

**Keynote Statement by the Honorable Charles N. Keenja (MP)
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at

**The Regional Workshop on Thematic Evaluation of IFAD's
Performance and Impact in Decentralizing Environments:
Experiences from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda**

Speke Resort Hotel, Munyonyo, Uganda, 10th March, 2005

Rt. Hon. Muganwa Kajura, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Service, Uganda

Hon. Prof. Tarsis Kabwegyere, Minister of Local Government, Uganda,

Hon. Mary Mugenyi, Minister of State, Responsible for Animal Industry, Uganda,

Mr. Jim Carruthers, Assistant President of IFAD,

Mr. Luciano Lavizzari, Director of IFAD's Office of Evaluation Secretary of IFAD,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Representatives from IFAD, FAO, WFP, EU, World Bank, ADB and UNOPS,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr, Chairman, I would like to thank the organizers of this Workshop for inviting me to speak at this Regional Workshop on the Thematic Evaluation of IFAD's Performance and Impact in Decentralizing Environments co-organised by the Government of Uganda and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Uganda for the hospitality accorded to us and for the arrangements which have made our participation and stay comfortable. Uganda provides an appropriate setting for this event. The Government and the people have made significant efforts in promoting decentralization, transparency and accountability leading to enviable achievements in overall social and economic development.

2. In 1972, Tanzania embarked on a nationwide programme which was intended to transform the national administration so as to give the people a greater say in the planning and control of development in the country. While launching the programme which was simply called “*decentralisation*”, the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere had this to say:

“..... we must face the fact that, to the mass of the people, power is still something wielded by others –even if on their behalf.

Thus it has gradually become obvious that, in order to make a reality of our policies of socialism and self-

reliance, the planning and control of development in this country must be exercised at local level to a much greater extent than at present. Our nation is too large for the people at the centre in Dar es Salaam always to understand local problems or to sense their urgency. When all the power remains at the centre, therefore, local problems can remain, and fester, while local people who are aware of them are prevented from using their initiative in finding solutions. Similarly, it is sometimes difficult for local people to respond with enthusiasm to a call for development work which may be to their benefit, but which has been decided upon and planned by an authority hundreds of miles away.

3. Mr. Chairman, I am aware that the Governments of our countries have always realised the need for some kind of decentralisation and they have taken steps of different kinds and magnitude in that direction with varying success. I am made to believe that of the three countries represented in this Workshop, the Republic of Uganda has had the greatest success in decentralising its administration.

4. The term ‘*decentralisation*’ is often surrounded by terminological confusion and as such, its important to have a working definition. Rondinelli 1981 defines decentralisation as the transfer of authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from a **higher** level of Government to an individual organisation or an agency at a **lower** level. Decentralisation is a process or an organisational change which occurs, at least in part, **as a result of conscious action**

by a government or a part of the government, but decentralisation can also be initiated or supported by organisations outside the government. Some donor agencies have played important roles in promoting decentralisation in our region and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is an outstanding example.

5. It is not my intention to go into the details of the various forms of decentralisation. Suffice it here to say that the form of decentralisation relevant to our discussion is the one which transfers authority to plan, to make decisions and to manage public functions as directly as possible to the people –a form known as **devolution**.

The Advantages of Decentralisation

6. Decentralisation has many advantages to the country the government and, most important, to the people. I will quickly skim through some of them:

- In the quotation from Mwalimu's launching speech of the decentralisation programme at the beginning of this presentation, Mwalimu alludes to the fact that '**power**' should be wielded by the people themselves and not on their behalf. Meaningful devolution of authority or power should restore it into the hands of the people. The problem does not lie with the intention but rather in the complexities of how it can

be done without adverse effects to development, poverty alleviation and the other ideals.

