

# Political Decentralization and Rural Roads Upkeep in Western Uganda

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**Abstract:** *The empirical study assessed the connection between Political Decentralization and Countryside Roads Upkeep in Kanungu District in western Uganda. The investigation study utilized an exploratory and descriptive inquiry design with quantitative and qualitative models. A sample of 104 respondents were carefully chosen from 113 persons using Slovene's formula. Information was gathered by means of questionnaires and interview agendas. Data was evaluated using frequencies, percentages, Pearson linear correlation coefficient (PLCC) for quantitative statistics and thematic analysis was employed for organizing qualitative evidence. The study findings came up with a significant correlation between Political Decentralization and Countryside Roads Upkeep in Kanungu District in Western Uganda. The schoolwork concluded that Political decentralization is vital for countryside feeder roads Upkeep because it covenants with issues to do with delivery of quality services to the community. If the roads are well upheld, they can be a stimulus to socio-economic progress of the nation at large. From the schoolwork findings, the academic recommended that the political leadership of Kanungu district sub-national government in Uganda should continuously put in a monitoring and evaluation system to oversee the Upkeep of countryside roads for appropriate development of the nation. This can be done through putting in place effective committees to make sure that government policies on rural roads upkeep are well respected and executed. The government of Uganda should increase on the budget meant to repair the countryside roads so that native governments can have adequate money to execute activities related to roads Upkeep and encourage the development of rural areas in Uganda.*

**Keywords:** Political Decentralization, Roads Upkeep, Service provision, Uganda

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, rural roads are a key element in the provision of physical access. Although physical access is not a Millennium Development Goal in itself, it plays a vital role in determining the chances for reaching a number of the millennium development goals. The benefits of improved physical access however are short lived if the rural roads are not maintained (ILO 2015). For instance, in Thailand, Upkeep of rural roads has taken different shapes since the early 1980s; massive investments have been made in rural roads. Underlying this was a belief that rural roads and the vehicles that traveled on them would provide the catalyst for increased economic activity in the rural areas. It also responded to the change in development thinking towards a belief in the necessity to develop the rural areas so that agricultural production is stimulated

and to ensure that jobs and livelihoods are created locally to limit the urban drift. The development of the rural road network was seen as, a prime mover and certainly an important facilitator. In 1988 the World Bank produced a seminal work on road maintenance. The publication drew on detailed research and data from 85 countries. The publication was more focused on the major highways and paved the way for the road network than on rural roads {Mookherjee, 2017}.

In Armenia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, China, El Salvador, Georgia, India, Mexico and South Africa decentralization of the authority over Upkeep of rural roads by local communities has recently become widespread (World Bank, 2022). These initiatives have transferred responsibility of procurement, selection of local projects, and identification of beneficiaries from central ministries to local governments or community representatives. The presumed argument in favor of decentralizing delivery systems is that local governments will be subject to electoral pressures from local citizens, who are able to monitor delivery of better services than a distant central authority (Mookherjee 2017).

In Africa, Upkeep of rural roads leaves a lot to be done. For example, in Ghana the road sub-sector is in the process of recovering from the serious neglect of the 1970s and 1980s. The recovery process started in the late 1980s with a series of transport rehabilitation projects. As a well-functioning road sub-sector is regarded as crucial for continued successful development, later in 1996 a credit agreement with the World Bank was signed for a Highway Sector Investment Programme (HSIP), covering the period 1996-2000. Funds were provided by a number of donors (Odongo, 2017). In Cote d'Ivoire, managerial decentralization has been introduced in conjunction with aggressive training of (technical) local government staff involved in infrastructure development (particularly roads (ILO, 2014).

In Rwanda as an example, is where local entities, particularly community-based organizations, have been the subject of interventions focused on increasing local capacity to manage and implement small-scale infrastructure investments, like rural roads. "Burungi Bwansi" meaning working for the good of the community in Rwanda is compulsory on every Wednesdays by everyone including visitors and whoever dodges is severely punished. Tanzania also focused her decentralization policy on developing local planning, construction and Upkeep capacity in the road sector (ILO, 2014).

