

# 1 **Strengthening Ethical Values and Accountability in Local Governance: Citizen-Led** 2 **Strategies in the Greater Kigezi Sub-Region of Uganda**

## 3 **Abstract**

4 Concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of ethical and accountability systems in public  
5 administration in Uganda. Addressing these challenges requires examining the role of citizens in  
6 promoting ethics and accountability in public service delivery and exploring the strategies to  
7 strengthen ethical values and accountability in local governments. This study sought to establish  
8 the role of citizens in enhancing ethics and accountability in public service delivery and to  
9 explore strategies for promoting ethical values which in turn can strengthen accountability  
10 mechanisms in local governments. The study was guided by the following research questions:  
11 What is the role of citizens in enhancing ethics and accountability in public service delivery?  
12 What strategies can help promote sound ethical values so as to strengthen accountability  
13 mechanisms in local governments? The methodology combined both qualitative and quantitative  
14 approaches that included surveys and interviews with local government technical and political  
15 officials as well community leaders. Findings reveal that while local government initiatives  
16 often fall short in involving citizens adequately, empowering communities through education,  
17 sensitization and active participation in decision-making processes is identified as a key strategy  
18 for fostering ethical values and reinforcing accountability in local governance. The study also  
19 underscores the importance of reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies and enhancing collaboration  
20 between local governments and civil society organizations. In conclusion, the study advocates  
21 for strengthening citizen engagement mechanisms, promoting transparency, and addressing  
22 structural barriers that hinder accountability in Uganda's local governance systems.  
23 Recommendations focus on: empowering citizens to combat corruption; strengthening political  
24 accountability in local governments; limiting the use of discretionary powers; salary review and  
25 harmonization; adopting the Malaysian anti-Corruption model and reviewing Institutional  
26 frameworks for fighting corruption.

27 Key words: Citizens, Ethics, Accountability, Local Governments and Uganda

## 28 **Introduction and Background**

29 Ethics is a branch of philosophy that studies ideal human behavior and ways of well-being,  
30 providing a systematic approach to understanding, analyzing, and distinguishing matters of right  
31 and wrong, good and bad, and relationships among sentient beings (Sharma et al 2023). Ethical  
32 determinations are applied through formal theories, approaches, and codes of conduct developed  
33 for professions and religious bodies. The meanings of related concepts have varied over time.  
34 For example, Aristotle believed that ideal behaviors were practices leading to eudemonia (a high  
35 level of happiness or well-being), whereas Emmanuel Kant argued that ideal behavior involved  
36 acting in accordance with one's duty (Steven et al. 2014). For Kant, well-being meant having the  
37 freedom to exercise autonomy, being treated with dignity, and thinking rationally (Rich, 2016).

38 Dubnick (2005) traces the origins of the concept of accountability to the emergence of royal  
39 legal traditions in England before the rise of the modern bureaucratic state. Mulgan (2003) and  
40 Bovens (2005) acknowledge this history but argue that for a long time, accountability was

41 primarily used in financial accounting. It gained broader significance with the New Public  
42 Management (NPM) reforms of the 1980s. Initially embedded within the idea of responsibility,  
43 accountability later became an independent concept, even outweighing responsibility in  
44 importance and scope (Sinclair 1995; Mulgan 2000). As a moral issue, accountability requires  
45 the exercise of ethical virtue, which has been a central theme in intellectual thought since ancient  
46 times. Ethics is regarded as a set of moral principles guiding good and bad conduct (Freedman,  
47 2002). The need for high ethical standards has been widely recognized, with Confucius  
48 advocating for ‘the way’ (Hansen, 2007), emphasizing compassion and open-heartedness.

