K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

The effect of non-partisan elections and decentralisation on local government performance

Robin Richards
Independent Research Consultant
27 January 2021

Question

Do non-partisan elections as part of political decentralisation improve performance of local government?

- *What is the international evidence-base on non-partisan elections and how they improve performance of local government over partisan elections?*

- *Where are country examples of decentralisation policies being introduced which shifted local elections from being partisan to non-partisan, and how successfully were they implemented?*

Contents

1. Summary

This rapid review focusses on whether there is international evidence on the role of non-partisan elections as a form of decentralised local government that improves performance of local government. The review provides examples of this from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The literature for this review is from a variety of sources, including published journal articles and academic theses as well as grey sources that include published reports and online literature. There was a dearth of literature on non-partisan elections and how they improve performance at the local government level. The shortage of current literature on this topic necessitated the use of some older published papers as key sources. Comments from experts in the field of local government and decentralisation as well as African elections were therefore also solicited. Unsurprisingly, because of the shortage of examples on non-partisan elections and decentralisation, a gap in evaluation studies exploring the impact of non-partisan elections at the local government level is a further observation. This subject area in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing parts of the world.

The following key observations emerge from this review:

- There are two reported examples in Sub-Saharan Africa of non-partisan elections that delink candidates from political parties during election campaigns. This finding was supported through the opinions solicited from experts on African elections and local government (see: Cheeseman, 2021, Fakir 2021, De Visser 2021);

- The use of non-partisan elections to improve performance and democratic accountability at the level of government is not common. For example, in southern Africa all local elections at the sub-national sphere follow the partisan model (Hartmann, 2004);

- No examples were found where countries shifted from partisan to non-partisan elections at the local government level; and

- Decentralisation policies have the effect of democratising and transferring power and therefore few central governments implement it fully. In Africa decentralisation is favoured because it is often used as a cover for central control. Many post-colonial leaders in Africa continue to favour centralised government under the guise of decentralisation. These preferences emanated from their experiences under colonisation where power was maintained by colonial administrations through institutions such as traditional leadership (Makara, 2017; Lechler and McNamee, 2016).

A review of the literature on non-partisan elections at the local government level came across three examples where this occurred. These countries were: Ghana, Uganda and Bangladesh. Although South Africa holds partisan elections at the sub-national sphere, the election of ward committee members and ward councillors, is on a non-partisan basis and therefore, the ward committee system in South Africa, is included as an example of a non-partisan election process in the review.

A review of the evidence from these four countries highlighted the following key insights:

Ghana.

- Key structures of local government in Ghana are district assemblies. District assemblies arose from the system of government created under President Rawlings after a military coup in the 1980s. The coup resulted in the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) coming to power and the implementation of a populist agenda (Crook, 1994).

- District assemblies were based on the idea of populist direct democracy, involving all citizens. District assemblies were established by law as non-partisan local governance structures (Crook, 1994).

- With the advent of multiparty democracy in Ghana in 1992, the system of election of non-partisan district assembly members continued (Crook, 1994).

- In reality, district assemblies are partisan entities because the President appoints district chief executives and a third of district assembly members. The remaining district assembly members not appointed by the president are also linked to the ruling party (Razin, 2000).

- Decentralisation is used as a means of ruling party control by co-opting local actors, through offering them a role in local government (Natalini, 2010).

- Informal ties to the ruling party also bind district assembly members to the ruling party and weaken the independent non-partisan nature of assembly members. Such informal ties include ethnic bonds between the ruling party and elected district assembly members (Adamtey, 2014).

- Assembly members are unpaid but must still fund their own election campaigns. The shortage of resources at this level has led to claims that candidates secretly fund their campaigns through political parties and other influential people. This further undermines the claim that assembly members are non-partisan (Adamtey, 2014).

- Although the local government system in Ghana is supposed to be bottom-up in its approach, by developing community plans from the unit committee level, the absence of funds at this level, means that development plans emanate from the top down, via the ruling party, through district assemblies (Natalini, 2010).

Uganda:

- In a similar fashion to Ghana, Uganda developed an idealized notion of the 'African Community' to support its populist non-partisan ideology of inclusive local community participation at the sub-national sphere (Crook, 1994).

- When Yoweri Museveni came into power in 1986 under the National Resistance Movement (NRM), a 'no-party' system, also known as the 'movement system' of government was adopted (Ribot, 2002).

