

# Decentralization and Social Service Delivery in Uganda a Case Study of Bulopa Sub County, Kamuli District

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**Abstract:** This study was about decentralization and social service delivery in Uganda a case study of Bulopa sub county, Kamuli district. Decentralization varies from country to country and from region to region; the reason for this focus is that most of the social services such as health, education, water and sanitation that are a responsibility of government are systematically failing. The objective of this study was to investigate decentralization and service delivery in Kamuli district. The data was collected from top political leaders, councilors, HR managers and support staff through the use of questionnaires. Data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted in view of the four specific objectives of the study. The study key findings indicated that there was need for review of laws and policies related to the provision of social welfare services, government commitment and political will to extend social protection to all vulnerable groups. Literature review did not yield empirical evidence of similar researches carried out before. The ministry should ensure that schemes of service are regularly reviewed to avoid employees stagnating in one job grade for many years. Further research on decentralization and social service delivery in Uganda needs to be done to help settle social issues. The absence of supervision generally means also lack of or inadequate assessment. The possibility that the scheme of service might be perceived by some social welfare workers as being deficient was linked with what should be done to improve it if that turned out to be the case. In responding to this question some social welfare workers (13%) indicated that various kinds of in-service training should be provided, while others (8%) mentioned the need for the government to extend more recognition and care for the work of the department of social welfare. Most respondents (61%) did not know or were not sure about what needs to be done, a position which is consistent with the fact that they were not familiar with the scheme of service. Improved standards of living among people in probation and social welfare sector generated a mean value = 2.5210 and  $stddevn=0.82746$ . Decision making by local people over service provisions in probation and social welfare generated a mean value = 2.5000 and  $stddevn=0.71771$ . Successful implementation of projects in probation and social welfare sector is seen to have a mean value = 2.5000, and  $stddevn=0.82746$ . It is also noted that clear accountability to the social service beneficiaries in probation and social welfare sector generated a mean value = 2.4500, and  $stddevn=.88202$ . There has been a clear monitoring mechanism drafted to aid the implementation of different development programmes with a mean = 2.3200, and  $stddevn=0.88202$ . Overall mean = 2.4500 – a low mean implying that despite a clear monitoring mechanism drafted to aid the implementation of different development programmes, its full implementation is still lacking. The study therefore concluded that the demand for social welfare services is primarily a function of population growth and rate of urbanization and that local government authorities need to accommodate this reality especially in their long-term planning. The study recommends that the ministry for local government in collaboration with stake-holders take deliberate measures to disseminate and distribute relevant policy documents and subsequently undertake regular reviews and trainings targeting social welfare workers. Review of laws and policies related to the provision of social welfare services confirms the existence of a solid policy and legislative framework, which demonstrates the government commitment and political will to extend social protection to all vulnerable groups. Up to 69% of the social welfare workers in the areas covered by the assessment have expressed lack of knowledge on various laws and policies related to their work, a situation which most likely exists in other areas as well.

While existing national policies and laws are generally supportive of social welfare services in the country, gaps still exist in translating these documents into actions among those entrusted to implement them including social welfare officers. Service delivery is primarily constrained by unqualified social welfare workers in almost all field offices. Many of these offices have hardly two (2) qualified social workers in comparison to the high caseloads they attend to. Field situations show that in some stations, even office messengers/ attendants attend to clients in the absence of social welfare officers. The level of responsibility and accountability among most of the social welfare workers is generally low, something which might undermine staff motivation and morale. Most social welfare workers have expressed the need for further training in providing shelter and other services to vulnerable groups poorly resourced in every respect while staff are frustrated by the poor work environment. Budget limitations is a persistent and chronic problem with the Social Welfare Department, and it makes the work of the concerned social welfare officers very difficult and frustrating for decentralized service delivery of probation and social welfare in Kamuli.

