success of the performance of these sectors include; commitment of staff, some positions are substantively filled, proper record keeping and promotions in case of chance in the department and recruitment of new staff (**Table 3**).

While on contrary the cross-cutting factors that led to less success of these sectors were among others; absence of appropriate staff to guide the implementation of activities at the LG, absence of extra facilitation for staff while implementing activities, absence of tools and equipment for works department and limited staffing due to failure to attract and retain staff at the LG. More details are elaborated on below as per district.

Table 3: Showing most successful and least successful sectors

Most Successful	Reason	Least Successful	Reason
KYENJOJO			
1. Health 2. Production	❖ These are 90% staffed	Finance and Planning	The district has just recruited the district planner
KARENGA			
1. Water 2. Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commitment from the existing staff. Many staff are doing work of three persons at one time, and/or doing the work of an entire department as one person. ➤ Wage bill is sufficient and as such, staff are assured of their pay at the end of the month 	1. Production 2. Education	There is Under staffing under these sectors
KAABONG			
1. Health 2. Education 3. Community based services 4. Trade and industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of facilitation from the Ministry of health (CG direct facilitation) • Continuous monitoring and supervision of various sectors by the Office of Town clerk, RDC to curb staff absentees. • Allowance given to staff as a motivation mechanism 	1. Works and Transport 2. Production 3. Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under staffing in the department of water. • Budget reduction in the FY under Works and Transport
KASESE			
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The staff has been committed and self-motivated ➤ Health sector is so essential 	Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualifications required for the recruitment of a position of an Engineer are so high
KABALORE			
1. Water 2. Natural resources 3. Education	There is Proper record keeping	1. Health 2. Statutory bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There was no substantive DHO. ❖ Poor documentation for the documents that were required during the LGPA i.e. HMIS forms ❖ The department of statutory bodies

			had one staff who has been over-stretched
BUNDIBUGYO			
1. Education 2. Health	❖ Commitment of the staff	Works and Transport	Absence of works equipment for department
NTOROKO			
1. Health, 2. Production 3. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability of facilitation for immunization ▪ The selfless commitment of the current staff 	1. Water 2. Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🚧 Needs urgent attention due to under staffing in the Departments 🚧 Effect of COVID-19 🚧 Disasters including floods that washed away most facilities, made others facilities inaccessible and contributed to poor sanitation

Source: Field data 2022

KEY ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS




4. Recommended Actions To Address The Staffing Issues

Through stakeholder engagement and desk review of secondary information, the results reveal that there are no new key strategies they are employing while addressing staff issues. The districts follow the recruitment structure as guided by Ministry of Public Service as well as internalization of staff recruitment for purposes of filling the vacant positions.

Local Governments are also requesting for waivers for positions that cannot be filled in terms of accelerated promotion in addition to Lobbying for supplementary wage to be able to recruit the missing staff and cater for payment of staff.

Below we provide the key issues identified and recommendations suggested to improve and address the staffing issues both at National and Local Governments levels.

Table 4: Key issues identified and recommendations.

Key issues identified	Recommended actions
NATIONAL LEVEL	
Inadequate wage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increase and balance the wage across all government MDAs, this will enable district recruit all key critical staff. Similarly, there should be interventions to harmonize salaries of all government workers because you find someone in UNRA earning more than a district official yet they all have the same qualifications. This will help in retaining the available staff; ❖ If the District Service Commission are to be maintained, then their funding should be increased, the allowance of these members needs to be revised since they play an important role in recruitment of public servants at local government level. ❖ Provide and increase on staff incentives for example provide lunch, breakfast which will also help in attracting and retaining the staff at LG; ❖ There is need to look into the issues of tied wage especially for tertiary, secondary and Health workers which is sometimes returned back to treasury. This will allow LGs relocate these funds to other votes rather than being returned; ❖ There is need to provide funding which is in line with recruitment and at the same time the budget line and recruitment plans submitted by the district; ❖ Lobbying for more wage to recruit the missing staff and be able to pay off staff; ❖ Widening the tax base to increase funds available for implementation of LG activities for example, provide funding for capacity building of LG staff.
LG structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Review LG structure to provide for career growth in other different positions  Revise the minimum qualifications for recruiting staff in sectors lacking such key personnel e.g. Engineering to attract applicants in job positions.  Some DLG staff should all be considered under the Hard-to-reach policy for instance Ntoroko

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ DSC be abolished and replaced with Regional Service Commissions to prevent political and cultural influences ✚ Some districts are still big hence they should be split to cater for the existing recruitment structure e.g. Kasese
Lack of incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The ministry of public service ought to put in place incentives scheme in addition to the wage provisions to be able to attract persons to apply, work and retain staff in Local Governments especially for critical positions. ❖ There should be rewarding of good performers and conducting of employee satisfactory exit interviews for staff retiring. This will provide more insights on how to improve staff recruitment in Local Governments.
Key issues identified	Recommended actions
LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL	
Central recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The institutional and legal position of the DSC should be kept independent from any other interference especially the prevailing political influence. Line ministries should also synchronize guidelines on recruitment of technical staff to avoid situations where the DSC has to follow different guidelines for the different technical staff. ❖ There is need for a comprehensive review of the centrally recruitment process, if possible, it can be done at regional level other than national Level. ❖ Let the hard-to-reach policy be fully implemented to attract and retain staff in these districts.
Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There should be continuous trainings so as to handle critical skills gap in LGs in form of continuous refresher courses. ➤ Political leaders should have detailed induction (2 days provided not enough).