- Under Uganda's 1993 constitution, the no-party system was entrenched and it gave every citizen the right to run for elected leadership which was based on individual merit (Singiza, 2014).

- In terms of Uganda's 1993 constitution, district councils formed the basis of local government and political parties were prohibited from interfering with any functions of the movement political system. In reality, there was very little difference between the movement political system and the ruling party (Singiza, 2014).

- After a referendum in 2005, Ugandans voted to adopt a multiparty system and the non-partisan elections came to an end Singiza (2014).

- Since this system of local government was set up, the ruling party has dominated district councils overwhelmingly, winning the majority of district council seats in comparison to opposition parties (Singiza, 2014).

Bangladesh:

- Bangladesh is an example of a country that has moved from non-partisan local elections, that have been in place since the country's independence, to partisan elections in an effort to strengthen democracy and accountability at the local level (Union Pradesh level) through political competition (Panday, 2019).
- Under the former no-party system, political parties would become involved informally in supporting non-partisan candidates at the local level. However, when there was a leadership failure at this level, political parties did not fully accept responsibility for mistakes that were made by local elected leaders (Panday, 2019).
- With the advent of partisan elections, there has been a deterioration in the service delivery system and corruption at the local level (Sarker and Nawaz, 2019).
- Deterioration in local government performance emanated from local MPs selling nominations for local government candidates to less capable candidates in order to strengthen their base at the local level. This prevented more capable candidates from being nominated (Panday, 2019).
- Another problem identified with partisan elections, was state capture by elites. Ruling party members with strong political support were favoured in senior government appointments at the local level. This affected service delivery because instead of responding to the needs of citizens, political factors came into play when deciding on the services to provide (Panday, 2019).

The South African ward committee system:

- Although South Africa's local government system operates within a partisan framework, a non-partisan approach is used , at this grassroots level in the election of the ward committee members (Modise, 2017).
- Ward committees link residents to municipal councils to promote democratic decision-making at the community/ward level. A non-partisan approach is utilised. The election of ward committee members and councillors is based on the principle of appointing residents to ward committees on merit, rather than party affiliation (Modise, 2017).
- In terms of the Municipal Structures Act (1998), ward committees have limited powers and are able only to advise and make recommendations to councillors on any matter affecting its ward (Smith and de Visser, 2009).
- Although ward committees lack decision-making powers, they have the ability to deepen democracy at the local level if they are chaired by competent ward councillors and are not undermined by party political agendas and if they are supported by municipal councils institutionally and materially (Piper and Deacon, 2009).
- In reality, ward committees are dominated by political parties rather than communities and are not supported materially or institutionally by local government administrations making them less effective in responding to local residents' needs (Piper and Deacon, 2009).

2. Decentralisation and non-partisan elections

Post-colonial trends in local government organisation

Razin (1998) points out that decentralisation was a governance approach used in many colonised countries to prolong colonial rule. For example, in Namibia, the utilisation of tribal forms of governance, such as tribal chiefs, was a strategy deployed by colonial powers to exert indirect control over the indigenous population. These traditional authority systems continue to hold enormous political, economic and social power in post-colonial societies today (Lechler and McNamee, 2016). Following independence, centralism in governance was the new governance model adopted in many newly independent states. This was in response to the negative perception towards local authority-structures that were seen as collaborators with colonial regimes. Centralised government was also adopted as a way of promoting unity and nation-building. In addition, because of the socialist roots of early post-independence states, belief in centralised control was perceived as the best approach to implementing large-scale development projects (Razin, 1998). Centralisation of the state as a governance strategy failed in most African countries and promoted a one-party political culture and cronyism that undermined democracy (Makara, 2017). Following failures with a centralised approach to governance decentralisation has subsequently been widely adopted in African states as a governance approach to facilitate development and inclusive government involving local communities (Makara, 2017).

Decentralisation is meant to facilitate development and accountability at the local level and a system that serves the needs and interests of citizens, incorporating citizen participation in local government decision-making. In this way decentralisation is meant to extend democracy to the local community level (Razin, 1998). However, Makara (2017) notes that decentralisation ironically is favoured by less democratic governments because such policies are used as cover to retain central control. As pointed out earlier, this was a strategy utilised by colonial administrations to maintain power. An important component of decentralisation at local government level is the ability of this sub-national sphere of government to make its own decisions and to have autonomy from the national level. Decentralisation tends to democratise and transfer power and therefore few central government actors want to implement it fully (Makara, 2017). Where it has been implemented more successfully (with local level autonomy), decentralisation has resulted in a local governance style that is inclusive and more responsive to the needs of local communities (Makara, 2017).