49 From the 1990s many developing countries instituted a variety of reforms to revitalize their  
50 public sectors as a way of responding to the demands for effective and efficient service delivery  
51 by citizens and donor agencies. The most striking public administration reform was the adoption  
52 of the decentralization system of public administration by many countries of the developing  
53 world. According to Faguet (2003) and Martinez-Vazquez and McNab (2003), the  
54 decentralization system of public administration gained a lot of momentum to the extent that  
55 80% of developing countries had pursued decentralization policy by the year 2000. Okidi and  
56 Guloba (2006) define decentralization as the transfer of planning, decision making and  
57 administrative authority from the central government to the local government a view earlier  
58 echoed by Prud’homme (2003) who voiced that decentralization entails a system of government  
59 in which power is granted to local authorities or a process by which governance is moved from a  
60 centralized to a decentralized administrative system.

61 In Uganda, decentralization took shape in 1986 following the ascendance of the National  
62 Resistance Movement (NRM) to power (Mucunguzi, 2010). Prior to this, the country’s  
63 administrative machinery had been weakened by political crises, including military rule (1971–  
64 1979), short-lived governments (1979–1980), disputed elections (1980), and civil war (1981–  
65 1986). The new government initiated decentralization by establishing local councils at district,  
66 sub-county, parish, and village levels to promote local empowerment and improved service  
67 delivery. These reforms were reinforced by the Local Councils Statute (1993), the Constitution  
68 (1995) and the Local Governments Act (1997), which transferred political, fiscal, and  
69 administrative authority to local governments. Local governments gained the power to levy  
70 taxes, pass development plans and budgets, deliver public services, and make byelaws.  
71 Meanwhile, the central government retained functions related to policy formulation, technical  
72 support, and service inspection (Nsibambi, 1998).

73 The decentralization policy aimed to promote ethical and accountable governance by  
74 empowering local governments to manage their own affairs (Nshakira et al 2024). It sought to  
75 transfer power to local governments, reduce the workload on central government officials,  
76 enhance citizen participation in decision-making, and achieve good governance. Additionally, it  
77 aimed to improve accountability and effectiveness in service delivery, foster local ownership of  
78 programs, free local managers from central constraints, enhance financial resource collection,  
79 and strengthen councils' capacities to plan and manage services.

80 From 1997, public service agencies at the local level were expected to adopt private-sector  
81 management techniques, modernize public administration through information and  
82 communication technologies, and strengthen transparency and accountability in procurement and

83 financial management. Capacity-building initiatives were introduced to reinforce public servant  
84 ethics (Katusiimeh et al., 2024). The Leadership Code Act (2002) was enacted to enforce ethical  
85 conduct among public leaders by requiring them to declare incomes, assets, and liabilities while  
86 establishing an accountability enforcement mechanism.

87 Despite these efforts, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of ethical and accountability  
88 systems in public administration in Uganda (Mesharch et al. 2022). Reports indicate weaknesses  
89 among public servants in local governments, affecting service delivery despite increased  
90 financial resources (Basheka, 2014; Grossman & Michelitch, 2014; Olok & Ssentongo, 2020;  
91 Buye, 2021; Galukande-Kiganda et al., 2022; Mucunguzi & Katabaazi, 2023; Katusiimeh et al.,  
92 2024; Mucunguzi, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires examining the role of citizens in  
93 promoting ethics and accountability in public service delivery and exploring strategies to  
94 strengthen ethical values in local governments.

95 This study seeks to establish the role of citizens in enhancing ethics and accountability in public  
96 service delivery and to explore strategies for promoting ethical values and strengthening  
97 accountability mechanisms in local governments. The key research questions guiding the study  
98 are: What is the role of citizens in enhancing ethics and accountability in public service delivery?  
99 What strategies can help promote sound ethical values so as to strengthen accountability  
100 mechanisms in local governments?

## 101 **Methodology**

102 The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative  
103 research methodologies within a descriptive research design. The quantitative approach  
104 facilitated the collection of structured data from local government authorities in the selected  
105 districts responsible for accountability. These respondents included district councilors for  
106 political accountability, bureaucrats for administrative accountability, and officials from finance  
107 departments for financial accountability. The qualitative approach was used to obtain in-depth  
108 insights from key informants, including district chairpersons, district speakers and their deputies,  
109 resident district commissioners (RDCs) and their deputies, chief administrative officers (CAOs),  
110 chief finance officers (CFOs), heads of departments (HODs), and district-based civil society  
111 leaders.

