

WOMEN'S DEMOCRACY NETWORK

Empowering Women to Lead

Uganda Chapter

REVIEWING YOUR PERFORMANCE AS COUNCILLOR AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE 2016 ELECTIONS

Introduction

Councillors are elected representatives of the people and speak on behalf of their electorate. The decisions made by councillors whether good or bad are binding on the electorate. For a councillor to be in position to measure his/her output while in leadership there are certain issues that should be borne in mind.

Issues on which to assess yourself as you begin your second year in office:

1. What is **my agenda** for coming to the council or what was the problem that made me aspire to become a councillor?
 - Every successful leader must have an agenda that enables him/her to fulfill the aspirations of the people who elected him/her into office. The agenda must arise from the problem he/she wanted to address and must be clear.
 - Your agenda does not have to be complicated. It must be doable and be in the context of the national agenda of Uganda. The national agenda is contained in the National Development Plan (2010-15). Define what is locally known in your electoral area as a problem that can be resolved. It may be: advocacy for better water sources for your electorate; getting more children to pass in first grade in Primary Leaving Examinations; Ensuring that children go to school on time and that they are taught when in school. For instance, you can be the councillor who is known for admonishing children who walk to school at their own leisure time or the one who speaks to parents about their roles in working with government in order to provide quality education for their children. For example encouraging parents to contribute some money towards provision of lunch for their children is a good advocacy issue. In this respect government on August 1, 2012 through the Minister of Education has lifted a ban on schools with regard to charging parents a fee for lunch. School management committees will now be allowed to set a figure that parents should pay to enable schools to provide lunch for children.

- Your agenda does not have to be on issues that you know will not achieve any tangible results.
- You must therefore have indicators that will show how your work as a councilor has positively impacted your community. In order to do this, you must show the magnitude of the problem on which you campaigned and asked for the people's vote. You should monitor progress that you have made in addressing the problem since your election and communicate to your electorate your achievements on the agenda.
- Ensure that the word representation becomes real for the community you represent. If you have not acted upon an issue that they raised explain to them why that was not possible. It may be due to the lack of budget allocation for that activity. You explain to your electorate how you will ensure that the issue is addressed. You may have to look for other actors that you can partner with to address the issue.
- You must be in position to address known and outstanding challenges. For instance if a disaster has struck your electoral area, as the councilor what are you doing to bring attention to the plight of your people and to mobilize resources to address current challenges? ***Remember Citizen Satisfaction is key in order to be remembered as a good leader. You cannot satisfy everyone but there must be a reasonable quarter of the population that gets satisfied through your leadership.***

2. How have you justified your existence as a councilor since your election?

- This can be measured using the things that you have been able to do since you were elected.
- Contact with your electorate on a regular basis is very important because it shows the electorate that you are in leadership to represent their views and not yours. Do you have a contact address for your electorate through which they can get in touch with you? If yes, how many meetings have you held with your electorate? What issues did they raise at the meetings and what have you done to address them? Did you give council a report on the issues raised by your electorate? Have you given your electorate feed back?
- What is the quality and quantity of services being delivered in your sub-county? Have you taken interest to share with your electorate information on the plans and services that will be provided in the sub-county and their roles in ensuring effective and efficient service delivery? How have public resources been used in the sub-county? Are there drugs in the health center if budgeted for? Are the road repairs being done in the sub-

county if they were budgeted for? If tax payers' money has been used properly what have you done to encourage citizens to pay taxes on time? What creative ideas have you shared in council to increase revenue and improve service delivery in the district? Can the ideas be attributed to you? If yes, how?

- What kind of councilor have you been? Are you the type that breeds conflict in council? Does not read council documents? Shuts down any person who is contributing? Does not speak in council? What contribution have you made in council that can be said to have influenced decision making in favor of the tax payer (local citizen)? Are you the type of councilor who is opportunistic and forms alliances with any side in council where he/she will gain materially regardless of the implication that the decision will have on service delivery?
- What working relationship have you developed with the district technocrats? How has this relationship improved service delivery?
- Do you know have personal vision for your electorate? If yes, how does the district vision fit within your vision for the local citizens you represent and what work are you doing to achieve that vision?
- What are you doing differently from what your predecessor did?
- What is your five year plan for your sub-county? Who can help you to achieve this plan and what have you done to get other relevant stakeholders to enable you achieve this plan? Ask yourself, how many well wishers have I attracted to my sub-county to address the needs of my people where government resources have been inadequate? What foot prints do you want to be remembered for as a leader? What things can be attributed to your leadership?

Characteristic challenges to good governance in local governments

1. The laws, policies and client charters on governance in local governments read beautifully. The challenge is to develop institutions and processes that address the needs of the local citizens especially the poor.
- Where is the disconnection and what are you doing as a councilor in any position that you hold in council to address the disconnection?
 - What are you doing to improve access to justice and access to public administration for local citizens? For instance what have you done to create a working relationship

between sub-county chiefs and the public, agricultural workers attached to the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture programs and local farmers?

