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Boosting Service Delivery through Strengthened Local Government Assessments: Insights from Uganda's LGMSD Framework

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In an era where efficient service delivery is paramount for the socio-economic development of regions, it is essential to explore effective mechanisms in improving local governance. This paper dissects the utilisation of the Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework in Uganda as an innovative approach to enhancing service delivery at a local level. From 2014/15, the Ugandan government introduced the Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer Reforms (IGFTR) to enhance the adequacy, equity, and efficiency of local government financing for improved service delivery. The paper investigates the application and impact of the LGMSD assessment as a critical component of the IGFTR, focusing on five primary areas: Crosscutting, Water and Environment, Education, Health, and Micro Scale Irrigation. The findings in this paper present how this assessment model has contributed to incentivising good administrative practice, resource management, accountability, and overall service delivery. The study demonstrates how the framework has been instrumental in identifying local government functional capacity gaps and needs for performance enhancement. A noteworthy highlight of the study is the exploration of the independent assessment and internal verification audit firms; role in evaluating the effectiveness of the LGMSD framework. The study concludes with an analysis of the lessons learned and proposed strategies to improve this approach, offering a comprehensive understanding of how to replicate and tailor the LGMSD model in similar contexts in Africa to enhance LG service delivery. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on improving governance and service delivery through enhanced monitoring and evaluation systems and provides insights for policymakers, M&E professionals, academics, and practitioners in local government administration and service delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

Diejomaoh & Eboh (2012) contend that the effectiveness of local government systems is crucial for robust socio-economic development in any country. Local governments are the backbone of governance, especially in developing countries like Uganda. They play a pivotal role in delivering essential services, infrastructure development, and ensuring the welfare of the populace. However, their effectiveness is often marred by numerous challenges, ranging from inadequate resources, lack of capacity, and sometimes, bureaucratic red tape (Suberu, 2013).

Growing awareness of the vital role local governments play in providing communities with necessary services has occurred in recent years (Green, 2003). Since local governments are in charge of everything from transportation and infrastructure development to healthcare and education, they have a significant influence on the quality of life for their constituents. However, many local governments around the world continue to face substantial challenges in providing effective service delivery (Pradeep, 2011).

In response to this difficulty, Smoke (2015) has identified need for a growing focus on bolstering assessments conducted by local governments as a way to attain better service delivery results. Evaluating municipal governments is analysing their ability, effectiveness, and efficiency in providing services (Fattakhova, Khusainova & Karnach, 2015). Policymakers and stakeholders can better understand the strengths and weaknesses of local governments by conducting a thorough assessment. This allows for focused

interventions and resource allocation to improve service delivery (Bovaird & Löffler, 2002).

The study used a multifaceted approach, taking into account numerous aspects that influence service delivery, such as governance frameworks, financial management, human resource capacity, and community engagement. By doing so, it aims to provide a thorough knowledge of the complex processes at work and to investigate chances for synergy between various parts of local government assessments.

Being cognizant of the pivotal role played by its local governments, Uganda introduced the Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework. This innovative approach was aimed at evaluating local governments' performance and providing them with actionable insights to improve their service delivery mechanisms. Introducing these innovative approaches to improve local governance is essential in enhancing service delivery at the grassroots level and contributing to socio-economic development. This paper offers insights into Uganda's Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework and its role in enhancing local government operations.

Overall, by emphasizing the importance of stronger local government assessments, this study aims to make a significant contribution to the advancement of local governance and service delivery (Sanderson, 2001). By identifying strategies and instruments that can improve the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery, this research intends to assist policymakers and practitioners in their efforts to create more vibrant and responsive local communities.

An effective monitoring and evaluation system becomes paramount in such scenarios. By regularly assessing local governments' performance, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, nations can ensure that these entities are aligned with national developmental goals. This ensures the efficient use of resources and guarantees that the local populace receives the services they are entitled to.

Objective

The purpose of this paper was to find out how improving local government assessments can improve service delivery. Through the examination of several regional case studies and the procedures and approaches employed for evaluating local government performance, this study sought to uncover optimal practices and offer practical suggestions for practitioners and policymakers.

Furthermore, the study will highlight the importance of data-driven decision-making in evaluating local governments and designing effective service delivery techniques. It will investigate how technology and data analytics may aid in the facilitation of evidence-based policymaking and the improvement of service delivery outcomes.

The outcomes of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge on local government assessments and service delivery improvements. The study was designed to provide important insights into the major determinants of effective assessments, challenges encountered, and potential solutions that may be implemented to promote positive change at the local government level.

METHODOLOGY

This paper draws from official reports related to Uganda's LGMSD framework and synthesis reports spanning multiple years. Performance assessment frameworks from other African countries, including South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria, were analysed for a comparative perspective (Calandro et al., 2010). A thematic

analysis was employed, focusing on key aspects such as performance indicators, challenges, and recommendations within the LGMSD framework and its counterparts in other countries. This thematic approach allowed for the identification of common trends, challenges, and best practices across different governance frameworks in Africa.

The primary limitation of this paper is its reliance on secondary data sources, leading to potential gaps in capturing contextual nuances.

FINDINGS

Overview of LGMSD Assessment's Impact

The Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework, introduced as part of Uganda's Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer Reforms (IGFTR), has been instrumental in re-shaping the landscape of local governance in the country. Over the years, the impact of this assessment model has been palpable in various facets of local administration and service delivery.