112 The research was conducted in the Greater Kigezi Sub-Region, covering the districts of Kabale,  
113 Rukiga, Rubanda, Kanungu, and Kisoro. The study targeted three key categories of respondents:  
114 technical officials, political leaders and community representatives. The key informants included  
115 five district chairpersons, five district speakers, five deputy district speakers, five RDCs or their  
116 deputies, five CAOs, twenty-five HODs and five CFOs (sourced from Local Government  
117 staffing lists). The survey respondents, who were randomly selected, included ninety-eight  
118 district councilors (from Local Council Registers), three hundred ninety-four technical staff  
119 (from Local government staffing lists) and one hundred accessible community members that  
120 included civil society leaders, district internal security Officers (DISOs), sub-county internal  
121 security officers (GISOs), leaders of youth, women, and People with Disabilities (PWDs)  
122 councils and religious leaders.

123 A representative sample size was determined using Slovin's formula:

124  $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$  where  $n$  represents the sample size,  $N$  is the  
125 total population and  $e$  is the margin of error. Based on this formula, a sample of 558 respondents  
126 was drawn from the total population of 697.

127 The study employed probability sampling in selecting local government respondents (both  
128 political and technical staff) to ensure representativeness. Non-probability sampling (purposive  
129 sampling) was used to identify key informants with expertise in ethics and accountability.

130 Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data collected  
131 through structured questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences  
132 (SPSS), which facilitated descriptive and statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as  
133 frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data.  
134 Qualitative data obtained through key informant interviews were analyzed thematically.  
135 Responses were transcribed, coded, and categorized into emerging themes to provide deeper  
136 insights into governance, ethics, and accountability in local governments. Direct quotes from  
137 participants were used to support key findings.

138 To ensure ethical research processes, the study adhered to established research ethics guidelines.  
139 Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Kabale University Research  
140 Ethics Committee (REC). Informed consent was sought from all participants, who were assured  
141 of their right to voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any stage without any  
142 consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by ensuring that responses were  
143 not linked to specific individuals. The collected data were securely stored and used solely for  
144 academic purposes. Furthermore, efforts were made to minimize bias and maintain objectivity  
145 throughout the research process.

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## 148 **Presentation and Interpretation of Findings**

### 149 **Technical Staff Responses on the Role of Citizens in Enhancing Ethics and Accountability** 150 **in Public Service Delivery**

151 This section presents findings based on responses from technical staff regarding the role of  
152 citizens in enhancing ethics and accountability in public service delivery, as illustrated in Table  
153 1.

154 **Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Technical Staff Responses**

<b>Role of Citizens in Enhancing Ethics and Accountability</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>DK (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev.</b>
The local people demand accountability from their	31.1	35.9	11.2	11.2	10.8	2.34	1.31

elected leaders

The local people demand accountability from the technical staff	20.3	38.2	12.7	15.9	12.7	2.62	1.31
The masses are fully aware and sensitized on how to demand services from their leaders	12.7	29.5	21.9	16.3	19.5	3.00	1.32
Government has put the local people at the center of fighting corruption	13.5	20.3	24.3	18.7	23.1	3.17	1.35
The local people bribe their local leaders to get services	27.5	23.1	22.3	13.5	13.5	2.62	1.36
The citizens usually report public officers who solicit bribes	19.9	28.7	19.9	18.3	13.1	2.76	1.32
Local governments call citizens to attend planning and budget sessions	22.7	31.9	16.3	17.5	11.6	2.63	1.31
Local governments call citizens to attend accountability meetings	9.6	23.1	25.5	21.9	19.9	3.19	1.26
Citizens fully participate/understand allocated funds for service delivery	8.8	23.9	25.1	19.5	22.7	3.23	1.28
Government has enhanced citizens' capacity to fight corruption	12	25.1	23.9	24.3	14.7	3.04	1.25
Local governments have empowered local citizens to fight corruption	15.1	24.7	28.3	18.3	13.5	2.90	1.25

