

Another progressive approach of the Ugandan system is its gender sensitivity. It is government policy that there shall be +/- 30% of women on any local or central government structure or organ. However, attention needs to be drawn to the need to develop civic awareness programmes and the refinement and creating effective continual training and capacity building programmes.

There is no recognised conventional multi-party electoral system in Uganda. But the government has put in place an elaborate electoral process that operates from the cell to the municipal level, where the seats are contested as if the multi-party system was operative. The government commitment to decentralisation gives hope for the future in Uganda. At the rate development of the system is going, 20 years down the road, Uganda may be a very strong democracy to reckon with in Africa.

In Zimbabwe local government was set up in the 1900s (urban areas) and 1930s in the rural areas. Admittedly, the local, like the central government system during the colonial era, was racially segregative as was the case in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. However, the institution continued to be respected up to and after majority rule when it was democratised. The new government accepted the importance of local government. Rather than abandoning it, the new rulers sought to improve it starting with urban centres.

One of the first steps was its democratisation. This meant the enfranchising of the black majority who had no vote before. The development budget now had to cover both high (where most blacks live) and the low-density suburbs, which were predominantly white. In rural areas, the democratisation aimed at amalgamating African Councils hitherto based on chieftainship - to form district wide local authorities that were more viable. The second step in rural areas was the amalgamation of the District and Rural Councils. (Rural Councils catered for white commercial farmers outside urban areas). The new Rural District Councils cater for all people (+/-75% of the population). The exercise was completed in June 1993. The establishment of Rural District Councils was followed by another very important policy aimed at developing the infrastructure and capacity of Rural District Councils (the Rural District Councils Capacity Building Programme (RDCCBP)). The RDCCBP is funded by various donors that include SIDA, the World Bank, ODA (UK), etc.

Among the critical areas to be addressed by the RDCCBP are : capacity building, development (especially infrastructure), financial management and development planning. Though there still are some teething problems arising from inappropriate strategies adopted, the principle has been accepted that RDCs must be strengthened to ensure there is effective development in the rural areas of Zimbabwe.