Only a few countries have attempted decentralisation through adopting a non-partisan model in the election of representatives at the local level whereby candidates are delinked from political parties for the purposes of elections. For example, all countries in southern Africa hold partisan local elections but most of these countries allow independent candidates and local traditional leader participation (Hartmann, 2004).

Figure 1: Candidature provisions for local councils

	Role of Political Parties	Formal Role of Traditional Leaders
Botswana	Independent candidates allowed	Reserved positions, quota defined by the ministry, their number should not exceed elected councillors
Lesotho	Independent candidates allowed	Quota with separate election for reserved seats
Malawi	Independent candidates allowed	All chiefs hold ex officio seats in local councils, but without voting powers
Mauritius	Independent candidates allowed. At village council elections no formal party affiliation	No traditional leaders
Mozambique	Independent candidates allowed	None[a]
Namibia	Only political parties and local political associations	Allowed as candidates in regional elections, but not in local elections.
South Africa	Independent candidates allowed	Quota of up to 10% of elected members.
Tanzania	Independent candidates allowed	None
Zambia	Independent candidates allowed	None
Zimbabwe	Independent candidates allowed	Reserved positions, number not fixed; alternatively may abdicate and run as ordinary candidates.

a   Local elections are only held for urban councils; the institutional arrangements at the local level thus keep rural populations in the hands of central state agents – and of traditional leaders.

The next section highlights examples from developing countries where a non-partisan political model at the local government level has been used as part of a decentralised approach to governance.

3. Examples of non-partisan elections at the sub-national sphere of government

Ghana non-partisan local elections

Ghana has had a turbulent political history marked by military takeovers. After independence and the creation of a one-party state under Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana experienced six different military regimes between 1966 and 1992. Notwithstanding these political changes, Ghana's current model of decentralised local government has persisted since the 1980's when it was introduced along with many other developing countries under a Structural Adjustment Programme, to reform the public sector (Zakaria, 2014).

In Ghana governance at the local level is through district assemblies. These cover metropolitan and municipal entities (Zakaria, 2014). When President Rawlings was in power between 1982 and 1992, he established a system of district assemblies based on the idea of community participation in local government and populist direct democracy (Crook, 1994). This system of local government is one of the few institutional structures that has survived since Ghana transitioned from a military takeover under the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) into a multi-party democracy in 1992 (Crook, 1994). Initially, it was expected that revolutionary

People's Defense Committees (PDCs) would be set up automatically by communities. Every community member would be included in a PDC Committee of the Village, Area or Town Council, similar to the National Resistance Movement (NRM) in Uganda (discussed below). However, Crook (1994) notes that Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), replaced the PDCs after Rawlings' military takeover in 1984. CDRs were closely aligned with the PNDC and identified as Rawlings loyalists under tight control of the PNDC (Crook, 1994).

District assemblies' main purpose continues to be to encourage local-level participation (down to the level of villages and communities) in development. The ideology underpinning this system is to 'give power to the people' (Crook, 1994). The model was based on the ideal of the village assembly in which all adults could participate (Crook, 1994).

Since a multi-party democracy was re-established with the passing of a new a constitution after 1992, elections have been closely contested between two main parties, the NPP (New Patriotic Party) and the NDC (National Democratic Congress) (Nyarko, Antwi and Antwi-Boasiako, 2019). Bob-Milliar (2012) notes that political patronage forms the basis of the current two-party dominated political system in Ghana. Political parties attract supporters not on the grounds of different ideological platforms, but as a route to political patronage. Party activists expect to be rewarded for their support before the outcome of an election is even determined (Bob-Milliar, 2012). This is unlike established traditional Western democracies, where supporters count on their parties to deliver on their campaign platforms after they have won elections (Bob-Milliar, 2012). Nyarko Antwi and Antwi-Boasiako (2019) note that political patronage is evident in the appointment of officials and permeates every level in government. The president has extensive powers, written into the constitution, to make public appointments.