## SECTION ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

##### **Historical Perspective**

The motivation for decentralization varies from country to country and from region to region. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, it was part of political transformation from centralized government where few participated in decision-making to a decentralized system where many could participate in the decision-making process. Decentralization programmes in Africa followed the recommendations of the World Bank for developing countries to devolve political and administrative powers to local and autonomous levels. The reason for this focus is that most of the social services such as health, education, water and sanitation that are a responsibility of government are systematically failing (World Bank, 2003). The adjustment programme, therefore, had improved and more efficient distribution of goods and services as its prime target. In addition, the recommendation was made on the basis that decentralisation would quicken decision-making processes and increase participation by the local people. This would result in decisions better tailored to people's needs and reduced corruption and clientelism, which went along with centralised government. Decentralisation is a longtime practice in Africa. However, it became more pronounced in the 1980s and 1990s when it featured as one of the World Bank's structural criteria. In Sri Lanka and South Africa, it was a response to ethnic and regional conflicts. It is argued that decentralisation provides an institutional mechanism for bringing divided groups into a formal, rule-bound bargaining process (Treismann, 1998). Decentralisation thus serves as a path to national unity.

In Uganda, Chile and Cote D'Ivoire, it was carried out for improving service delivery (Shah and Theresa 2004). In Uganda, the Local Government Act (1997), a central part of the decentralisation policy, stipulates that most central government powers and responsibilities for public services planning and delivery should be devolved to local governments. The aim of this study was to discuss decentralization as a policy for delivering services in Uganda. The arguments for decentralisation are reviewed against its success in improving service delivery in Uganda. The paper examines then different decentralisation frameworks and their implication for service delivery.

It goes on to examine the challenges of decentralisation and proposes mechanisms that can make decentralisation an effective tool for delivering services to local communities. Government and public documents, academic analysis and findings of other research about decentralisation and service delivery in Uganda are considered.

##### **Theoretical Perspective**

This study adopted the participatory theory as advanced by Brett (2003). He notes that participation has emerged in response to global demands for greater individual and social control over the activities of state and private agencies, and especially to the manifest failures of traditional 'top-down' management systems in less developed countries (LDCs). He points out that participation can succeed for specific kinds of projects and programmes in favourable circumstances, but is unsuitable for many others. It commonly fails in contexts where local conditions make co-operative and collective action very difficult, or where it is manipulated by implementing agencies to justify their own actions or poor performance.

##### **Conceptual Perspective**

In terms of service delivery, government has captured the essence of decentralisation as a means of providing for Ugandans through assigning service delivery to local entities in the following words: Decentralisation is a democratic reform, which seeks to transfer political, administrative, and financial and planning authority from centre to local government councils (Abigaba, 2012). It seeks to promote popular participation, empower local people to make own decisions and enhance accountability and responsibility. In this study, decentralization shall refer to a principle applying to all levels of local government and in particular, from higher to lower-level government units to ensure peoples' participation and democratic control in decision making.

##### **Contextual Perspective**

Service delivery under a highly centralized system of governance did not achieve much for the majority of Ugandans, who remained unaware of the key development processes including the planning, implementation and monitoring services. Undoubtedly, decentralization has resulted in more basic and geographically customized units of governance being constituted nearer the ordinary person. Nonetheless, challenges are noted in promoting a human rights-based approach to development, especially in ensuring equality and non-discrimination, increased accountability and the consideration of vulnerable groups for specialized and measured interventions. In the absence of a 'rights' consciousness among service providers and beneficiaries under decentralization, some of the drawbacks associated with centralized governance systems, such as centralized and technocrat-based decision-making processes, limited consultation with citizens, and the concentration of power in the hands of a few elites, tend to resurface in Kamuli district (Ministry of Local Government (2013)). Probation Supervision and Homelessness: The challenges of the social context similar to other studies of probation (Farrall, 2002; Robinson and McNeill, 2004) it was clear that probation and welfare officers in this study viewed the social context of offender's lives as highly significant. In essence, as Burnett (2004:171) describes, 'helping ex-offenders to identify, analyse and find solutions to their problems in living is precisely what probation officers have traditionally concentrated