From the outset, the LGMSD framework aimed to offer a comprehensive system that encompasses planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Since its inception in 2014/15, there have been notable strides in administrative practices across local governments. One of the consistent findings across the reports was the improvement in the timely production and submission of reports to the Contracts Committee, with performance indicators in some years achieving scores ranging from 96% to 100% (OPM, 2020).

Additionally, a significant area of improvement has been in the domains of planning and budgeting. The framework has fostered a culture of disciplined financial planning, evident from the timely submission of plans and budgets by local governments. Over the years, adherence to planning and budgeting timelines has seen a marked increase, reflecting the framework's emphasis on fiscal discipline and proactive governance (OPM, 2021).

However, with the highs came certain challenges. Some reports indicated indicators that performed

sub-optimally, such as the non-substantive filling of Heads of Department positions and ensuring pension payroll within stipulated timeframes (LGMSD, 2021). Despite these challenges, the framework's iterative nature, characterised by continuous monitoring and feedback loops, has ensured that local governments remain on a path of improvement.

A key component of the LGMSD's success has been its holistic approach to evaluation. By collaborating with various stakeholders, including Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), the assessment process garnered diverse perspectives, ensuring a more comprehensive evaluation (OPM, 2019). This inclusivity has not only enhanced the credibility of the assessment process but has also fostered a culture of cooperative governance.

Furthermore, the financial aspects of local governance have also seen significant

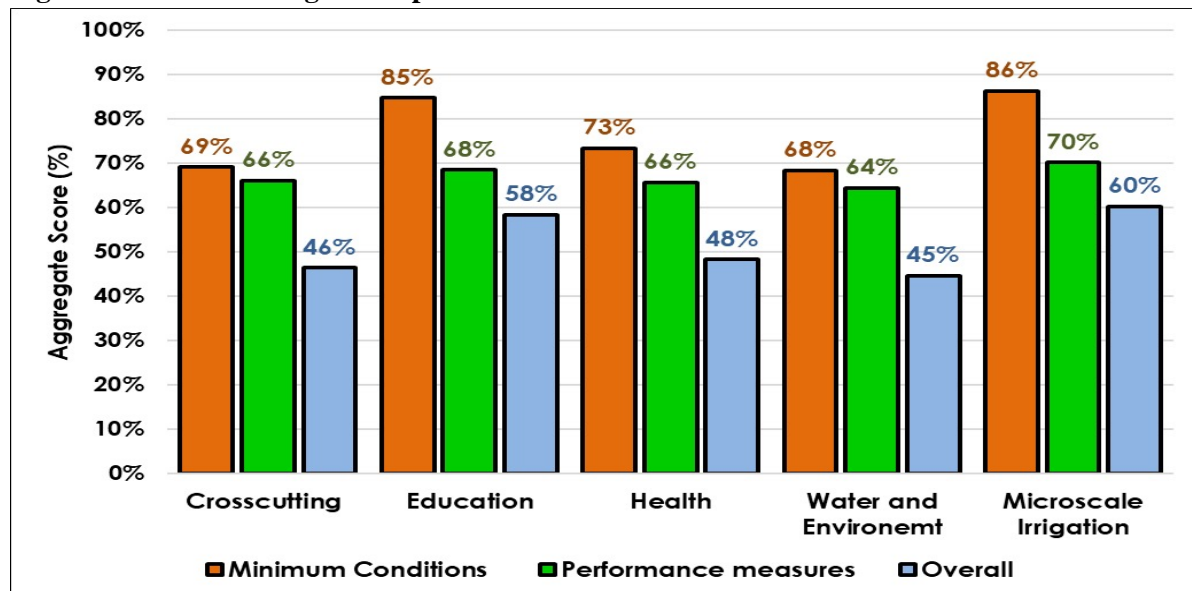
improvements. The framework has played a pivotal role in enhancing the adequacy, equity, and efficiency of local government financing, ensuring resources are effectively utilised for improved service delivery (MoH, 2020).

A quick comparison across the assessment areas over the past two to three years indicates tremendous improvements in the performance of local governments which resonates with service delivery as indicated in the figures below;

Minimum Conditions

Education was the best performed area at 58% having improved from 53% in 2021; followed by Health which improved from 44% to 48%, Crosscutting from 38% to 46% and finally Water and Environment performance areas from 40% to 45% over the same period. Microscale Irrigation performance also improved in 2022 assessment from 47% in 2021 to 60% for the 40 piloted LGs.

