How PDM Pillar 7 is anchoring governance, accountability

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Uganda's decentralisation framework continues to evolve as government institutions strengthen systems that ensure development programmes reach communities effectively. At the centre of this transformation is the Parish Development Model (PDM), a national strategy designed to shift millions of Ugandans from subsistence production into the money economy.

Within this framework, PDM Pillar 7, Governance and Administration, plays a critical institutional role in ensuring transparency, co-ordination and accountability across local governments.

The pillar is largely stewarded by the Ministry of Local Government, which oversees inspection, monitoring and support supervision of decentralised structures that implement the programme at district, sub-county and parish levels.

Historically, development planning in Uganda followed a largely centralised approach, where priorities were formulated at higher administrative levels before filtering down to communities.

PDM redefines that structure by repositioning the parish as the nucleus of planning, implementation and economic mobilisation. Under the programme, 10,589 parish savings and credit co-operative societies (SACCOS) have been capitalised to extend affordable credit to more than 3.18 million households, particularly the 30% of Ugandans who remain outside the formal money economy.

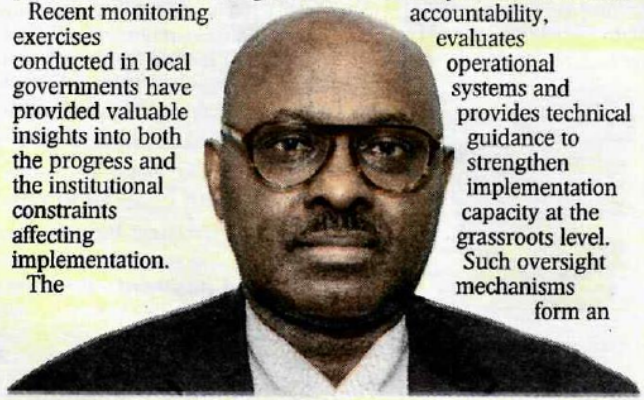
Through these financial platforms, households receive capital to invest in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and so on.

The design reflects a broader shift in policy thinking: development is increasingly seen as most effective when communities themselves drive production and enterprise growth, supported by governance structures that ensure proper accountability and co-ordination.

PDM Pillar 7, therefore, focuses on ensuring that the administrative machinery responsible for delivering the programme operates efficiently and transparently. To achieve this, the ministry conducts regular monitoring missions across districts and municipalities.

These inspections examine the functionality of key governance structures, including parish development committees, ward development committees and the operational capacity of parish chiefs and ward agents.

Recent monitoring exercises conducted in local governments have provided valuable insights into both the progress and the institutional constraints affecting implementation.



The supervision process involves close collaboration with local administrative leaders, including residential district/city commissioners, chief administrative officers, town clerks, sub-county chiefs and district technical teams.

Through this engagement, the ministry assesses financial accountability, evaluates operational systems and provides technical guidance to strengthen implementation capacity at the grassroots level.

Such oversight mechanisms form an essential pillar of Uganda's decentralisation policy, ensuring that fiscal transfers to local governments are effectively utilised and aligned with national development priorities.

By strengthening accountability systems, improving reporting structures and building capacity among local government officials, the ministry helps ensure that funds channelled through parish-level SACCOS translate into productive investments.

This governance architecture supports the broader PDM objectives, which seek to transform subsistence households into active participants in the formal economy.

The result is a model that integrates finance, production and governance within a single localised system, enabling communities to drive their own economic advancement while remaining accountable to national development frameworks.

Insights gathered during monitoring visits are consolidated through technical working group meetings, where stakeholders review implementation challenges and propose policy adjustments.

This mechanism allows government institutions to convert local experiences into actionable reforms that improve the programme's design and execution. In this, the Government ensures that PDM remains adaptive, responsive and aligned with the needs of the communities.

As Uganda continues its journey towards large-scale economic expansion, the success of this transformation will depend not only on financial investment, but also on the strength of governance systems that guide development at the parish level.

In this sense, the parish has evolved from a simple administrative boundary into a dynamic centre of economic organisation, one where accountability, community participation and local enterprise development converge to shape the future of Uganda's social-economic transformation agenda.

The writer is the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Local Government