on doing'. Reflecting similar findings from Dane (1998), probation and welfare officers recognized the importance of assisting homeless offenders find accommodation and access support services: Probation and Welfare Officers identified the limited social skills or 'human capital' (Coleman, 1988: s.98 in Farrall, 2004a:57) of many homeless offenders as adversely impacting on their ability to access temporary accommodation or other support services. According to officers, the process of accessing any type of accommodation involves detailed paperwork, lengthy periods of waiting around and perseverance on the part of the client. A lack of the necessary social and coping skills to successfully negotiate the housing and other support systems potentially excluded those on probation from essential services.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The central government's commitment to ensuring that Ugandans progressively realize their economic and social rights can be gauged from the human, financial and technical resources devoted towards decentralized service provision. While 90% of local government funding is from the centre, these resources have been inadequate and are allocated in an untimely, uncoordinated and ineffective manner. The essence of decentralization is to promote good governance and democratic participation. However, the majority of funds for decentralized service delivery are conditional and earmarked, raising questions about the autonomy of district leaders in planning for services and also the degree of citizens' participation in identifying and prioritizing service delivery programs (Abigaba, 2012). The lack of clarity between the roles and mandates of central government functionaries and local government officials in Kamuli has led to hostile relations between the two entities. In turn this has affected anticipated outputs at the various levels of local government. The tensions have also tended to mar the effective allocation, collection and distribution of resources towards public services, as well as implementation and supervision (Anok, 2013). This study therefore will investigate whether decentralization with its challenges and shortcomings provides a useful framework and mechanism for democratic participation and the empowerment of local people, with the ability to improve service delivery.

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To investigate the level of decentralization at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District.
- ii. To examine whether local councilors are fully accountable to the public at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli district.
- iii. To establish the impact of decentralization on social service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District.
- iv. To establish the challenges faced by local governments in service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology used in addressing the set objectives. The chapter is organized under the following subsections: research design, research population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data gathering procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

#### **Research Design**

Creswell (2003) defines a research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. Further, Dooley (2007) notes that a research design is the structure of the research, it is the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together.

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design which according to Kothari (2004), is used when the problem has been defined specifically and where the researcher has certain issues to be described by the respondents about the problem. Survey designs are found to be accurate in descriptive studies and generalizations of results (Ngechu, 2004).

The researcher used case study design basing on the use of qualitative approach that was adopted to examine the roles of local government in economic and social development of the rural areas in Uganda using Bulopa subcounty as a case study. This design was used for profiling, defining, estimating, predicting and examining associated relationships.

#### **Target Population**

The study involved 200 people in from Bulopa subcounty Kamuli district local government that's to say the local government civil servants working in Bulopa subcounty, the residents of Bulopa subcounty, political leaders, and central government civil servants among others.

#### **Sample design and sample size**

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) argues that a sample size of at least 10% of the target population is convenient in a descriptive study more specifically when the target population is less than 10,000. Slovene's formula was used to compute the sample size. Slovene's formula states that, for any given population (N), the sample size (n) is given by;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where; n = the required sample size; N = the known population size; and  $\alpha$  = the level of significance, which will be fixed to be = 0.05 in social science research when the population size is known. The population and sample distributions of this study are shown in table 3.1 below.

The sample size consisting of one hundred and twenty-six (126) was selected from a population of 184 people in their respective categories. These included;

Supervisors and Supervisees. The Slovene’s formula is used to determine the minimum sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where n= is the sample size N=the population size, 0.05 is the level of significance.

$$n = \frac{184}{1+184(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{184}{1+ 184 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = 126.02$$

$$n=126$$

The Sample size of the study therefore rounded off to 126

**Table 3- 1: Sample size**

Categories of expected Respondents	Population	Sample	Percentage%
Local officials	15	10	8%
Supervisors	10	7	6%
Beneficiaries	149	102	80%
Human resource	10	7	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Sampling Procedure

Sample selection was used for probability sampling technique especially simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select supervisees’ category of respondents who were local official in the probation office at the center, supervisor, beneficiaries and human resources who were part of the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the supervisors of different departments of probation and welfare headquarters. This is because their number is not very big.

The study used convenient sampling in the choice of respondents. That is to say, for instance, the researcher distributed questionnaires to respondents who were present on the day when the survey took place and those who are absent were automatically be excluded from the study.

### Research Instruments

The following research-based tools were utilized in this study: face sheet to gather data on the respondents’ demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational level, and working experience); and researcher devised questionnaires were used to establish the level of decentralization and the level of service delivery.