Figure 1: Overall average score per assessment area for minimum conditions



Source: OPM 2023

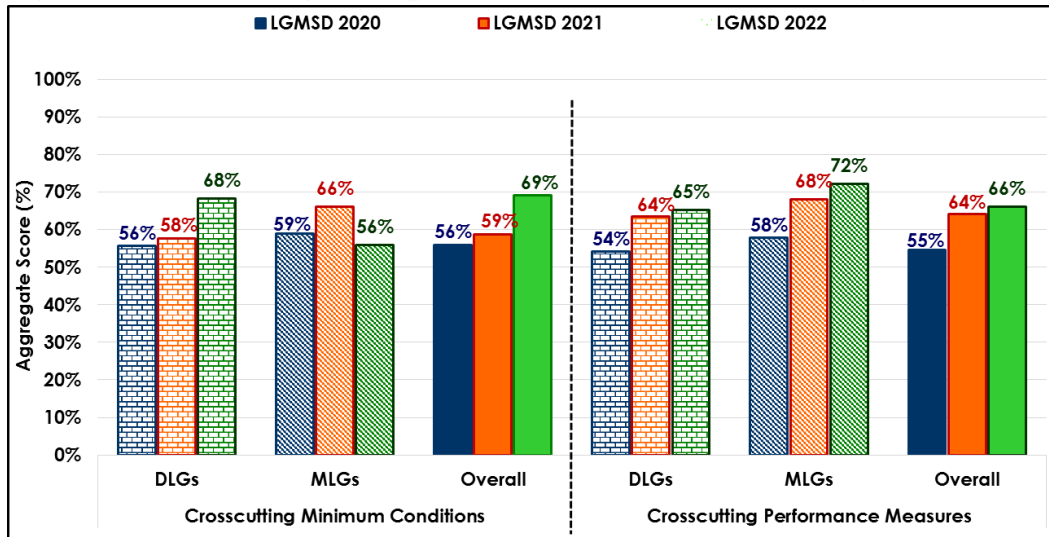
Crosscutting Areas

In the 154 LGs assessed, there was continued improvement in both Minimum Conditions and Performance Measures over the three assessments; which improved by 10 and 2 percentage points respectively between 2021 and 2022.

Under Minimum Conditions, DLGs with a score of 68% improved by 10 percentage points, while MLGs declined by the same margin with an aggregate score of 56%. Under Performance Measures, both DLGs (with a 65% score) and MLGs (with a 72% score) registered marginal improvements of 1 and 4 percentage points respectively between 2021 and 2022; which was a

nonetheless a smaller increment compared to the 10 percentage points between the 2020 and 2021 assessments.

Figure 2: Overall average score per assessment area for cross-cutting area



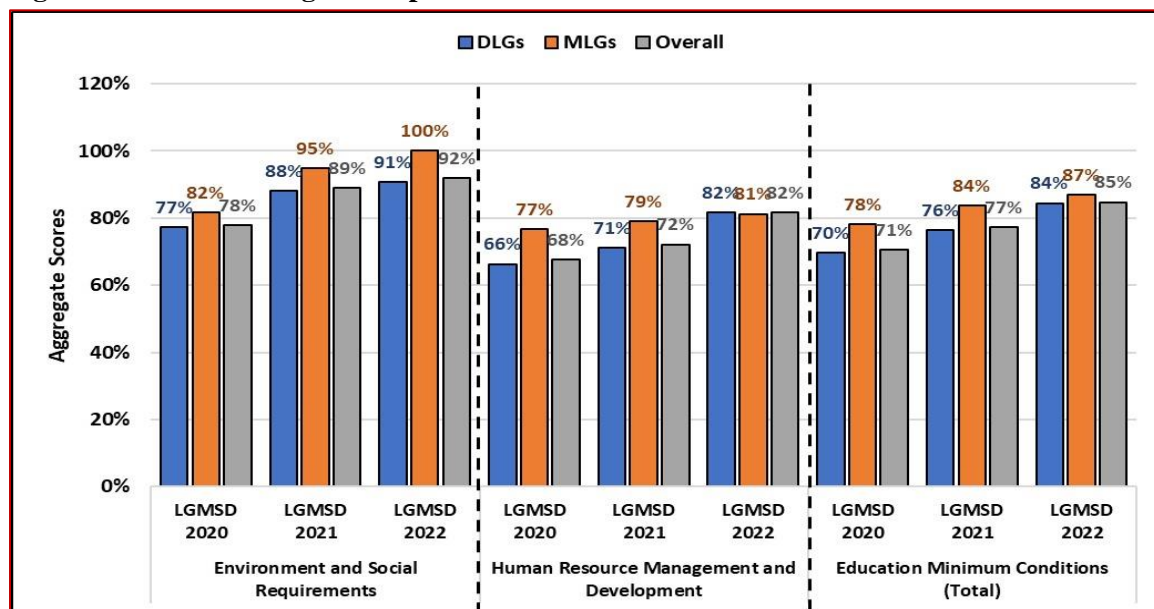
Source: OPM 2023

Education Area

Under MCs, both Environment and Social Requirements performed better at 92% having slightly improved from 89% in 2021 and Human

Resource Management and Development that scored 82% in 2022 against 72% in 2021. There was improvement across the 3 years of assessment in the 154 LGs assessed.

Figure 3: Overall average score per assessment area for education



Source: OPM 2023

Health Area

There was an improvement in performance in LGMSD 2022 compared to the previous two assessments for both Minimum Conditions and

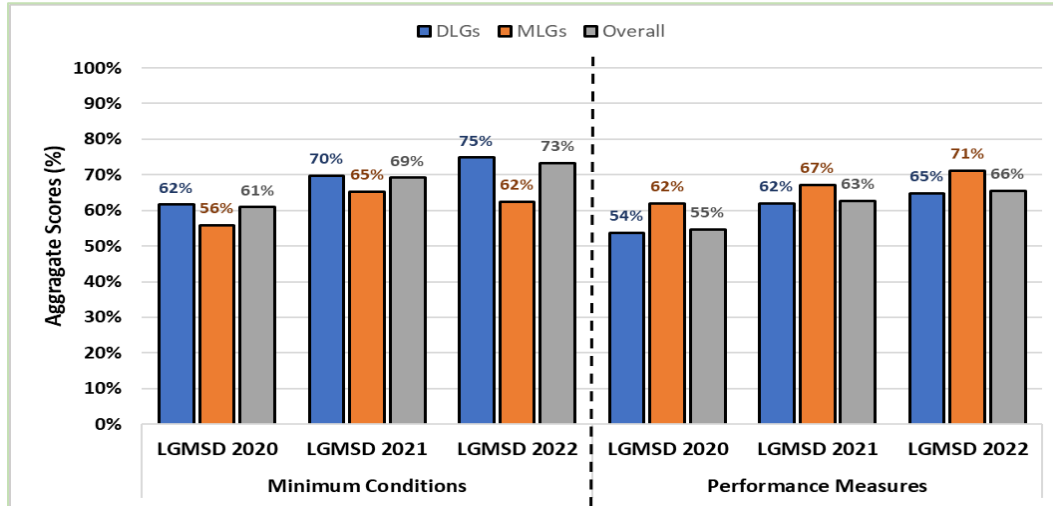
Performance Measures. Performance in MCs improved from 61% in 2020 to 69% in 2021 and to 73% for 2022 while PMs improved from 55% to 63% and further to 66% over the same period. DLGs performed slightly better than MLGs under

MCs while the reverse was true for PMs across the 3 assessments.

