

DECENTRALISATION IN AFRICA: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF UGANDA'S EXPERIENCE

H Ojambo*

SUMMARY

Since the rise to power of the Movement government under the leadership of Yoweri Museveni in 1986, Uganda has largely been show-cased as an emerging democracy on the continent. Among other things, Museveni's regime has been acclaimed for the restoration of periodic national elections, the making of the Constitution and the overall promotion of democratic governance, most especially through the adoption of a decentralised system with a commendable institutional and legal framework. Decentralisation is believed to promote service delivery at the local level, accountability for government resources by local leaders, and the involvement of the masses in local planning and the implementation of government programmes. It is now over twenty years since decentralisation was adopted as a system of government but the quality of service delivery and the accountability for government resources at the local level remains just as deplorable as the extent to which the masses are involved in the planning and implementation of government programmes in their localities. This paper examines the challenges that inhibit the realisation of the noble objectives of decentralisation, notwithstanding the apparently impressive institutional and legal framework.

KEYWORDS: Uganda, decentralisation, democratic governance, government resources, planning

* Henry Ojambo. S.J.D. & LL.M., University of Toronto. Lecturer, Makerere University; Partner, M/s Ojambo & Ojambo Advocates, Kampala, Uganda, hojambo@law.mak.ac.ug. The author extends appreciation for research assistance to Ms. Barbra Nahone Ajambo. This paper immensely benefited from comments made at the conference organised by the Africa Law Association (ALA) in cooperation with the Max Planck Institute (MPI) on "Legal Transformation in North Africa and Decentralisation in Africa" at Heidelberg, Germany.