- Mwalimu also notes that the people understand their local problems and the urgency at which they would like them solved.
- Decentralisation can facilitate popular participation by the people in the planning, decision making and control of the development process thus enhancing democratic values in the community and as Mwalimu put it, increase the relevance of programmes to the problem of the people as well as the commitment of the people to their development activities and thus increasing their chances for sustainability.
- Under decentralisation, decisions are made and implemented at the local level. They can, therefore, be made quickly and changed in response to changes in the local situation resulting in more efficient and effective use of scarce resources.
- Decentralisation makes it possible to mobilise local resources, including manpower, locally available materials and local knowledge and innovation for development reducing dependence on limited central and local authority resources.

- Improve coordination of sectors.

Problems of Decentralisation

7. The advantages of decentralisation are many and desirable but the process of decentralisation is not all rosy.

- Decentralisation implies the transfer of authority, decision making and the control of resources from a higher level of administration to a lower level. Almost invariably, this has been met with stiff resistance which may frustrate the rate at which the process is implemented. Government bureaucrats are afraid of losing authority and control of resources and they have ready excuses in the laws and regulations which give them overall responsibility. Some Donor agencies have gone so far as to set up their own parallel administrative structures, staffed with technical and managerial staff from their headquarters, so that they can control activities and resources with the excuse of making it easier to prepare reports for headquarters.
- The process being hijacked before it reaches the lowest levels where the people are and revert to centralisation at the regional, district or ward level. Vertical coordination may also be lost together with the financial resources and technical expertise.

- The political implications of decentralisation must be carefully considered. Political will at the highest level is required for the process to have any chances of success. Such support will depend on other political considerations particularly the effects which the redistribution of political power may have. If those effects will be favourable and thus desirable, or if they will not threaten the existence of the political structure, They may be supported but if they threaten the existence of the political structures, They will most likely, be discouraged.
- Finally, decentralisation may cause difficulties in achieving other objectives of national importance, such as interregional equity, implementation of sectoral and national programmes and control of expenditure of national and donor funds.

8. Decentralisation is usually intended to speed up the rate of development and thus the improvement of the welfare of the people. Decentralisation may have a positive impact in achieving the objectives of participation, speed and flexibility of implementation and in intersectoral coordination. Decentralisation, therefore, can play an important role **in poverty reduction** and in creating a democratic, transparent and accountable system operated by the people themselves at district and community levels.

Resource Constraints

9. A Decentralisation programme require enhanced levels of resources, which invariably includes increased manpower, re-orientation and re-deployment of existing personnel. Shortage of manpower of the required quality and quantity is usually given as one of the reasons for centralisation of government administrations.

10. Manpower constraints affect decentralization in various ways. As already indicated, decentralization tends to generate demands for increased manpower, or at least for new types of manpower skills, and for the reorientation and, in some cases, physical relocation of existing staff. There are six main problems related to manpower, which are:

- The lack of administrative and managerial skills at regional or local level, including specific skills such as in finance and planning and, perhaps most important, general managerial ability;
- Inadequate numbers of technical staff at these levels and, in particular, their inexperience in making decisions and managing their own activities without constant support and supervision from their national headquarters;
- Lack of a tradition of teamwork at regional and local level;

- The reluctance of qualified staff to move out of the national capital, especially into the more isolated rural areas;
- The inability of extension staff and others based at the very local level to relate effectively to the local population and therefore to encourage participatory development activities; and
- Problems of role definition and communication between politicians and public (or local government) servants at regional and local levels.

11. Financial constraints are a major problem to decentralisation programmes. Empowering the people to make decisions on developmental issues which solve local problems is only meaningful if resources for implementation are available, otherwise the people become disillusioned and quickly lose interest in the programme. Again, shortage of financial resources can be used as a reason for centralisation.

12. My opinion is that decentralisation must be continued within available human and material resources. The same people and finances to be used under a centralised system should be relocated to the decentralised system and steps should be taken to fill in any gaps which may appear through manpower development, prudent allocation and use of resources and through resources accessed outside the normal

government budget. In any case, any decentralisation programme which is based on unrealistic levels of resource support is likely to run into difficulties.