155 **Source:** Primary Data, 2023

156 The data reveals that technical staff generally believe that citizens demand accountability from  
157 their elected leaders (Mean = 2.34), suggesting that public participation in governance is  
158 significant. However, uncertainty exists regarding whether citizens demand accountability from  
159 technical staff (Mean = 2.62) and whether they are fully aware of their rights to demand services  
160 (Mean = 3.00).

161 The study also shows mixed perceptions on the government's role in positioning citizens at the  
162 forefront of fighting corruption (Mean = 3.17), with concerns that local people resort to bribery  
163 to access services (Mean = 2.62). Similarly, findings indicate skepticism about whether local  
164 governments involve citizens in planning and budgeting sessions (Mean = 2.63) and  
165 accountability meetings (Mean = 3.19).

166 Overall, these findings suggest that while some citizens engage in accountability processes, their  
167 involvement in fighting corruption is not well institutionalized. Local governments must strengthen their  
168 mechanisms to empower citizens in demanding transparency and ethical governance. As one senior  
169 technical official observed "*Citizens play a crucial role in demanding accountability, but many still lack  
170 awareness of their rights and the avenues available to report misconduct. Strengthening public  
171 sensitization and ensuring citizen participation in planning and budgeting processes will enhance  
172 transparency and service delivery.*"

173 **Political Leaders' Responses on the Role of Citizens in Enhancing Ethics and Accountability in**  
 174 **Public Service Delivery**

175 This section presents findings based on responses from political leaders regarding the role of citizens in  
 176 enhancing ethics and accountability in public service delivery, as presented in Table 2.

177 **Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Political Leaders' Responses**

Role of Citizens in Enhancing Ethics and Accountability	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DK (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
The local people demand accountability from their elected leaders	47.7	16.9	10.8	16.9	7.7	2.20	1.39
The local people demand accountability from technical staff	29.2	26.2	18.5	15.4	10.8	2.52	1.34
The masses are fully aware and sensitized on how to demand services	24.6	23.1	27.7	13.8	10.8	2.63	1.29
Government has put local people at the center of fighting corruption	29.2	16.9	33.8	9.2	10.8	2.55	1.29
The local people bribe their local leaders to get services	43.1	27.7	3.1	16.9	9.2	2.21	1.39
The citizens usually report public officers who solicit bribes	33.8	20.0	26.2	12.3	7.7	2.40	1.28
Local governments call citizens to planning and budget meetings	27.7	23.1	30.8	9.2	9.2	2.49	1.25
Local governments call citizens to accountability meetings	24.6	16.9	32.3	12.3	13.8	2.73	1.33
Citizens fully understand how much is allocated for service delivery	20.0	18.5	29.2	20.0	12.3	2.86	1.29
Government has enhanced citizens' capacity to fight corruption	10.8	16.9	36.9	16.9	18.5	3.15	1.22
Local governments have empowered local citizens to fight corruption	13.8	15.4	35.4	16.9	18.5	3.10	1.27

178 **Source:** Primary Data, 2023

179 Political leaders perceive that citizens hold elected officials accountable (Mean = 2.20),  
 180 reinforcing the notion that civic engagement is strong at the political level. However, their ability  
 181 to hold technical staff accountable is seen as weaker (Mean = 2.52).

182 Moreover, findings indicate that corruption remains a challenge, with citizens often bribing local  
 183 leaders to access services (Mean = 2.21). Some progress is observed as citizens report public  
 184 officers soliciting bribes (Mean = 2.40) indicating a level of civic empowerment.