On the other hand, timely invoicing and communication of health facility transfers 15%, taking corrective actions based on health worker

appraisal reports 17%, compliance to MOH budgeting and reporting guidelines, 23% timely submission of BFPs and warrants for health facility transfers 25% were the least done indicators.

Figure 4: Overall Average Score per Assessment Area for Health



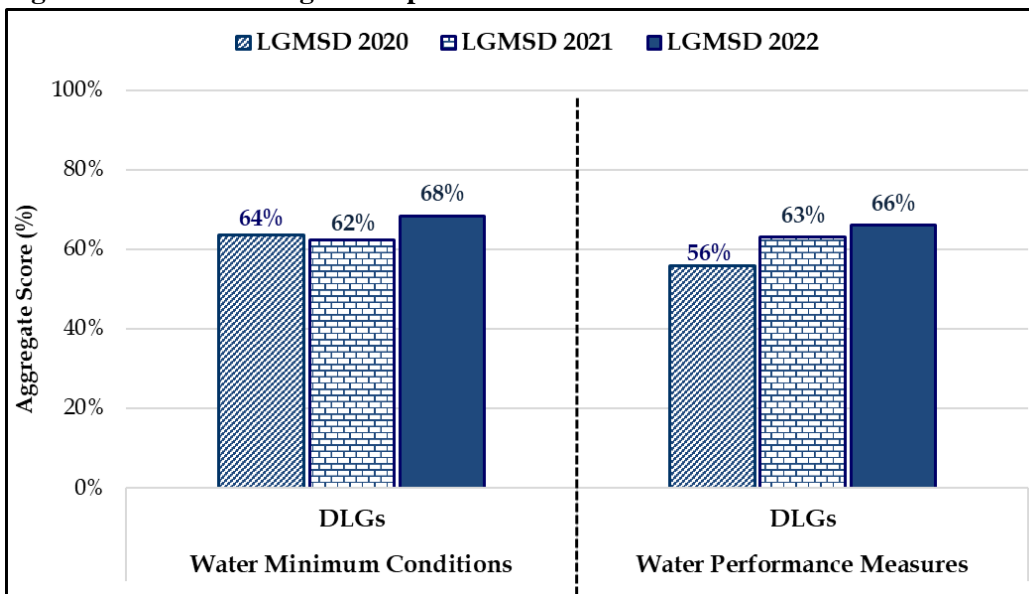
Source: OPM 2023

Water Area

There was a tremendous improvement in overall performance of DLGs’ compliance in Performance Measures from 56% in 2020 to 63% in 2021; however, we note a marginal improvement between 2021 and 2022 as indicated in the graph above from 63% to 66%.

There has been a positive trend in the performance of minimum conditions from 64% in 2020 to 68% in 2022 largely attributed to an improvement in staffing of critical positions under the Water and Environment office.

Figure 5: Overall average score per assessment area for water



No. of DLGs Assessed =134 in 2020, 135 in 2021 and 2022

Source: OPM 2023

Micro Scale Irrigation

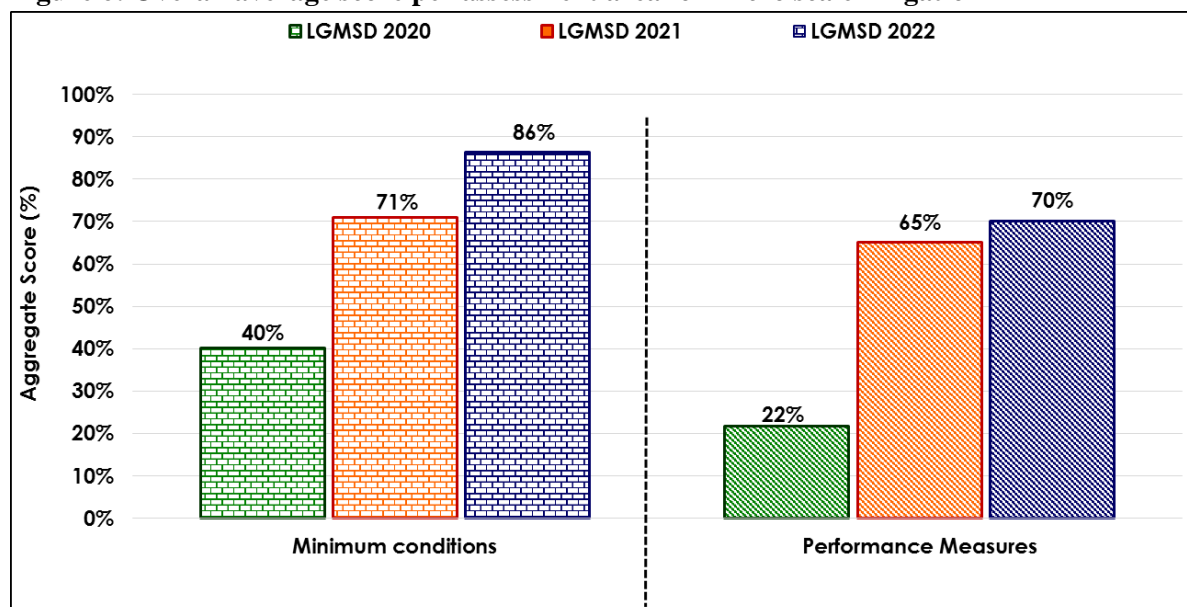
The overall average score for Micro-scale irrigation minimum conditions was 86% compared to 71% and 40% for 2021 and 2020 respectively. Under Performance measures, the overall average score was 70% compared to 65% and 22% for 2021 and 2020 respectively. The improvement in performance is due to implementation of phases of the programme which had not started the previous years, whereby some of the activities by design had been implemented compared to the last two years where they had not been implemented.