In Uganda, by 1986, majority of feeder roads, that is to say; 350km of the then 2000km of paved national roads and the entire 6000km gravel national roads were in despair. The reform adopted in 1992 were within the World Bank supported in the Road Management Initiative (RMI) for Sub Saharan Africa and were based on the four building blocks that is funding, management, responsibility and ownership of roads. This program helped in Upkeep of many roads in Uganda of which the citizens were able to improve on their living standards due to improved mobility (Odongo, 2017).

Kanungu district like other Districts and Urban Local Governments is routinely upgrading road classes from community to district/urban status (Yildirim & Oban, 2021). Road User Satisfaction Survey (RUSS) for 2016 showed a marked decline in the general satisfaction of road users with roads compared to 2015. Previous RUSS conducted annually from 2012 had shown increasing bad state of roads by road users, 27% in 2012, 22% in 2013, 32% in 2014, 53% in 2015 and 37% in 2016 which was attributed to narrowness, dustiness, inadequate maintenance, poor drainage, congestion and accidents. Decentralization in Uganda became effective during the financial year 1993/94 when most of the public services were transferred

from the central government to local governments. The responsibility for service delivery was passed on to the local governments as spelt out in the local government (Resistance Councils Statute, 1993). Decentralization was later on enshrined in the 1995 Uganda Constitution and a modified version of law-the Local Government Act which was enacted in 1997 as amended. Because of the nature of the Uganda's economy the local population depends on the rural feeder roads to get their produce to markets (Kagina, 2022). Trunk roads that connect major towns and provide access to neighboring countries are actually not as important to the rural person as the feeder roads. Feeder roads provide the chief means of communication and also link rural areas with the market. They are the principal means of vehicular access to rural areas. Therefore, decentralization is seen as a key mover as far as Upkeep of rural feeder roads is concerned. It is against this background that the study examines the effectiveness of decentralization on rural feeder roads Upkeep in Kanungu district (Modise, 2018).

## **2. Methods and Materials**

### **Data Capturing**

Actualities used for the research scheme were got by means of both primary and secondary basics of data. Primary data was reached at by usage of questionnaires and interviews to vivacious persons related to the schoolwork. Secondary data was attained by the use of documentary records. The study engaged an exploratory descriptive investigation design including qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Amin (2005) specified that descriptive examination design is generally used to designate a phenomenon and its data characteristics. The scholar picked a total of 104 participants (sample size) by means of the Sloven's formula to participate in the inquiry study.

### **Sampling methods**

The societal expert engaged stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods in the schoolwork. The study populace used the target population including groups like District Technical workforce, Local council front-runners, road users, Ministry of local government bureaucrats and Officials from Uganda National Roads Authority.

### **Questionnaire and interviews**

The questionnaire is a research tool consisting of inter-related interrogations organized by the investigator about the research dilemma under study grounded on the intentions of the exploration study. Items were set and transcribed for the contributors to answer with choices as reflected on the likert scale type inquiries.

This technique was adored because it covers a varied physical space in data congregation; it accumulates a lot of evidence within a short period of time and offers superior guarantee regarding privacy.

Yet, the questionnaire involved some constraints of attrition. There were limited copies that were not returned, although this was resolved by issuing a lot of copies than the mandatory number of the sample size for the schoolwork.

Interview schedule is a tool of facts congregation which has something to do with face to face communication with participants. The scholar posed queries which the respondents replied verbally. It was important in getting the story behind the participants' contribution even through facial actions. This instrument was chosen because the evidence and data got was

relevant to the study. The intention of a qualitative conversation programme was to comprehend the respondents personal view of their cosmos; unfolding the sense of their ecosphere, revealing their lived routines prior to logical interpretations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### Validity and reliability of research instruments

Validity of the well-thought-out survey was assured by using content validity Index. Arising from the analysis of the validity of the instruments, the academic got content validity index (CVI) of 0.78 which was well directly beyond 0.75 signifying that the tool was valid to bring together statistics for the examination study (Amin, 2005). On the contrary, the validity of the interviews was got by talking to key members to verify the answered substances (Gibbs, 2007).