Source: Field data findings 2022

APPENDICES

Annex A: Table 1: Selected LGs visited

Region	LGs and Municipal Councils	Officers Interviewed
Central	Mpigi Mityana	District Officials, Human Resource Personnel, Planners, CFO, LCV, DEC, DSC
Western	Kisoro	
	Rubanda	
	Kabale	
	Mbarara	
	Ntoroko	
	Kyenjojo	
	Kasese	
	Isingiro	
	Kiruhura	
	Bundibugyo	
	Kabarole	
	Rubirizi	
	Rukungiri	
Kamwenge		
Masindi		
Kiryandongo		
Eastern	Tororo	
	Sironko	
	Bulambuli	
	Bugiri MC	
	Kapchorwa	
	Mbale	
Northern	Nwoya	
	Nebbi MC	
	Packwach	
	Karenga	
	Kaabong	

Annex B: STAFFING ESTABLISHMENTS AS PER MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

DISTRICT/DEPARTMENTS OR UNITS	APPROVED STAFF STRUCTURE BY DEPARTMENTS AND DISTRICTS														
	Mbarara	Kiruhura	Kabong	Bulambuli	Kamwenge	Kasese	Mbale	Mityana	Mpigi	Ntoroko	Nwoya	Pakwach	Rubanda	Rukungiri	Tororo
OFFICE OF THE CAO	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT	41	30	38	27	24	23	30	19	38	39	37	34	38	40	40
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	4	3	3				3		3	3	3	3	3	3	3
STATUTORY BODIES	5	5	5				5		5	5	5	6	5	5	5
FINANCE	12	14	13	6	6	6	12	6	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
PROCUREMENT AND DISPOSAL	2	2	2				2		2	2	2	2	2	2	2
PLANNING	3	5	3						4	3	3	3	3	4	4
WORKS DEPARTMENT	17	19	20	13	9	11	23	10	14	15	23	16	15	17	23
EDUCATION	8	9	7				7		7	7	7	7	7	7	8
COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES	6	7	5	3	3		7	3	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
NATURAL RESOURCES	10	9	10				10		9	10	10	11	10	12	10
INTERNAL AUDIT	3	4	2	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2
PRODUCTION	10	13		3	3	3	16	2	17	16	14	16	14	13	16
TRADE, INDUSTRY AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEV'T	4	5		2	2	2	7	2	6	7	7	7	7	6	7
HEALTH SERVICES	8	8		3	3	3	10	3	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
TOTAL WITHOUT GENERAL HOSPITAL & HCs	136	136	142	60	53	54	142	48	137	138	142	136	135	130	150

Annex C: Scoring guide for Crosscutting Minimum Conditions for LGMSD

2020

Number	Performance Area	Designation	Percentage of overall Score
A	Human Resource Management and Development (Maximum Score is 52)	Chief Finance Officer/Principal Finance Officer	3 percentage points
		District Planner/Senior Planner	3 percentage points
		District Engineer/Principal Engineer	3 percentage points
		District Natural Resources Officer/Senior Environment Officer	3 percentage points
		District Production Officer/Senior Veterinary Officer	3 percentage points
		District Community Development Officer/ Principal CDO	3 percentage points
		District Commercial Officer/Principal Officer	3 percentage points
		Senior Procurement Officer/Municipal Procurement Officer	2 percentage points
		Procurement Officer/Municipal Assistant Procurement Officer	2 percentage points
		Principal Human Resource Officer	2 percentage points
		Senior Environment Officer	2 percentage points
		Senior Land Management Officer	2 percentage points
		Senior Accountant	2 percentage points
		Principal/Senior Internal Auditor	2 percentage points
		Principal Human Resource Officer (Secretary DSC)	2 percentage points
		Senior Assistant Secretaries in all LLGs	5 percentage points
		Community Development Officer/Senior CDO for TCs in LLGs	5 percentage points
Senior Accounts Assistant/Accounts Assistant	5 percentage points		

B	Environment and Social Requirements (Maximum Score is 16)	100% release of funds allocated to Natural Resources Department	2 percentage points
		100% release of funds allocated to Community Based Services department	2 percentage points
		Environmental, Social and Climate Change screening	4 percentage points
		Environment and social impact assessments	4 percentage points
		Costed ESMPs using DDEG	4 percentage points
C	Financial Management and Reporting (Maximum Score is 32)	Clean audit Opinion	10 percentage points
		Provided Information to PS/ST on status of implementation of internal auditor general and auditor general findings for previous FY by end of February	10 percentage points
		Submitted an annual performance contract by August 31st of the current FY	4 percentage points
		Submitted the annual performance report for the previous FY or before August 31 of the current FY	4 percentage points
		Submitted quarterly budget performance reports for all the four quarters of the previous FY by August 31 of the current FY	4 percentage points
Total			100 percentage points

Annex D: Scoring guide for Crosscutting Performance Measures

Number	Performance area	Percentage of Overall maximum score for this thematic area
1	Local Government Service Delivery Results	14 percentage points
2	Performance Reporting and Performance Improvement	12 percentage points
3	Human Resource Management and Development	9 percentage points
4	Management, Monitoring and supervision of Service	10 percentage points
5	Investment Management	20 percentage points
6	Environment and Social Safeguards	16 percentage points
7	Financial Management	6 percentage points
8	Local Revenues	6 percentage points
9	Transparency and Accountability	7 percentage points
Total		100 percentage points

A Rapid Evaluation of the Challenges in Local Government Staffing: FOCUS FILLING OF CRITICAL POSITIONS IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS STRUCTURES



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