District assemblies are by law 'non-partisan', in terms of which, neither the ruling party nor opposition parties are permitted to back candidates, through financial support or in political campaigns (Crook, 1994). In reality, this is not the case and members of district assemblies are partisan because of the way they are appointed and elected. Razin (2000) notes that the president has the power to appoint district chief executives, who head district assemblies. Although his nominations of district chief executives require confirmation of two thirds majority in district assemblies, his abilities to have his nominations appointed are strengthened by his power to directly appoint 30% of district assembly members[1]. In addition, besides the assembly members appointed by him, the balance of members elected to these assemblies are also linked to the ruling party. Ties to the ruling party of public officials at the local level are also evident in other ways. For example, the wages of local government officials are paid by the ruling party (Razin, 2000). Decentralisation is used as a means of ruling party control by co-opting local actors through offering them a role in the local government. For example, rural and urban elites are the one's employed in local government (Natalini, 2010). Crook, (1994) also notes that although there is partial democratisation under decentralised local government in Ghana, this sub-national sphere of government is still accountable to the ruling party.

Adamtey (2014) highlights that informal ties to the ruling party are powerful forces in diluting the non-partisan nature of district assemblies. The overlap between ethnic ties and political control is

---

[1] The balance of district assembly members is elected in a non-partisan way from the community level (Natalini, 2010).

the main example of this. Control of state power has shifted between various ethnic groupings in Ghana. For example, during the Nkwame Nkrumah years, the southern Akan groups were the dominant ethnic grouping in political control, whereas latterly, in the PNDC period, it was the Ewe-based ethnic groupings that were in control. For those in power, ethnic groupings are important in political decision-making and appointments because they promote trust and confidence in the belief that people in the same grouping will support and deliver for them (Adamtey, 2014).

A factor that dilutes the intention of nonpartisan elections in Ghana, is tied to resource limitations for elections of district assembly members. Contesting district assembly elections at this level is expensive and potential candidates have to fund their own campaigns in spite of the fact that assembly members are unpaid. Assembly members claim that political parties and influential people, secretly fund candidates and this method was used by chief executives to unseat incumbent members for opposeing them (Adamtey, 2014).

Decentralisation and the development impact in Ghana

In practical implementation terms, bottom-up people's participation in development has not been so successful in Ghana because of inadequate resources (Natalini, 2010). The grassroots planning process was meant to happen at the unit committee level. However, since members to the committees are not paid and are not always even elected or in place, district assemblies become the default level of government tasked with development planning including poverty reduction policies. District assemblies are directed by central government in this respect and therefore plans do not emanate from the ground up by the people, but from top down (Natalini, 2010).

Natalini (2010) and Crook (1994) both highlight the limitations of district assemblies in meeting citizens development needs at the local level. Crook (1994) notes that the size of wards which district assembly members represent can be large with population sizes of between 75,000 and 250, 000. Population needs in such territories may be diverse with differences between rural and urban areas. Natalini (2010) notes that the idea that representatives of district assemblies are serving the needs of homogenous communities in the areas they are representing is a fallacy. The diverse needs of these territories and multiple 'communities' within them, increases the service delivery demands. Crook (1994) notes that assembly members may be pressured by district secretaries' (the next level of government), to meet national level targets rather than first meeting the demands of communities at the local level. For example, district secretaries required assembly members to focus on meeting tax collection targets rather than focussing on local service delivery targets which would increase their popularity at the local level (Crook, 1994).

Uganda non-partisan local elections

Decentralisation in Uganda has its roots in violent political conflict since the country achieved independence from Britain in 1962. Decentralisation was a reaction to over centralisation of power between 1967 and 1986. This period of overcentralisation was marked by a decline in the rule of law, military government, civil wars and dictatorship. It was local communities that bore the brunt of this hardship and struggle for power over these two decades (Singiza, 2014). Political instability and violent takeovers over this period was experienced at the local level and citizens were subjected to an absence of basic and community services such as health care,

clean water supply and schools for their children (Singiza, 2014). When Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 under the National Resistance Movement that overthrew military dictator Idi Amen, a 'no-party' system (also known as the 'movement system') of governance was adopted as the approach to decentralisation and the model for governance to restore political stability and to promote unity following the war (Ribot, 2002).

Crook (1994) notes that in Uganda, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), like Ghana's PNDC regime developed an idealized notion of the 'African Community' to support their ideology of a non-partisan form of governance that would be based on inclusive local community participation. After Museveni's National Resistance Army came into power following the war, every Ugandan citizen was viewed as a member of the NRM, which was called a 'movement' rather than a political party and therefore every citizen was eligible to participate in elections for local community Resistance Councils. These were bodies at the base of the government structure which were used to elect the National Resistance Council in 1986. From 1987 onwards, the Resistance Councils became local government structures, indirectly appointing members up to the district level, whilst the National Resistance Council has become Parliament, elected on a no-party' basis (Crook, 1994).