The best performing indicators included, up to-date data on irrigated land, mobilization activities for farmers conducted, up to-date LLG

information entered into MIS, LG visits to EOI farmers, and awareness training on micro-irrigation all scoring above 97% compared to 78%, 95%, 93% and 95% respectively scored in the previous year. All the best 10 indicators scored at 93% and above. The indicator whose improvement was tremendous was Up to-date data on irrigated land which improved from the rank of 20 with a score of 78% in the previous year to rank of 1 with a score of 100%.

In conclusion, the LGMSD framework, over the years, has proven to be more than just an evaluative tool. It is a beacon of transformation, driving local governments towards efficiency, transparency, and excellence in service delivery.

Figure 6: Overall average score per assessment area for micro scale irrigation



No. of LGs assessed = 40

Source: OPM 2023

Overarching Impact on Administrative Practices, Resource Management, and Accountability

The LGMSD framework has been instrumental in encouraging administrative excellence by setting clear benchmarks and standards for local government operations. These incentives have led to improvements in resource management, governance, and service delivery.

Administrative Practices

The introduction of the LGMSD framework heralded a significant shift in administrative practices within local governments in Uganda:

Efficiency in Reporting: As noted from the reports, there has been a consistent improvement in the timely production and submission of reports to relevant authorities. This punctuality indicates

a more disciplined and streamlined administrative process (Office of the Prime Minister, 2022).

Planning and Budgeting: The framework instilled a culture of proactive governance. The discipline in financial planning, as evidenced by the timely submission of plans and budgets, became an integral part of local government operations (LGMSD, 2021).

Cooperative Governance: The inclusive approach of the LGMSD assessment, involving various stakeholders, has fostered a collaborative administrative environment. Local governments, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) worked in tandem, ensuring a holistic approach to governance (Office of the Prime Minister, 2019).

Resource Management

The LGMSD framework's emphasis on efficient resource utilisation has led to more transparent and effective resource management practices:

Fiscal Discipline: The framework has been instrumental in instilling a culture of fiscal discipline. The consistent monitoring and evaluation of financial indicators ensured that resources were allocated judiciously and utilised effectively (Uganda Ministry of Finance, 2020).

Optimal Utilisation: The reports indicate a trend towards better utilisation of available resources, ensuring that local governments could achieve more with the resources at their disposal. This optimisation was particularly evident in sectors like water and environment, education, and health (OPM, 2019, 2020, 2021).

Accountability

One of the most profound impacts of the LGMSD framework has been on enhancing accountability at the local government level:

Transparent Evaluations: The involvement of independent assessment and internal verification audit firms brought about an added layer of transparency, ensuring that evaluations were unbiased and reflective of the true situation (OPM, 2022).

Public Participation: By making performance results accessible to the public, the framework ensured that local governments were more accountable to their constituents. This transparency empowered citizens, allowing them to demand better performance and service delivery (OPM, 2021).

Feedback Mechanisms: The iterative nature of the framework, characterised by continuous monitoring and feedback loops, ensured that local governments were always in tune with their performance metrics, allowing them to address gaps promptly (OPM, 2019, 2020, 2021).

Assessment across Key Areas

The Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework stands as a beacon of holistic and transformative assessment in local governance. By extending its evaluative lens across varied sectors it ensures that no stone is left unturned, fostering comprehensive coverage and nuanced evaluation. The subsequent sections delve deeper into the findings of these critical sectors:

Table 1: Summary of findings and observations by assessment area

Assessment Area	Description	Findings & Observations
Crosscutting	Serving as the backbone of the LGMSD framework, crosscutting measures offer an aerial view of administrative practices, resource allocation, and overarching governance strategies.	Reporting Efficiency: Consistent improvement over the years with performance indicators reaching up to 100% in some instances (Office of the Prime Minister, 2022). Human Resource Management: Improvements noted, but challenges like non-substantive filling of Heads of Department positions persist (Office of the Prime Minister, 2021).
Water and Environment	Water and environment are intertwined with the very essence of life, making their assessment a matter of paramount importance.	Project Execution: Consistent positive trajectory in project completions over the years (Office of the Prime Minister, various years). Environmental Safeguards: Need for rigorous environmental and social clearances remains crucial, with some contract payments lacking requisite clearance (Office of the Prime Minister, 2022).
Education	Education is the cornerstone of progress, and its assessment under the LGMSD framework offers insights into the nation's future.	Infrastructure Development: Persistent focus on infrastructure development, reflecting commitment to knowledge (Office of the Prime Minister, 2021). Teacher Allocation: Efforts made, but challenges in certain regions highlight the need for more equitable resource distribution (Office of the Prime Minister, 2020).
Health	Healthcare is a reflection of societal well-being. The assessments in this sector provide a pulse check on the nation's health.	Health Infrastructure: Continued emphasis on health infrastructure development (Office of the Prime Minister, various years). Service Delivery: Initiatives like mobile health units and telemedicine introduced in remote areas (LGMSD, 2022).
Micro Scale Irrigation	Agriculture is synonymous with sustenance. The assessments in this sector are pivotal to ensuring food security and sustainable agricultural practices.	Project Implementation: Emphasis on timely implementation and completion of projects (Office of the Prime Minister, 2021). Community Involvement: Active participation of local communities in projects ensures sustainability and effectiveness (Office of the Prime Minister, 2020).