The Likert scale grading 1=Strongly disagree and 4=Strongly Agree was adopted for this study due to its suitability in measuring perceptions, attitudes, values and behaviors that relate to decentralization and service delivery. The scale interval of this Likert’s 1-4 scale was computed as (i.e., Scale interval = (Highest scale – Lowest scale)/Highest scale) and the response modes, scoring and interpretation of scores are as indicated in Table 3.2 below

**Table 3- 2: Interpretation of the Mean Values**

Scale	Mean range	Response mode	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	You agree with no doubt at all	Very satisfactory
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree	You agree with some doubt	Satisfactory
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree	You disagree with no doubt	Fair
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree	You disagree with no doubt at all	Poor

### SECTION THREE DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION

#### Introduction

This study established decentralization and service delivery in probation and social welfare sector in Kamuli. The general objective was further studied under four specific objectives; to investigate the level of decentralization at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district, to examine whether local councilors are fully accountable to the public at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district, to establish the impact of decentralization on social service delivery at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district. And to establish the challenges faced by local governments in service delivery at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district. To achieve these objectives, the researcher designed a questionnaire which was divided into four parts; each part with various items that were based on a four Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree. The questionnaire was accompanied by an interview guide. The means in subsequent tables were interpreted as per the following interpretation guide.

Mean range	Response range	Interpretation
3.26 - 4.00	strongly agree	Very high
2.51 - 3.25	Agree	High
1.76 - 2.50	Disagree	Low
1.00 - 1.75	strongly disagree	Very low

Analysis tools used are means and standard deviations for all parts and items. The results from analysis, following objective by objective are illustrated as follows;

#### 4.1 Investigating the level of decentralization at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district

Part one of the questionnaire comprised of six items to measure the level of decentralization in probation and social welfare sector at Bulopa subcounty in Kamuli district. This objective was studied into six components as described below. Tools used to make analysis were means and standard deviations; as summarized in table below.

**Table 4- 1: Level of decentralization in probation and social welfare sector**

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Rank	Interpretation
The Political Framework	2.7500	.49763	1	High
Beneficiaries involved in the different decision making	2.6100	.55504	2	High
Local Government development in probation and social welfare sector clear to all the local people	2.6000	.62703	3	High

Improved channels of communication between the public and probation and social welfare	2.5210	.82746	4	High
At the probation office there is transparency in decision making process	2.5000	.71771	5	Low
Many development programmes in in probation and social welfare sector	2.4500	.88202	7	Low
Probation and social welfare have efficient distribution of resources under decentralization system of governance	2.3200	.88202	8	Low
Decentralization facilitates program eradication of poverty in probation and social welfare sector	2.3000	.71771	9	Low
Overall means	2.4800	.78300		Low

Source: researcher, (2021)

Table 4-1 above presents examination on skills analysis as one of the components of recruitment process. Skills analysis was also studied into eight items. The response per question was given a mean for which standard deviation, rank and interpretation was also obtained. Local government political framework generated high response with mean= 2.75, Stdev= 0.49763. Local Government development in probation and social welfare sector benefited all the local people with mean =2.6100, Stdev=0.55504.

The roles and responsibilities of social welfare workers are intertwined with the services they provide to varied clientele. While social welfare workers perform similar professional social work functions in whichever sector they are employed, their actual day to day roles vary according to the mandates and service-focus of the individual institutions they work for.

Another set of functions by social welfare workers include health related services, in particular the provision of services to people living with HIV/AIDS (home -based care; voluntary counseling and testing and community education on HIV/AIDS).

The aforementioned responsibilities are elaborated in the schedules of the different cadres of social welfare officers which has been prepared by the social welfare department and in their specific job descriptions. The functions include but are not limited to those listed in Annex 3. It has been noted however that the functions are in many cases similar across the schedules, something which suggests that individual social welfare officers assigned in any of the schedules would have requisite professional knowledge.

Improving Service Delivery - improving service delivery means that the lower levels of government could deliver services such as education, water, health, sanitation...etc. effectively and efficiently than the central government. Also, at the lower levels of government, politicians and civil servants are much aware of the needs of their community making them more responsive in delivering such services. Preferences of local communities are better known at lower levels of government

Productive Efficiency - productive efficiency means that local governments can produce the same goods and services at lower costs than the central government. Because local governments are closer to the local communities, cost of producing goods and services will be minimal. The usual “middle-men” and bureaucracy involving contract procedures could be reduced.

#### 4.2 Examining whether local councilors are fully accountable to the public at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli district

Respondents were also asked to give their opinions on whether local councilors were fully accountable to the public at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli district. This is evidenced in the statements provided in the table below.