In 1993 a new draft constitution was crafted after nationwide consultations (Uganda Electoral Commission[2]). In terms of the new Constitution of Uganda, district councils form the basis of local government and these structures had separate and distinct political and administrative powers from national government (Singiza, 2014). Makara (2000) argues that President Museveni's government was motivated to decentralise power in early 1990s because decentralisation was seen as an alternative to full political democratisation in Uganda.

In terms of the constitution, Singiza (2014, p. 268) lists four key principles of the political movement system (no-party system):

- Every citizen had the right to be involved in the decision making process;

- Transparency in the governance system, whereby every decision taken had to be justified and explained to citizens;

- Every citizen had the opportunity to access any leadership position;

- Candidates were elected based on individual merit.

In addition, the constitution prohibited political parties from performing any activities that would interfere with the Movement Political System. In reality, there was very little difference between the Movement Political System and the ruling party. Singiza (2014) argues that the Movement Political System was seen as a 'rival' to government, even-though there was very little difference between the NRM (as a movement) and the *de facto* one-party state. Non-partisan elections came to an end in 2005 when a referendum was held on the political system and Ugandans voted to adopt a system of multiparty governance (Ugandan Electoral Commission). However, this change was not genuine, but followed external pressures (including from the donor community) to change to a multiparty system (Singiza, 2014). Singiza (2014) notes that since the

---

[2] Source -Electoral Commission, date unknown

system of multiparty elections was implemented with the passing of The Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005, the ruling party has dominated district councils overwhelmingly, winning large majorities of district council seats in contrast to opposition parties.

Decentralisation and the development impact in Uganda

In Uganda Francis and James (2003) highlight that decentralisation at the local government level is in name only. There is little citizen participation at this level in the context of 'elite capture' where decisions and resources are allocated to community members favoured by the ruling party. Francis and James (2003) note that decentralisation was adopted for 'technocratic' and 'patronage' reasons. Technocratic reasons concerned the need to prioritse and set national development targets for example around poverty reduction. Whereas, patronage reasons utilised concepts of participatory planning, as a smokescreen in the context of limited resources and "state capture by the local elites", in decision making. In this situation, participatory planning was limited to "ritualised performance with little meaningful citizens' involvement" (Francis and James, 2003, p. 334).

 Makara (2000) notes that decentralisation was implemented mainly to appease international donors and citizens. Singiza (2014) notes that although a multi-party system was adopted in 2005, political pluralism is tolerated but not favoured in the election of district councils. A *de facto* one-party state remained the key characteristic of governance in Uganda and electoral outcomes of district councils indicate an overwhelming dominance of the ruling party as highlighted earlier.

Decentralisation has also not improved service delivery and is leading to growing disillusionment among citizens with this approach to government (Manyak and Katono, 2010). Local government in Uganda is responsible for the provision of a range of services, including: education, health care through hospitals and health centres; water supply and the provision and maintenance of road infrastructure. Agricultural development (though the provision of agricultural extension services and poverty alleviation fall within the remit of local government responsibilities (Manyak and Katono, 2010). However, with the elimination of the G-tax poll (because of its unpopularity with citizens) which was a tax that all Ugandan adults were required to pay, even if they were not employed, local government revenue was slashed by some 85% (Manyak and Katono, 2010). Central government did not step in to replace the balance of lost revenue and this resulted in local government operations and services coming to a virtual standstill (Manyak and Katono, 2010). Compounding the unsustainability of local government was the creation of new districts. This was undertaken to reduce conflicts by separating tribal and ethnic groups into districts with their own governments and to improve service delivery especially in marginalised rural areas (Manyak and Katono, 2010). However, the new districts are not economically viable and there is an added financial and administrative burden resulting from their establishment. Resources for their management are spread more thinly between new and old districts, reducing their effectiveness (Manyak and Katono, 2010).

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is an example of a country that changed from a non-partisan election system at the local level to partisan elections. This local government electoral reform marked the first time Bangladesh had undertaken such reform since independence (Sarker and Nawaz, 2019). The

adoption of this new policy was aimed to strengthen democracy and accountability at the local level through the introduction of political competition (Panday 2019). However, even when local elections were held with the non-partisan approach, political parties would become involved by informally supporting candidates. Under this system, political parties did not fully accept accountability for the mistakes that elected 'non-partisan' candidates made after election. For example, if they did something that was illegal. However, with partisan elections political parties would have to take responsibility and bear liabilities for nominated candidates (Panday, 2019).