Reliability of the Organized Questionnaire was calculated by means of Cronbach's alpha coefficient formula though observing the variables that had an alpha coefficient of digit bigger than 0.70. Since the reliability calculation got by the researcher produced 0.78 alpha value, it concluded that the research tool was reliable to yield data essential for the methodical study. Nevertheless, the reliability of the interviews was got by resorting on peer review strategies (Gibbs, 2007).

### Data analysis

Inquiry Statistical tools which were involved to analyze data for this investigation study included; descriptive dimensions such as tables, frequencies, percentages, and inferential statistics like Pearson Linear Correlation Coefficient for assessing quantitative statistics. In general, Qualitative information were evaluated by scientifically unifying data into sensible themes or sub themes for easy Interpretation in a storyline process (Gibbs, 2007).

## 3. Results

### Contribution of Political Decentralization on People's Participation in Rural Roads Maintenance

This item of the study presents descriptive results that sought to find out Contribution of Political Decentralization on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep which was studied in seven items as indicated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Frequencies, Percentages and Means on Items of Contribution of Political Decentralization on People's Participation in Rural Roads Maintenance**  
 Source: Field Data 2020

Political Decentralization on People's Participation in Rural Roads Maintenance	F/%	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean
Promotes delivery of services to local people, improves effectiveness and accountability.	F	8	18	9	65	4	3.38
Promotes a sense of people's ownership of local government programmes and projects	%	7.7	17.3	8.7	62.5	3.8	
helps in opening of new roads than Upkeep Promotes local initiatives	F	6	35	8	41	14	3.21
	%	5.8	33.7	7.7	39.4	13.5	
spreads responsibilities for rural road Upkeep within the various levels of government	F	4	18	16	62	4	3.42
Enhances local partnership initiatives	%	3.8	17.3	15.4	59.6	3.8	

Promotes planning of rural feeder roads	F	13	19	5	52	15	3.36
Promotes delivery of services to local people, improves effectiveness and accountability	%	12.5	18.8	4.8	50.0	14.4	
Promotes a sense of people's ownership of local government programmes and projects helps in opening of new roads than maintenance	F	-	6	5	62	31	4.13
	%	-	5.8	4.8	59.6	29.8	
Promotes local initiatives spreads responsibilities for rural road Upkeep within the various levels of government	F	-	48	7	39	10	3.11
	%	-	46.2	6.7	37.5	9.6	
Enhances local partnership initiatives	F	9	5	1	70	19	3.82
	%	8.7	4.8	1.0	67.3	18.3	

The results in Table 1 above on whether political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep promotes delivery of services to local people, improves effectiveness and accountability, cumulatively the majority percentage (66.3%) of the respondents disagreed, 8.7% were undecided while 25.0% agreed. The mean = 3.38 was close to 3 which on the five-point Likert scale used to measure the items corresponded to undecided. This means that fairly, political decentralisation on People's participation in rural roads Upkeep promotes delivery of services to local people. With respect to whether political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep promotes delivery of services to local people promotes a sense of peoples' ownership of local government programmes and projects, cumulatively the larger percentage (52.9%) of the respondents agreed, 7.7% were undecided while 59.5% disagreed. The mean = 3.21 was close to 3 which corresponded with undecided. The results suggested that fairly, political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep was legitimately implemented. With regard to whether political decentralisation on People's participation in rural roads Upkeep helps in opening of new roads than maintenance, cumulatively the majority percentage (63.4%) of the respondents agreed, 15.4% were undecided while 21.1% disagreed. The mean = 3.42 was close to 3 which corresponded with undecided. The results suggested that fairly, inspection teams reviewed how Rural Roads Upkeep projects were implemented.