**Table 4- 2: Examining whether local councilors were fully accountable to the public at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli district**

Items	Mean	Std.devn	Rank	Interpretation
Quick access to services in probation and social welfare sector	2.5000	.82746	1	Low
All people have equal access to medical, water, and other services in probation and social welfare sector	2.4500	.88202	2	Low
Quick information access in probation and social welfare sector	2.3200	.88202	3	Low
People got ability to achieve socio-economic goals on their own	2.3000	.71771	4	Low
Overall average	2.4500			

Source: researcher, (2021)

The Probation and Social Welfare Officer is crucial in the care and protection of children through provision of technical guidance and advice (The Children Act Part V). The PSWO is the central person in the implementation of the Children's Act and all other stakeholders interact with him/her at one point on children's concerns. One of the key responsibilities of PSWO in the implementation of the Optional Protocol is to provide access to justice and other forms of redress to victims of sexual abuse including, obtaining a medical examination report, having adequate evidence required by court, providing initial counselling to child victims and the family so as to cope with abuse and to also ensure that the child is protected from any form abuse. To make easy the work of the PSWO, government also has two Community Development Assistants (CDAs) in each sub county. A district consists of several sub counties, ranging from a minimum of eight to a maximum of 13. The CDAs handle children's issues at the lower levels and where there is need, refer them to the PSWO. Likewise, the PSWO may refer a child to a CDA for continued support after redress has been initiated or provided.

*When asked about the respondents on what exactly they do?*

The majority of social welfare workers are involved in providing individualized services in the context of family integration on the one hand, and networking among stakeholder or social partner institutions in the context of referral systems on the other. Affiliation and matrimonial cases including child maintenance as well as associated family conflicts fall under this category of services. The services are presented as a package of the main professional tasks performed by individual social welfare workers who were interviewed. The researcher identified that the responsibilities of social welfare workers are intertwined with the services they provide to varied clientele. While social welfare workers perform similar professional social work functions in whichever sector they are employed, their actual day to day roles vary according to the mandates and service-focus of the individual institutions they work for. The aforementioned responsibilities are elaborated in the schedules of the different cadres of social welfare officers which has been prepared by the social welfare department and in their specific job descriptions. The functions include but are not limited to specific work. It has been noted however that the functions are in many cases similar across the schedules, something which suggests that individual social welfare officers assigned in any of the schedules would have requisite professional knowledge.

#### 4.3 Establishing the impact of decentralization on social service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District

The researcher further asked respondents to give their opinions on the impact of decentralization on social service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District. However, the respondents gave their opinions basing on the statements shown in the table below.

**Table 4- 3: Establishing the impact of decentralization in probation and social welfare sector in Kamuli**

Items	Mean	Stddevn	Rank	Interpretation
There is improved standards of living among people in probation and social welfare sector	2.5210	.82746	1	High
The local people make decisions over service provisions in probation and social welfare	2.5000	.71771	3	Low
Projects have been successfully implemented in probation and social welfare sector	2.5000	.82746	5	Low
There has been clear accountability to the social service beneficiaries in probation and social welfare sector	2.4500	.88202	6	Low
There has been a clear monitoring mechanism drafted to aid the implementation of different development programmes	2.3200	.88202	7	Low
Overall mean	2.4500			Low

*Source: researcher, (2021)*

Improved standards of living among people in probation and social welfare sector generated a mean value = 2.5210 and stddevn=0.82746. Decision making by local people over service provisions in probation and social welfare generated a mean value =2.5000 and stddevn= 0.71771. Successful implementation of projects in probation and social welfare sector is seen to have a mean value = 2.5000, and stddevn= 0.82746. It is also noted that clear accountability to the social service beneficiaries in probation and social welfare sector generated a mean value = 2.4500, and stddevn= .88202. There has been a clear monitoring mechanism drafted to aid the implementation of different development programmes with a mean= 2.3200, and stddevn= 0.88202. Overall mean =2.4500 – a low mean implying that despite a clear monitoring mechanism drafted to aid the implementation of different development programmes, its full implementation is still lacking. Designations or official titles influence the way in which individual workers are perceived by supervisors and also how they are seen to be in a position to contribute to or influence decision making in the institution. Findings show that the majority of the respondents (31%) are social welfare officers while 16% are community

development officers. Respondents included principal social welfare officers (7%) and senior social welfare officers (8%) As shown on Table 4. Designations of social welfare workers vary with the nature of organizational structures of the employing institutions, so that some are designated as project officers/advisers, medical social workers or youth officers.