When the ruling coalition government led by Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) amended the election regulations to allow partisan elections at the level of Union Parishad (UP) (the lowest tier of the village local government system), various problems have been identified (Sarker and Nawaz, 2019). Problems concern a deterioration of service delivery and corruption at the local level. Panday notes that in the 2016 UP election, there were many instances where local MPs (Member of Parliament) would sell nominations to non-deserving less capable candidates, to strengthen their base at the local level. This denied more capable candidates from being nominated. State capture by elites was also another problem identified and this affected the quality of service- delivery (Panday, 2019). Ruling party leaders with strong political support were being favoured in senior appointments of government at the local level (for example mayoral appointments). Service delivery was affected because instead of responding to the needs and demands of citizens at the local level, political considerations came into play in deciding the services to provide (Panday, 2019). Sarker and Nowaz (2019) suggest that the ruling party should rethink electoral reform along political party lines, to reduce the incidence of buying and selling nominations and factional conflicts within political parties that result from this.

4. An approach to promoting local democracy through the ward committee system in South Africa

The South African ward committee system has attempted to respond directly to the local development needs of communities and to promote democratic decision-making at the community/ward level, through a decentralised approach. The election of ward committee members is based on the principle of appointing residents to ward committees on merit, rather than party affiliation (Modise, 2017). In this system, ward committee members must be appointed in terms of their competence in relation to the scope of the work they perform in the ward committees rather than appointments based on party politics. Ward committee members are required to carry out their functions by focussing on the interests of people who live in the ward, rather than the political parties they may belong to (Modise, 2017).

A ward is a defined area with distinctive boundaries located in a metropolitan area or municipality in South Africa and is the lowest level of local government administration[3]. Ward Committees can have up to 10 members and are supposed to represent a wide variety of community interests. Wards meet regularly under the chairperson who is a ward councillor. In South Africa, there are two types of local government councillors, viz: those councillors who are elected through

---

[3] Civics Academy. https://www.civicsacademy.co.za/video/role-ward-committee/

Proportional Representation (PR) via party lists (they are called PR councillors), and are accountable to their political party and, ward councillors (Paradza, Mokwena and Richards, 2010). Ward councillors are elected directly by residents living in the ward they are representing. Ward councillors are not elected on the party ticket, but rather through community nomination. Ward councillors must receive 50 signatures of support from local residents in the ward (de Visser interview, 2021). Ward councillors are also able to stand for ward councillor elections as independent candidates or as representatives of political parties (Hartmann, 2004). In terms of the Municipal Structures Act (1998), ward committees have limited powers and are able only to advise and make recommendations to the councillor on any matter affecting its ward (Smith and de Visser,2009). Piper and Deacon (2009) in their research conducted in the Msunduzi municipality in KwaZulu-Natal highlight that although ward committees lack decision-making powers, they have the ability to deepen democracy at the local level if they are chaired by competent ward councillors and are not undermined by party political agendas and if they are supported by municipal councils institutionally and materially (Piper and Deacon, 2009).

The ward committee system has shown some limited success in encouraging citizen participation in decision making. Piper and Deacon (2009) note that in the case of the Msunduzi municipality, their research indicated that community members thought ward committees were a positive innovation and facilitated citizen involvement in council decision making at the municipal level. Ward councillors felt that their views carried more weight in council if they were supported by their ward committee. However, the Msunduzi case study highlighted that ward committees are often not implemented properly, and this affects their functions. They are dominated by councillors and political parties rather than by the community as a whole and are not supported adequately by municipal administrations to carry out their functions (Piper and Deacon, 2009).