185 On the other hand, uncertainty prevails regarding whether citizens are fully aware of how to  
 186 demand services (Mean = 2.63) and whether government and local authorities have empowered  
 187 them in anti-corruption efforts (Means = 3.15 and 3.10, respectively). This suggests that while

188 there is some citizen engagement, there is still a significant gap in institutional support to  
 189 enhance their role in ethics and accountability within local governance.

190 According to one chairperson local council V, "*Citizens can be willing to demand accountability*  
 191 *but are not knowledgeable and some have less confidence to challenge leaders. Without proper*  
 192 *sensitization and support from government institutions, their role in fighting corruption remains*  
 193 *limited.*

194 **Strategies for Promoting Sound Ethical Values in order to Strengthen Accountability**  
 195 **Mechanisms in Local Governments**

196 The second objective of this study was to devise strategies for promoting sound ethical values to  
 197 strengthen accountability mechanisms in local governments. Three categories of respondents –  
 198 community leaders, technical staff, and political staff (councilors) – were requested to provide  
 199 their suggestions. Their responses are presented below.

200 **Community Leaders' Responses**

201 Table 3 presents the findings from community leaders on strategies for enhancing ethical values  
 202 and accountability in local governments.

203 **Table 3: Community Leaders' Responses on Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values**

<b>Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>NS (%)</b>	<b>DK (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev.</b>
Empower citizens for effective accountability	60.1	25.9	8.7	4.6	0.8	1.60	0.884
Sensitize citizens on their roles and responsibilities	56.3	26.6	8.7	6.8	1.5	1.70	0.989
Reduce bureaucracies in anti-corruption efforts	41.8	37.3	12.5	4.9	3.4	1.90	1.020
Instill good morals in society to fight corruption	46.8	36.1	12.2	3.4	1.5	1.76	0.901
Recognize the link between collapsed societal values and corruption	46.8	33.8	12.5	3.0	3.8	1.83	1.010

204 *Source: Primary Data, 2023*

205 Community leaders strongly agreed that empowering citizens is the most critical strategy (Mean  
 206 = 1.60). They highlighted that empowered citizens are better equipped to understand local  
 207 government operations and hold their leaders accountable. Sensitization of citizens (Mean =  
 208 1.70) was also emphasized, as a lack of awareness of rights and responsibilities often hinders  
 209 accountability efforts. Indeed according to one community leader who also doubles as a religious  
 210 leader, "*an informed and empowered community is our first line of defense against corruption.*  
 211 *When citizens understand their rights and responsibilities, they ensure leaders remain*  
 212 *accountable*". Furthermore, they stressed the importance of instilling good morals (Mean = 1.76)  
 213 and revisiting societal values to combat corruption (Mean = 1.83). One key respondent, a head  
 214 teacher of a primary school emphasized "*the need to introduce the subject of ethics, molarity and*  
 215 *citizenship as a key examinable subject at the primary school level to instill good morals and*  
 216 *patriotism*". Additionally, respondents pointed out that the multiple bureaucracies involved in

217 anti-corruption efforts can create inefficiencies (Mean = 1.90), leading to a lack of clear  
 218 accountability.

219 **Technical Staff Responses**

220 Table 4 presents the perspectives of technical staff regarding strategies for enhancing ethical  
 221 values and accountability.

222 **Table 4: Technical Staff Responses on Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values**

Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	DK (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
Empower citizens for effective accountability	61.8	29.9	2.8	3.6	2.0	1.54	0.872
Sensitize citizens on their roles and responsibilities	59.4	31.9	6.8	1.6	0.4	1.51	0.728
Reduce bureaucracies in anti-corruption efforts	47.4	34.7	12.4	4.0	1.6	1.77	0.924
Instill good morals in society to fight corruption	50.2	33.1	13.9	2.0	0.8	1.70	0.840
Recognize the link between collapsed societal values and corruption	52.6	27.5	12.0	3.2	4.8	1.80	1.080