**Establishing the challenges faced by local governments in service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District**

Respondents were also asked to provide their opinions in regards to challenges faced by local governments in service delivery at Bulopa subcounty, Kamuli District. Their opinions were based on the statements as given below.

**Table 4- 4: To establish the challenges faced by local government in social service delivery**

Items	Mean	Stddevn	Rank	Interpretation
Low funding of probation and social welfare sector	2.5210	.71771	1	High
Corruption in probation and social welfare sector	2.5000	.82746	2	Low
Lack of political scale in probation and social welfare	2.5000	.88202	3	Low
Lack of monitoring of activities of probation and social welfare sector	2.4500	.88202	4	Low
Less skilled personnel to manage probation and social welfare sector	2.3200	.71771	5	Low
Overall mean	2.4800	.87101		Low

Source: researcher, (2021)

Low funding of probation and social welfare sector generated a mean value = 2.5000, and stddevn= .82746. While corruption in probation and social welfare sector is considerably seen to have a mean= 2.5000, and stddevn=0.88202, the lack of political scale to help monitor some of these activities was seen to have generated a mean= 2.4500, and Stddevn=0.88202. Less skilled personnel to manage probation and social welfare sector generated a mean = 2.3200, and stddevn= .71771. The overall mean = 2.4800, stddevn= .87101. This implies that trained personnel to manage probation and social welfare sector is carried out at a low level. The research findings indicated that the social welfare workers interviewed expressed concern over limited communication and feedback from headquarters of the social welfare department and weak supervision in general. Such concern is in line with the observation of the DSW capacity assessment, to the effect that supervision is one of the weakest roles in the department. The report notes that institutions dealing with elderly and orphans are not supervised, monitored or followed up to determine adherence to standards. Inadequate communication and feed-back could be associated with a scenario in situations where authority is centralized and there might not be a strict supervision of staff and activities in the field. It may be the case also where the headquarters is overwhelmed with numerous tasks in the face of limited staff, such as is the case with the DSW. The absence of supervision generally means also lack of or inadequate assessment. The possibility that the scheme of service might be perceived by some social welfare workers as being deficient was linked with what should be done to improve it if that turned out to be the case. In responding to this question some social welfare workers (13%) indicated that various kinds of in-service training should be provided, while others (8%) mentioned the need for the government to extend more recognition and care for the work of the department of social welfare. Most respondents (61%) did not know or were not sure about what needs to be done, a position which is consistent with the fact that they were not familiar with the scheme of service.

**Table 4- 5: Bivariate Regression Analysis between decentralization in probation and social welfare sector in Kamuli**

Variables regressed	Adj. r <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.	Interpretation	Decision on H0
Decentralization in probation	0.455	153.902	0.000	Relationship exists	Rejected
Coefficients	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Interpretation	Decision on H0
Constant	.860	5.479	.000	Relationship exists	Rejected
Social welfare sector	.640	12.406	.000	Relationship exists	Rejected

Source: researcher, (2021)

Where  $y$  = decentralization and service delivery,  $a$  = constant,  $b$  = rate of change of probation and social welfare sector. Results in table 4.5 show that, since ( $F = 153.902$ ) and ( $sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), this means that there is a relationship. The fact that most social welfare workers do possess a job description implies that they are conversant with their expected roles and responsibilities a situation which in principle promotes a sense of responsibility and accountability. It should be noted however that there are some few of them who do not have a job description, suggesting that they are assigned tasks in an ad-hoc manner by their supervisors. In



the absence of a job description staff may not have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and assessment of work performance may be complicated.