5. References

Adamtey, R. (2014). *Deepening decentralisation through non-partisan district assembly system in Ghana.* Journal of Science and Technology, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2014), pp75-84 75. www.ajol.info/index.php/just/article/download/109938/99671

Bob-Milliar, G.M. (2012). *Political party activism in Ghana: Factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party.* Democratisation. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233438905_Political_party_activism_in_Ghana_Factors_influencing_the_decision_of_the_politically_active_to_join_a_political_party

Crook, R.C. (1999). *'No-party' politics and local democracy in Africa: Rawlings' Ghana in the 1990s and the 'Ugandan model'*, Democratization, 6:4, 114-138. https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/No%20party%20politics%20and%20local%20democracy%20in%20Africa_Crook%20(1999).pdf

Francis, P., James, R. (2003). *Balancing Rural Poverty Reduction and Citizen Participation: The Contradictions of Uganda's Decentralization Program.* World Development Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 325–337. http://courses.washington.edu/pbaf531/FrancisJames_UgandaContradictDecent.pdf

Hartmann, C. (2004). *Local elections and local government in southern Africa.* Institut für Afrika-Kunde, Hamburg. afrika spectrum 39 (2004) 2: 223 – 248

https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/10740/ssoar-afrspectrum-2004-2-hartmann-local_elections_and_local_government.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-afrspectrum-2004-2-hartmann-local_elections_and_local_government.pdf

Lechler,M., McNamee, L. (2016). *Decentralized Despotism: How Indirect Colonial Rule Undermines Contemporary Democratic Attitudes.* http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/14671466183522008/559-Marie-Lechler, M., .pdf

Makara, S (2018). *Decentralisation and good governance in Africa: A critical review*. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, Vol. 12(2), pp. 22-32. https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-full-text-pdf/0E5F1CA56067

Manyak, T., Katono, I (2011). *Impact of Mulitparty politics in Uganda*. African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236753904_Impact_of_Multiparty_Politics_on_Local_Government_in_Uganda/link/574ee98808ae789584d827cb/download

Modise,L.,J. (2017) *The notion of participatory democracy in relation to local ward committees: The distribution of power.* In die Skriflig 51(1). http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/ids/v51n1/38.pdf

Paradza, G., Mokwena,L., Richards, R . (2010). *Assessing the role of councillors in service delivery at local government level in South Africa.* Research Report No 125, Centre for Policy Studies. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Assessing-the-role-of-councillors-in-service-at-in-Paradza-Mokwena/fd18d372d14a3e147c89a1da9937fe1df9ec92b9

Panday, P., K. (2019). *Party-based local government election: pains and gains.*Daily Sun, 20 March. https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/378876/2019/03/20/Partybased-Local-Government-Election:-Pains-and-Gains

Piper,L.,Deacon, R. (2009). *Too dependent to participate: ward committees and local democratisation in South Africa.* LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES, 35(4): 415-433. *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233001709_Too_Dependent_to_Participate_Ward_Committees_and_Local_Democratisation_in_South_Africa*

Razin, E. (2000). *The impact of local government organization on development and disparities: a comparative perspective.* *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23542166_The_Impact_of_Local_Government_Organization_on_Development_and_Disparities_*

Ribot, J.,C. (2002). *African Decentralization Local Actors, Powers and Accountability.* UNRISD Programme on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Paper Number 8. https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/3345AC67E6875754C1256D12003E6C95/$file/ribot.pdf

Natalini, L. (2010). *The Role of Political Parties at the Local Government Level.* Africa Institute of South Africa. AISA Policy Brief Number 26. http://www.ai.org.za/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/11/No-26.-The-Role-of-Political-Parties-at-the-local-government-level.pdf

Nyarko, I., Antwi.K.E., Antwi-Boasiako,J (2019). *Partisan Politics and the Decline of Ghanaian Public Service Over the Past Two Decades.*
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3406371

Sarker.A.,E.,Nawaz, F. (2019). *Clientelism, Partyarchy and Democratic Backsliding: A Case Study of Local Government Elections in Bangladesh.* South Asian Survey 26(1) 70–91. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0971523119843692

Singiza, D.K. (2014). *Decentralisation in Uganda: A critical Review of its role in deepening democracy, facilitating development and accommodating diversity.* Doctor of Philosophy (Law), Faculty of Law, University of the Western Cape. http://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/handle/11394/5129

Smit,T.,de Visser,J. (2009). *Are ward committees working? Insights from six case studies.* Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape.
https://dullahomarinstitute.org.za/multilevel-govt/publications/ward-committt-pdf.pdf/view

Zakaria, H., B. (2014). *Performance Management and Local Government Administration in Ghana: The Case of the District Development Facility and the Functional Organisational Assessment Tool.* Doctor of Philosophy, University of Manchester. Institute for Development Policy and Management.
https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/54556740/FULL_TEXT.PDF

Acknowledgements

Suggested citation

About this report

This report is based on six days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).