Functional Capacity Gaps and Performance Enhancement

The LGMSD framework, in its pursuit of holistic governance evaluation, has been pivotal in identifying areas where local government capacities need bolstering. These functional capacity gaps, while posing challenges, also present opportunities for constructive interventions and enhancement. Through regular assessments, the LGMSD model has facilitated the identification of functional capacity gaps at various levels. This analysis has guided targeted interventions, resulting in enhanced local government performance.

Gaps Identified in Local Government Functional Capacities

- **Human Resource Management:** The non-substantive filling of critical positions, such as Heads of Department, has been a recurring challenge. This not only affects the efficient functioning of departments but also impacts the overall effectiveness of local governance (Office of the Prime Minister, 2021).
- **Infrastructure Development:** While there have been improvements in sectors like education and health, infrastructure development in other areas, such as roads and public utilities, has lagged in certain regions.
- **Service Delivery:** Especially in remote areas, the delivery of essential services, be it healthcare, education, or water supply, has been inconsistent. This disparity in service delivery often leads to unequal development outcomes across regions (Office of the Prime Minister, 2020).
- **Financial Management:** Efficient allocation and utilisation of resources have been a challenge in certain local governments. This often results in budget overruns or underutilisation of allocated funds, affecting project execution and service delivery.

Specific Areas Where Gaps Were Most Pronounced

- **Rural and Remote Regions:** These areas often face challenges in attracting and retaining skilled personnel, leading to gaps in human resource capacities.
- **Emerging Urban Centres:** Rapid urbanisation often outpaces infrastructure development and service delivery, leading to pronounced gaps in these regions.
- **Financially Constrained Local Governments:** Regions with limited financial resources often face pronounced challenges in multiple functional areas, from infrastructure development to service delivery.

Strategies and Interventions Proposed

- **Capacity Building Programs:** Regular training and skill enhancement workshops for local government officials can address human resource gaps, ensuring they are equipped with the latest knowledge and best practices.
- **Infrastructure Development Grants:** Targeted financial grants for infrastructure development, especially in emerging urban centres and remote regions, can help bridge the infrastructure gap.
- **Decentralised Service Delivery:** Empowering local communities to take charge of service delivery, with guidance and resources from local governments, can ensure more consistent and effective service delivery.
- **Financial Management Workshops:** Regular workshops on financial planning, budgeting, and resource allocation can enhance the financial management capacities of local governments.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborating with private entities can help in addressing gaps in areas like infrastructure development and service delivery, bringing in expertise and additional resources.

Role of Independent Assessment and Verification Firms

Engaging independent auditors and evaluators has added an extra layer of scrutiny and transparency to the assessment process. These third-party entities have played a vital role in ensuring the objectivity and efficacy of the LGMSD framework evaluations. The inclusion of third-party evaluations in the LGMSD framework brought an additional layer of objectivity and depth to the overall assessment process.

Third-party evaluations, conducted by independent assessment and internal verification firms, offer an unbiased perspective. While internal evaluations might inadvertently carry inherent biases or organisational blind spots, external firms approach the assessment with a fresh set of eyes, ensuring that findings are both comprehensive and impartial. Their independence lends credibility to the assessment results, making the findings more robust and actionable. These firms employed mixed methods to verify the assessment results. There are common approaches included.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** These firms often used structured tools and metrics to quantitatively measure various performance indicators. This could include statistical analysis of data, trend analysis over the years, and benchmarking against established standards.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Through tools like focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and field observations, these firms gather nuanced insights into the challenges and successes of the LGMSD framework.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from local government officials to community members, ensures a holistic understanding of the ground realities and the effectiveness of the framework.

From these approaches, over the years the findings related to the LGMSD Framework included its

overall effectiveness. The Independent assessments have consistently highlighted the LGMSD framework's effectiveness in fostering transparency, accountability, and improved service delivery. The framework's structured approach and clear metrics have been instrumental in driving positive changes across local governments. Additionally, they also identified numerous challenges that include resource constraints in certain regions, the need for capacity building in specific sectors, and occasional discrepancies between planned initiatives and on-ground implementation. Lastly, the LGMSD framework's success stories, as highlighted by third-party evaluations, revolve around improved reporting efficiency, enhanced community engagement in local governance, and positive trends in sectors like education, health, and water & environment.

The collaboration with independent assessment and internal verification firms not only reinforces the credibility of the LGMSD framework but also provides valuable insights that can guide future enhancements and interventions.