13. In Tanzania, we inherited a local Government system which quickly failed to respond to the greatly enhanced demands for development. We abandoned it in 1972 and replaced it with the Decentralisation Programme alluded to earlier. It too failed because it had serious design weaknesses : it depended wholly on government funding, a fact which stifled local initiative and due to government inability to adequately finance every aspect, people became frustrated and disillusioned. There were shortage of manpower and such manpower as existed wielded power and made decisions according to government regulations rather than in response to local needs and problems. The Programme was replaced by the re-introduced Local Authorities in 1982 and for almost a decade now, we involved are in local government reforms which aim at devolving more authority, responsibilities and resources to the Local Authorities while at the same time enabling the Local Authorities to carry out their responsibilities. The process has been slow but a lot continues to be achieved.

14. I would like to pay tribute to IFAD in assisting Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly our three countries, in their efforts towards alleviating rural poverty. IFAD's approach to decentralization is consistent with our Government's

decentralized systems as it focuses, not only on government structures, but also on community based organizations, NGOs, civil society and the private sector where it is engaged in promoting community development.

15. Most of the programmes which the International Fund for Agricultural Development support involve their beneficiaries all the way from the planning stage to implementation and, in most cases, they are affordable and sustainable. In Tanzania, for example, some of the programmes, which have been mainstreamed in the decentralization process include the Participatory Irrigation Development Programme (PIDP), the Kagera Agricultural and Environmental Management Programme (KAEMP) and the Mara Farmer's Initiative Project (Mara-FIP). The programmes have contributed in building capacity of local government authorities and communities in planning, managing irrigation schemes, provision of extension services, marketing skills, access to credit, management of farmers' organisations and environmental management. Communities have also been equipped with skills for contract management in areas such as construction, operation and maintenance of irrigation schemes and construction of other types infrastructure. I commend IFAD for this strategic intervention and approach, which has contributed to the transformation of the lives of rural communities through poverty alleviation.

16. Mr. Chairman, the Thematic Evaluation undertaken by the Office of Evaluation is timely, because it draws attention to many issues in local governance that need further reflection and action. While Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda and others in the region have been promoting decentralisation of political and administrative authority for some time, there are still many areas that need additional discussion and elaboration to ensure that decentralisation truly becomes a key principle in development and in poverty alleviation.

TRAINING NEEDS

The Role of Training

17. Training should assist to alleviate some of the problems associated with the implementation and management of decentralised administrative systems in three ways:

1. Improving understanding of the process of decentralisation among those involved in planning and implementing decentralisation policies and programmes;
2. Providing information and reorientation for those involved in, or affected by, a decentralisation programme, prior to – and in the early stages of its implementation; and

3. Meeting the medium – and long-term manpower needs of decentralised administration by expanding and reorienting existing training programmes.

Autonomous Support of Local Authorities

18. As already mentioned, decentralisation is a political process which involves changes in the distribution of power/authority or influence. In this sense, it is very different from the cooperative movement which aims at uniting people so that they can mobilise their resources to meet needs of economic nature. International organisations such as IFAD and other donor agencies may carry out development in a decentralised manner either by using existing structures or by setting up their own decentralised structures provided that they do not conflict with existing political authorities. Much as central governments may wish to share power with Subordinate Structure, it is doubtful as to whether any government will feel comfortable with the programme being managed by an '*autonomous organisation*' out of its control. Governments may accept the autonomy of rural Communities within limits set in the relevant legal instruments but not otherwise. This is a sensitive issue which should be handled with care and with due attention to the political situation in each country.

19. In conclusion, decentralisation is a complicated process which aims at addressing equally complicated issues. Its

content and extent will differ from country to country depending on the environment in each country and the objectives for decentralisation.

Thank you for your attention.

**I wish you a successful Workshop and an
Enjoyable stay in Uganda**

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TANZANIA.