## **SECTION FOUR DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Discussions**

It can be deduced from the findings, that the demand for social welfare services is primarily a function of population growth and rate of urbanization and that local government authorities need to accommodate this reality especially in their long-term planning. According to the DSW capacity assessment report, in September 2008, through circular No. CHA.215/355/01/87, the Principal Secretary, PMO-RALG informed all Directors in District Councils, Municipal Councils and City Councils to start employing at least 4 Social Welfare Officers to work in each of the three units in the Social Welfare Department structure, namely the Family, Child Welfare and Early Childhood Development; Juvenile Justice and Disability and Aging, effective 2009/10 financial year. In the same circular, the government of Uganda directed that Social Welfare Officers located in regional secretariats be transferred to local governments. The objective of the process is to bring social welfare service closer to communities in keeping with the decentralization by devolution. The assessment could not establish the progress made so far towards the implementation of the directive or whether there was a timeline given. Given the fact that the recruitment and placement for human resources is now the responsibility of the local government, the challenge remains that of implementation and co-ordination since most councils lack professionals to effectively carry out the function. The findings revealed that the assessment's interpretation of these concerns is that social welfare officers and other technical staff expect guidance and mentoring from the department leader but this seems to be not forthcoming and therefore efficiency and effectiveness is compromised. The supervision of service delivery goes alongside inspection, a role that needs to be decentralized to the local government level where the service providers are. The assessment has established that there is inadequate awareness or complete ignorance about individual staff promotion, which might be linked to limited access to the scheme of service as already evidenced by the findings. There is no doubt that when given timely and also communicated to concerned staff a promotion would boost morale and enhance efficiency in task performance and therefore safeguard against apparent apathy on the part of the staff ignorance about the scheme. Service among social welfare workers on the other hand, suggests that there are no deliberate measures by the employers to educate and inform staff about such an important document, or, that individual social welfare workers might not have seen the need to enquire or even demand to have access to the scheme of service. Staff morale among social welfare workers was found to be generally low, as captured when social welfare workers were responding to questions on promotions, job descriptions, supervision and budgetary constraints, as well as when giving their varied general comments on the situation of social welfare workers in the country. When asked about what they thought needs to be done the respondents suggested variously that their work environment should be improved, that social welfare workers should be valued and recognized and that the social welfare functions in the LGAs should not be mixed up with those of community development. They added that social welfare workers currently employed should be absorbed in the LGAs where the work environment seems to be better particularly in terms of office space and equipment.

### **Conclusions**

Review of laws and policies related to the provision of social welfare services confirms the existence of a solid policy and legislative framework, which demonstrates the government commitment and political will to extend social protection to all vulnerable groups. Up to 69% of the social welfare workers in the areas covered by the assessment have expressed lack of knowledge on various laws and policies related to their work, a situation which most likely exists in other areas as well.

While existing national policies and laws are generally supportive of social welfare services in the country, gaps still exist in translating these documents into actions among those entrusted to implement them including social welfare officers.

Service delivery is primarily constrained by unqualified social welfare workers in almost all field offices. Many of these offices have hardly two (2) qualified social workers in comparison to the high caseloads they attend to. Field situations show that in some stations, even office messengers/ attendants attend to clients in the absence of social welfare officers.

The level of responsibility and accountability among most of the social welfare workers is generally low, something which might undermine staff motivation and morale. Most social welfare workers have expressed the need for further training in providing shelter and other services to vulnerable groups poorly resourced in every respect while staff are frustrated by the poor work environment.

Budget limitations is a persistent and chronic problem with the Social Welfare Department, and it makes the work of the concerned social welfare officers very difficult and frustrating for decentralized service delivery of probation and social welfare in Kamuli.

### 5.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development in collaboration with stake-holders take deliberate measures to disseminate and distribute relevant policy documents and subsequently undertake regular reviews and trainings targeting social welfare workers.

The Ministry of Gender in collaboration with stakeholders undertake capacity building targeting social workers to enhance their capacity on responding to the need of the general public at local government levels.

The government should recruit more social welfare workers to work in collaboration with CDOs at LGA to village extension levels and formulate strategies for developing a social welfare policy which will define all elements of social welfare service provision need to be laid.

The Department of Social Welfare should take the lead in lobbying for —Social Protection Framework that will give them more visibility. The lobbying should be based on facts that the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development in collaboration with stakeholders embark on a comprehensive training programme to further build the capacity of Staff at all levels

The Department of Social Welfare should take measures, in collaboration with stakeholders to streamline and improve supervisory lines and make these known to the staff, who should also be provided with schemes of service and participate in the development of work performance targets.

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