223 *Source: Primary Data, 2023*

224 Technical staff respondents reinforced the earlier findings, emphasizing the importance of citizen  
 225 empowerment (Mean = 1.54) and sensitization (Mean = 1.51). They also recognized the  
 226 inefficiencies created by multiple bureaucracies (Mean = 1.77) and stressed the need to instill  
 227 moral values in society (Mean = 1.70). Furthermore, they highlighted the role of societal values  
 228 in shaping ethical behavior (Mean = 1.80). This finding aligns well with views from one senior  
 229 local government technical official. This is what he had to say when asked about the strategies  
 230 for enhancing ethical values and accountability *"When citizens are well-informed and*  
 231 *empowered, they become watchdogs of public resources, making it harder for corruption to*  
 232 *thrive. Strengthening moral values and reducing bureaucratic red tape are equally critical in*  
 233 *fostering accountability".*

234

235 **Councilors' Responses**

236 Table 5 presents the perspectives of councilors on strategies for promoting ethical values and  
 237 accountability in local governments.

238 **Table 5: Councilors' Responses on Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values**

Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values	SA (%)	A (%)	NS (%)	DK (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
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Empower citizens for effective accountability	60.0	21.5	7.7	9.2	1.5	1.71	1.056
Sensitize citizens on their roles and responsibilities	56.9	26.2	10.8	4.6	1.5	1.68	0.954
Reduce bureaucracies in anti-corruption efforts	55.4	26.2	10.8	4.6	3.1	1.74	1.035
Instill good morals in society to fight corruption	52.3	30.8	12.3	4.6	0.0	1.69	0.865
Recognize the link between collapsed societal values and corruption	49.2	29.2	16.9	3.1	1.5	1.78	0.944

239 *Source: Primary Data, 2023*

240 Councilors echoed similar sentiments as the other groups, emphasizing citizen empowerment  
241 (Mean = 1.71) and sensitization (Mean = 1.68) as key strategies. They also acknowledged the  
242 need to streamline bureaucracies (Mean = 1.74) and the importance of moral values in fostering  
243 ethical behavior (Mean = 1.69). The role of societal values in mitigating corruption was also  
244 recognized (Mean = 1.78). These quantitative findings are completed by the qualitative findings  
245 from interviews. According to one local councilor “*empowering citizens with knowledge and*  
246 *resources is the most effective way to ensure accountability in our local governments. When*  
247 *people understand their roles and demand transparency, leaders are compelled to act ethically.*”

## 248 **Discussions**

### 249 **Role of Citizens in Enhancing Ethics and Accountability in the Public Sector**

250 Study findings indicate that local citizens play a significant role in demanding accountability  
251 from their elected leaders, and civil society organizations have empowered communities in the  
252 fight against corruption. This engagement suggests a promising future for anti-corruption efforts,  
253 as local citizens frequently interact with service providers and can hold them accountable.

254 However, the findings also reveal a critical gap: citizens are generally unable to demand  
255 accountability from technical staff. Unlike political leaders, technical staff operate with less  
256 public scrutiny, either due to limited interaction with citizens or the lack of public knowledge on  
257 how to hold them accountable. Consequently, this leaves communities vulnerable to unregulated  
258 decision-making by technical personnel.

259 Furthermore, the government has not adequately positioned citizens at the center of anti-  
260 corruption efforts. Instead, the fight against corruption is largely driven by institutional  
261 mechanisms, sidelining the potential contributions of citizens. This exclusion partly explains the  
262 persistence of corruption, as many citizens do not clearly understand their role in curbing  
263 unethical practices. As a result, instances of bribery and misconduct often go unreported, as  
264 people are unaware of their responsibilities in promoting ethical governance.

265 The study also highlights the lack of citizen involvement in planning and budgetary processes at  
266 the local government level. Many citizens are neither invited to planning and accountability  
267 meetings nor informed about budget allocations for public services in their communities. This

268 information gap prevents them from effectively monitoring the implementation of government  
269 programs and tracking public expenditures.