You must connect governance to the reality of the people's needs. For instance how often do you inspect roads in your sub-county and report to council on their state? How often do you work with NAADs coordinators to address issues affecting the program in your sub-county?

Practical tips for strengthening governance and accountability in local councils

1. Clarity of vision and how you will address the issues affecting your electorate from a different perspective to what your electorate has always known is important.
 - You must ask yourself....How different do I want my sub-county to be when I leave office or before I contest again in 2016?
 - Do I have my five year sub-county plan?
 - How did I find the state of schools, health centers, water and sanitation services among others when I got elected?
 - What have I done to address issues regarding service delivery, access to information and justice since I got elected?
 - Why should people vote for me again in 2016?

There must be evidence of the difference that you have made to improve the lives of your electorate through playing your roles as provided for in the Constitution of Uganda and Local Government Act. The population must be able to measure your performance from a baseline. It is you and other actors who have seen a difference through your leadership whom you can work with to explain to the citizens the state in which you found service delivery and your achievements. Use communication structures like women and youth groups, your party structure and make maximum use of media especially radio to communicate your achievements basing on the baseline from which you found the sub-county.

How can the district councilors as a team strengthen good governance and accountability to local citizens (tax payers)?

- At district level in the most concise level, what strategy do you have as a district to improve service delivery? You must have programmatic discussions on how you intend to meet the peoples' aspirations as a team. Set a doable agenda (known agenda) - it must be in the context of the national agenda which is contained in the NDP (2010-15).

- Define what locally known and achievable indicators of progress for the district.
- Monitor your indicators of progress. As a district you must set targets for improving service delivery on a yearly basis. The district council should be able to discuss the reports on how different services have improved or regressed depending on the targets that the district set in the District Development Plan (DDP). The yearly targets can be developed from the DDP.
- Review the accountability procedures and systems that have been set up to stimulate participatory planning and ask yourselves whether you have made progress in improving accountability and service delivery using the systems in place.
- The issues the community faces must be acted upon...representation must be real and felt by communities that you represent. All those people who are geographically marginalized must be taken care of in planning. The marginalized must feel that they are represented.
- Identify the challenges that the district is facing as it attempts to improve service delivery and discuss practical solutions to address the challenges. For instance if revenue sources in the district are low, what have you done as a council to attract resources into the district? How have you accounted for public resources that you have received previously? Do the people know how their taxes have been used? It is easier to ask people to pay taxes or to introduce new taxes if they see real services being delivered. For instance, if they see better road networks in the district and are made aware of those roads that are not in the care of the district, it may be easier to collect more taxes or introduce new taxes. If they see drugs in hospitals, improved water sources among others it will be easier to encourage them to pay taxes and to introduce new ones.

Councilors should:

- Know that expenditures are permissible on local grants;
- Use their platforms for cross learning and experience sharing. Silent competition amongst local government and low innovation digress local governments;
- Know that sporadic civic education, deprives councilors of incremental learning and practices;
- Understand that political alignment and extremism affect service delivery; and

Know that every grant has 5% factored to monitoring and another 5% for capacity building. Ordinary councilors unlike their counterparts in the district executive are not mandated by law to do full time monitoring. However, it is good practice for the DEC to inform area councilors when they are going to monitor service delivery in their areas and meet with them and share information. This approach enhances team work and contributes to improving service delivery.

In council as you review your performance every year up till 2016 note the following:

1. Set an agenda which is clear and have a plan on how you intend to achieve your agenda;
2. Define the milestones;
3. Define results and indicators of success;
4. Define indicators for harmony and co-existence irrespective of party differences.
5. Define your yard sticks as a councilor. Some of the expectations of you are enshrined in the Local Government Act. In summary however, you can review your performance by:
 - highlighting the number of motions you have raised in council,
 - ordinances you have influenced or presented to council;
 - meetings you have attended in the sub-county local councils and reports you have written and submitted to the Speaker and clerk to council on activities you have undertaken and issues that require council's attention;
 - number of times you have attended council meetings; how you have serviced your constituency by influencing programs in your electoral areas, attracting partners to complement government in service delivery;
 - number of meetings with your electorate and issues you have gathered and addressed with regard to the electorate.
 - Services that have improved due to your influence and relationships with other actors including the private sector, CSOs and CBOs among others.
6. Define and work towards key strategic milestones and outcomes e.g. literacy, maternal health, water access, local economic development.
7. Create an interaction platform for sharing experiences, best practices and lessons- establish feedback and redress systems.

- Conduct regular monitoring of work plans.
- Conduct program reviews.
- Create innovations in council transactions.

“As long as there is no development that is evident in your electoral area, there is nothing you have done”-Assumpta Tibamwenda-Deputy Coordinator Program Support Team,
Ministry of Local Government

The views in this article were collected during a review workshop for district speakers and councilors from 11 districts of the KAS-ACFODE program on “Strengthening Good Governance and Accountability”. The main presenter was Assumpta Tibamwenda -The Deputy Coordinator Program Support Team, Ministry of Local Government; whose paper to a large extent informed the views expressed in this article.

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