With respect to whether there political decentralisation on people's participation in rural roads Upkeep promotes local initiatives, cumulatively the majority percentage (64.4%) of the respondents disagreed, 4.8% were undecided while 31.3% agreed. The mean = 3.36 was close to 3 which corresponded with undecided. The results implied that fairly, political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep promotes local initiatives. As regards to whether there is spreading of responsibilities for rural road Upkeep within the various levels of government, cumulatively the majority percentage (89.4%) of the respondents agreed, 4.8% were undecided while 5.8% agreed. The mean = 4.13 was close to 4 which corresponded with agreed. The results meant that there is spreading of responsibilities for rural road Upkeep within the various levels of government. Regarding whether political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep enhances local partnership initiatives, cumulatively the larger percentage (47.1%) of the respondents agreed, 6.7% were undecided while 46.2% disagreed. The mean = 3.11 was close to 3 which corresponded with undecided. The results suggested that fairly, political decentralisation on People's Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep enhances local partnership initiatives of the district.

As to whether it promotes planning of rural feeder roads, cumulatively the larger percentage (85.6%) of the respondents agreed, 1.0% was undecided while 13.1% disagreed. The mean = 3.82 was close to 4 which corresponded with agreed. The results suggested that political decentralisation on People’s Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep promotes planning of rural feeder roads. The summary mean = 3.49 for all the seven items measuring political decentralisation on People’s Participation in Rural Roads Upkeep was close to 3 which corresponded with undecided. This meant that the respondents indicated that fairly, political decentralisation can lead People’s Participation in Rural Roads Maintenance.

Alongside quantitative data, qualitative data was collected. The respondents gave several responses on political decentralisation on people’s participation in rural roads maintenance. One respondent (Chairman Local council V) said,

*“There is an effect of political decentralisation on people’s participation in rural roads Upkeep in a sense that the political monitoring groups normally help to identify gaps in the implementation of projects such as rural roads maintenance. Evaluation is done on quarterly basis.”*

Thus, this meant that *political decentralisation* has helped government ensure that there is proper accountability of the projects being implemented in sub-national governments.

**Table 2: The correlation between Political Decentralisation and Rural road Upkeep in Kanungu district**  
 Source: Primary data (2022)

		Political Decentralization	Rural roads maintenance
Political Decentralization	Pearson Correlation	1	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	104	104
Rural roads maintenance	Pearson Correlation	.478**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	104	104

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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The study established that administrative decentralization significantly ( $p=0.000<0.05$ ) influenced the rural roads Upkeep in Kananga district in Uganda. Also, there was a moderate positive relationship ( $r=0.478$ ) between Political decentralization and rural roads Upkeep in Kanungu district. In this context, Political decentralization improved the rural roads Upkeep in Kanungu district; because it upgraded supervision of rural roads under Upkeep in Kanungu district. This implied that the set null hypothesis was rejected saying that political decentralization has no strong bearing on rural roads Upkeep in Kanungu district in Uganda.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the effect of political decentralization on people’s participation on rural roads Upkeep in Kanungu district was significant. This finding is contrary to the findings of previous scholars such as Yildirim & Oban (2021) who conducted a study on Decentralisation in Algeria and found out that political decentralisation is full of intrigue, a scenario that does not lead to efficiency in local government operations. However, the finding was in agreement with the study conducted by Modise (2018) on Community rural setting who found out that political decentralisation has helped organise the citizenry to achieve the

objectives of government. This was because the monitoring of political leaders has aided in ensuring proper accountability of local government officials for development.

### Conclusion

Political decentralisation is has been seen to be most important in local governments because it helps mobilise people to cooperate together and achieve the objectives of community development. Political leaders have been able to monitor the implementation of government policies including rural roads maintenance leading to growth and development of the country.

### Recommendations

Political decentralisation should be strengthened by central government through improved funding for local governments so as to enhance performance of rural feeder roads maintenance. This can aid political leaders to realise efficient monitoring, periodic evaluation of performance, ensuring effective inspection teams and putting in place advisory committees for rural roads upkeep.

Central government should decentralize fully devolutionary powers to sub-national governments so that they can be empowered to make decisions or district ordinances regarding their districts for development. This means that local government officials can be able to put in place a strong system of monitoring and evaluation for rural roads maintenance and development.

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