270 These findings suggest a systemic failure in integrating citizens into governance and  
271 accountability initiatives. These findings are in line with studies done by Kakumba (2010);  
272 Mwesiwa (2021); and Kanyamurwa (2023).

### 273 **Strategies for Promoting Ethical Values and Accountability in Local Governments**

274 Findings indicate that citizen empowerment is the most effective strategy for promoting ethical  
275 values and accountability in local governments. When citizens are well-informed about their  
276 rights and the mechanisms of governance, they can effectively demand transparency, challenge  
277 unethical behavior, and hold leaders accountable for their actions. However, for empowerment to  
278 be meaningful, it must go beyond rhetoric and be supported by institutional frameworks that  
279 facilitate citizen engagement in governance processes.

280 Sensitization emerged as the second most effective strategy for promoting ethics and  
281 accountability. The findings suggest that a significant number of citizens fail to demand  
282 accountability not because they are unwilling, but because they lack awareness of their rights and  
283 responsibilities. This gap highlights the importance of targeted civic education programs that  
284 demystify governance processes and provide citizens with the tools to actively participate in  
285 oversight. Local governments, civil society organizations, and the media can play a critical role  
286 in bridging this knowledge gap by disseminating information on budget allocations, service  
287 delivery expectations, and complaint mechanisms. Additionally, leveraging technology – such as  
288 mobile-based reporting platforms and social media – can enhance citizen engagement and real-  
289 time monitoring of public service delivery.

290 The erosion of societal values was frequently cited as a root cause of unethical practices and  
291 corruption in local governance. Participants emphasized that fostering a culture of integrity must  
292 begin at an early age, with schools and religious institutions playing a central role in instilling  
293 moral values. Ethical leadership training for public officials, community leaders, and youth  
294 organizations can further reinforce the importance of honesty, responsibility and public service  
295 ethics. Furthermore, introducing rewards and recognition for whistleblowers and exemplary  
296 leaders who uphold integrity can serve as an incentive for ethical behavior in governance.

297 Another key finding points to inefficiencies in the existing anti-corruption framework due to  
298 bureaucratic redundancies. Uganda has multiple oversight bodies – including the Inspectorate of  
299 Government (IGG), the Auditor General (AG), the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID),  
300 the State House Anti-Corruption Unit, the Anti-Corruption Court, and the Public Accounts  
301 Committee (PAC) – each tasked with addressing corruption. While these institutions play a  
302 critical role, the overlap in mandates has created bottlenecks and inefficiencies in enforcement.  
303 Study participants recommended streamlining these agencies to eliminate duplication of efforts  
304 and improvement of coordination. Assigning clear roles and responsibilities to each institution  
305 would enhance accountability mechanisms, ensuring faster investigation and prosecution of  
306 corruption cases.

## 307 **Conclusions and Recommendations**

308 The findings from this study indicate that both central and local governments have largely  
309 overlooked the involvement of citizens in the fight against corruption and accountability  
310 initiatives. This highlights a significant gap in the battle against corruption, as its success is  
311 deeply dependent on citizens' active participation in planning, budgeting, and accountability  
312 meetings within local governments. Such involvement helps citizens understand their roles and  
313 responsibilities in upholding good governance principles and ensuring accountability.

314  
315 Several strategies have been identified as crucial in promoting sound ethical values and  
316 accountability in local governments. These strategies include citizen empowerment,  
317 sensitization, and instilling of good morals within society. Of these, citizen empowerment is the  
318 most effective. Empowering citizens enhances their capacity to comprehend local government  
319 operations, enabling them to hold their leaders accountable. However, the fight against  
320 corruption and the improvement of accountability measures are also hindered by bureaucratic  
321 complexities. Streamlining anti-corruption agencies by reducing role duplication is critical to  
322 advancing ethics and accountability in Uganda's public administration.