Discussing Challenges Faced and Proposed Solutions/ Recommendations

The synthesis reports shed light on the multifaceted challenges that local governments in Uganda grapple with. One of the most prominent hurdles lies in human resources, where positions, especially at the Head of Department level, remain unfilled, impacting service delivery. Financial constraints further exacerbate the situation, as evidenced by delays in pension payroll processing. Additionally, environmental considerations, crucial for sustainable development, seem to be sidelined. The weak enforcement of required environmental and social clearances for projects becomes evident when examining contract payments, with only a handful meeting the necessary criteria. Another noteworthy challenge is the ambiguity surrounding sanitation provisions, especially for specific groups like girls and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

LG's performance under Minimum Conditions has a significant impact on its total score. This significantly explains the poor performance of most LGs, particularly those lacking important personnel such as a District Education Officer, a

Principal Education Officer, and District/Municipal school inspectors, among others. As a result, LGs must develop strategies to resolve the identified weak points.

Table 2: Summary conclusions in the performance assessment report

No.	Emerging Issue/Outstanding Challenges	Recommended Action (s)	Responsibility Centre
1.	Appraisal of education staff remained a challenge in 2022 assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 25% of LGs conducted appraisal of all their secondary school headteachers; ▪ 57% of the LGs had all their primary school headteachers appraised; and ▪ 57% appraised other education staff like school inspectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the Education policy to empower LGs in control and management of secondary education. ▪ Strengthen compliance and significance of the appraisal process. 	MoES MoPS
2.	Late submission of warrants for schools' capitation grant. Only 19% of the LGs undertook timely submission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build capacity of the LG CFOs to undertake timely submission of warrants. 	MoFPED MoES
3.	Late invoicing and communication of capitation grants to schools. Only 26% of the LGs met this requirement in 2022 assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build capacity of the LG CFOs to undertake timely invoicing and communication to schools. 	MoFPED MoES
4.	Slow increase in PLE pass rates as only 29% of the LGs registered an improvement in pass rates as compared to 71% for UCE pass rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensify inspection and supervision of schools. ▪ Improve the teacher-Pupil ratio 	MoES LGs
5.	Inadequate dissemination and compliance to MoES guidelines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only 35% of LGs had all their schools comply to MoES budgeting and reporting guidelines ▪ 45% of LGs disseminated guidelines on proper siting of schools ▪ 54% of LGs recruited teachers as per MoES staffing guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensify dissemination and compliance efforts. 	MoES
6.	Land ownership for education projects still a challenge. Only 42% of LGs had proof of land ownership for school projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensify efforts to title and gazette all Government land. 	MoLHUD MoES

To navigate these challenges, the reports propose actionable recommendations. At the forefront is the call to bolster reporting mechanisms, emphasising the need for routine departmental report discussions. There is also a push for stricter

adherence to environmental and social safeguards, suggesting their inclusion in performance agreements and refining assessment tools. Addressing sanitation concerns, the reports advocate for clear governmental guidelines to

ensure inclusive service delivery. Lastly, a significant emphasis is placed on human resource development, pressing for the filling of all departmental roles to fortify local government efficiency.

Lessons Learned and Strategies for Improvement

The implementation and utilisation of the LGMSD framework has been a significant stride towards redefining service delivery within local governments. This systematic approach underscores the essence of diligent monitoring, evaluation, and the continuous cycle of learning. However, as with all pioneering efforts, there are lessons to be learned and avenues for enhancement:

Expanding the Framework

While the LGMSD framework has had notable success in its current scope, there is potential for even more significant impact. Expansion Recommendation: By broadening its horizons to encompass additional sectors and regions, the framework can achieve a more comprehensive coverage. This would entail not only revisiting the assessment tools but also ensuring they remain relevant to the new sectors and regions integrated.

Strengthening Collaborations

The synergy between local governments, assessment firms, and other stakeholders is the backbone of the framework's success. Strengthening these ties can pave the way for more efficient data collection, a more harmonised approach to problem-solving, and an overall enriched assessment process. Regular stakeholder engagement forums and feedback loops can ensure that all entities are aligned and working towards a common goal.

Capacity-building Initiatives

The efficacy of the LGMSD model is, in many ways, contingent on the capabilities of the local government officials administering it. Capacity-building Recommendation: Investing in regular training programs, workshops, and seminars can

equip these officials with the latest best practices, tools, and methodologies. This not only enhances their understanding of the LGMSD model but also empowers them to implement it effectively, leading to better service delivery outcomes.

Robust Data Management Systems

Accurate, timely, and transparent reporting is pivotal to the framework's credibility and effectiveness. Data Management Recommendation: Developing and integrating robust data management systems can streamline the reporting process, reducing errors and ensuring that insights drawn from the data are precise. Such systems can also facilitate real-time monitoring, allowing for swift interventions when anomalies or issues arise.

By internalising these lessons and strategically implementing the proposed enhancements, the LGMSD framework can evolve into an even more potent tool for transforming local government service delivery.

Comparative Analysis: Existing Frameworks for Performance Assessments in Africa

While Uganda's LGMSD framework serves as one of the pioneering models in local governance assessments, several African countries have also recognised the significance of performance assessments. These models, though unique in their approach, underscore the continent's collective move towards enhanced transparency, accountability, and efficiency in local governance.

Several African countries have recognised the importance of such assessments as tools for enhancing governance, service delivery, and accountability at the local level. Below are some notable examples from African countries:

1. South Africa: Municipal Performance Management System (MPMS)

South Africa's Municipal Systems Act (2000) mandates the establishment of a performance management system for each municipality. This led to the creation of the Municipal Performance

Management System (MPMS). The MPMS sets key performance indicators for local governments, with the goal of improving service delivery and accountability. The system's approach is holistic, covering various facets of local governance, from infrastructure development to social services. The MPMS has been instrumental in:

- Setting clear performance objectives for municipalities.
- Providing tools and methodologies to measure performance.
- Enhancing public participation by making performance results accessible to the public.
- Improving the capacity of municipalities through regular feedback and technical support.

Kenya: Performance Contracting

Kenya introduced performance contracting in the public sector in 2004, a system that was later extended to local governments. The aim was to improve efficiency and accountability in service delivery. Local governments sign contracts that detail expected outputs and are held accountable based on their performance against these contracts. This initiative has brought about a competitive spirit among counties, as they aim to outdo each other in the performance rankings published annually.

According to the Africa for Results Initiative (2016), Kenya's shift towards performance contracting in 2004 marked a significant move towards enhancing accountability and efficiency in the public sector. The initiative:

- Involves setting clear, measurable targets for local governments.
- Provides an avenue for regular reviews and evaluations of performance against these targets.
- Has fostered a culture of competition among counties, leading to overall improvements in local governance and service delivery.

Ghana: District League Table

Launched in 2014, Ghana's District League Table (DLT) ranks the country's districts based on their performance in sectors like health, education, sanitation, and governance. The DLT aims to increase social accountability by providing citizens with information about their district's performance. It also serves as a tool for districts to identify areas of improvement. The District League Table (DLT) in Ghana, launched in 2014, represents a unique approach to enhancing transparency and accountability. The DLT:

- Ranks all districts based on a set of performance indicators.
- Provides a clear picture of disparities in service delivery across the country.
- Serves as an advocacy tool, allowing citizens and civil society organisations to demand better performance from their local governments.

Nigeria: States Fiscal Transparency, Accountability, and Sustainability Program

Supported by the World Bank, this program aims to enhance the transparency, accountability, and sustainability of fiscal practices at the state level. The program assesses states based on their fiscal performance, offering financial incentives to those that achieve high performance. This World Bank-supported initiative in Nigeria is aimed at enhancing fiscal responsibility and transparency at the state level. The Programme;

- Sets clear fiscal performance metrics for states.
- Provides financial incentives for states that achieve high fiscal performance, promoting a culture of fiscal responsibility.
- Encourages states to adopt international best practices in fiscal management.

Implications for the Broader African Context

These case studies underscore the growing importance African countries place on

performance assessments for local governance. Such systems:

- **Enhance Accountability:** Regular assessments and rankings make local governments more accountable to both national governments and their constituents.
- **Improve Service Delivery:** Performance assessments highlight areas of weakness, allowing local governments to focus on improving specific sectors.
- **Promote Transparency:** Regularly published reports and rankings enhance transparency, allowing citizens to be more informed about their local government's activities.
- **Foster Healthy Competition:** Rankings, as seen in Kenya and Ghana, can foster a spirit of healthy competition among regions, pushing them to improve.

The diverse approaches adopted by African countries, including Uganda, highlight the continent's commitment to strengthening local governance. These systems, while varied, all aim at ensuring that local governments are more attuned to the needs of their constituents, providing services efficiently and transparently.

Performance assessments in local governance are becoming a pivotal tool across Africa. They serve as instruments not just for evaluation but also for continuous improvement, ensuring that local governments are more responsive, efficient, and effective in their duties.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications for Other Regions or Countries

Uganda's Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) framework serves as a shining example for other nations, especially in the African context. The framework's success and the insights gleaned from its implementation offer several implications for other regions or countries:

- **Decentralisation as a Governance Model:** The LGMSD framework underscores the power of decentralisation. Empowering local governments to take charge of their development agendas can lead to more contextual and effective solutions. Other nations can adopt this model to ensure that governance is more attuned to the unique needs of local communities.
- **Standardised Assessment Tools:** A standardised set of performance metrics, like those in the LGMSD, allows for an objective evaluation of local governments. Such standardisation can help countries ensure that every local government, irrespective of its size or resources, adheres to a common set of performance standards.
- **Collaborative Approach:** The involvement of various stakeholders in the assessment process, from local governments to MDAs and development partners, ensures a holistic evaluation. This multi-stakeholder approach can be replicated in other nations to garner diverse perspectives and achieve comprehensive assessments.
- **Continuous Monitoring and Learning:** The iterative nature of the LGMSD framework, with regular assessments and feedback loops, emphasises the importance of continuous monitoring and learning. This approach ensures that local governments are always evolving and improving, a principle that can be adopted universally.

Conclusion

The LGMSD framework offers an innovative and effective approach to boost service delivery through strengthened local government assessments. Its systematic application has brought about significant improvements in governance, accountability, and performance at the grassroots level in Uganda. However, continuous evaluation, learning, and adaptation are necessary to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. This paper's insights offer valuable lessons for other contexts across Africa,

highlighting the potential for replicating and tailoring the LGMSD model to meet specific local needs and conditions.

By contributing to the discourse on improving governance and service delivery, this paper has provided valuable insights for policymakers, M&E professionals, academics, researchers, and practitioners. It presents a promising pathway for enhancing local government administration and service delivery through targeted assessments, providing a model that could be adopted and adapted across various contexts. It showcases the power of structured monitoring and evaluation in governance and provides a roadmap for other nations keen on bolstering their local governance mechanisms. As nations strive towards sustainable development, focusing on strengthening local governance through frameworks like the LGMSD is not just desirable but essential. Such efforts ensure that development is not just top-down but also bottom-up, ensuring that every citizen, irrespective of their location or background, reaps the benefits of national progress.

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