### 323 **Recommendations**

324 Based on the findings and lessons learned from this study, the following recommendations are  
325 proposed:

#### 326 **1. Strengthening Political Accountability in Local Governments**

327 Local government councilors and other elected officials should regularly update citizens  
328 on the proceedings of council meetings. This will help keep the public informed about  
329 developments within their local governments, enabling them to hold their leaders  
330 accountable. Additionally, the Ministry of Local Government should play a central role in  
331 building the capacity of local government councilors, ensuring they are equipped to  
332 effectively monitor government projects and align them with approved budgets.  
333 Currently, many councilors lack the ability to understand and track project  
334 implementation and financial allocations.

#### 335 **2. Limiting the Use of Discretionary Powers**

336 In consultation with relevant ministries, the Ministry of Local Government should work  
337 towards limiting the discretionary powers of public officers in local governments. Clearly  
338 defining the circumstances under which discretion can be applied in public work will  
339 help minimize its misuse of public office for personal gain, fostering ethical practices and  
340 improving accountability. This can be achieved through reviewing key policies, such as  
341 the Constitution, the Local Government Act, and the Leadership Code.

#### 342 **3. Salary Review and Harmonization**

343 To enhance good accountability practices and reduce corruption in the public sector, the  
344 government should establish a salary review commission to evaluate and harmonize  
345 appropriate pay (salary and allowances) for public servants. Current salary structures  
346 appear inadequate in relation to the high cost of living, leading public officers to resort to  
347 unethical practices to meet their financial needs. A salary review would reduce the  
348 temptation to divert public resources for personal benefit and discourage false  
349 accounting.

#### 350 **4. Adopting the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Model**

351 The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) model serves as an effective  
352 example of tackling corruption. The MACC operates with the oversight of five  
353 independent bodies, ensuring the integrity of the commission and the protection of  
354 citizens' rights. The declaration of assets by public officials under the MACC has proven  
355 to be a powerful tool in combating corruption in Malaysia by promoting transparency and  
356 accountability. In contrast, Uganda's declaration of income, assets, and liabilities under  
357 the Leadership Code has largely been ineffective, serving only as a "paper tiger" in the  
358 anti-corruption effort because of the unsystematic nature of various anti-corruption  
359 agencies.

#### 360 **5. Reviewing Institutional Frameworks for Fighting Corruption**

361 There is a need to review and strengthen the mandates of various institutions tasked with  
362 fighting corruption in Uganda's public sector. Currently, there is significant overlap  
363 between agencies, such as the CID Police and the Inspector General of Government  
364 (IGG), leading to confusion and inefficiency. Streamlining these institutions and  
365 clarifying their roles will enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts.

#### 366 **6. Strengthening Citizen Participation in Governance Processes**

367 While citizen engagement is recognized as a cornerstone of accountability, findings  
368 indicate that many local governments still operate in a top-down manner, with limited  
369 direct citizen involvement in planning and budget processes. To address this gap, local  
370 governments should institutionalize participatory governance frameworks that allow  
371 citizens to contribute to decision-making processes. Holding regular public hearings,  
372 ensuring accessible grievance redress mechanisms, and promoting community-led social  
373 audits can enhance the role of citizens in ensuring ethical governance. Furthermore, the  
374 enforcement of access-to-information laws can empower citizens with the necessary data  
375 to scrutinize government performance effectively.

#### 376 **7. Role of Religious Institutions in Instilling Morality**

377 Finally, religious institutions should play a pivotal role in promoting moral values within  
378 society. By emphasizing ethics and integrity through their sermons, religious leaders can  
379 positively influence public attitudes towards corruption and accountability.

380 In sum, empowering citizens, streamlining anti-corruption institutions, and fostering  
381 transparency and accountability are vital steps towards reducing corruption and enhancing good  
382 governance in Uganda's public sector. The active participation of citizens, alongside reforms in  
383 institutional frameworks and policies, is essential in ensuring sustainable improvements in  
384 ethical conduct and accountability at all levels of government.

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