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The Role of Access to Information in Deepening Good Governance in Rural Communities in Uganda: A Case Study of the Ssesse Islands, Kalangala District.

This research sought to examine the role of access to information in deepening good governance in the Ssesse Islands, Kalangala District. It intended to establish whether the people in these Island communities are aware of their right of access to public information, and whether they have the capacity to use this information for purposes of promoting good governance in the district. The research studied people's experiences and challenges in accessing information as well as leaders' experiences and challenges in releasing and disseminating this information. The research dwelt more on the capacity of the people to use information because it directly determines people's demand and leaders' compliance to principles of good governance. The researcher explored the available alternative avenues that facilitate the accessibility and dissemination of information alongside the district initiatives, for purposes of comparison in effectiveness and efficiency.

The research design adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection with questionnaires and in-depth interviews as the key research instruments. The study was carried out in the Ssesse Islands in Kalangala district and targeted 104 respondents. Key categories of respondents were District leaders, Civil Society leaders, Village leaders, and Community members. This study found out that the level of awareness on the right of access to information, as well as the level of literacy among the communities in Kalangala is very low, and, therefore, hindering their capacity to access and use information to promote good governance. There is also limited will among the leaders to release or disseminate public information, in addition to inadequate resources to facilitate the dissemination of public information. This research recommends that more sensitisation should be carried out among the communities and their leaders on the right of access to public information. It also recommends that Functional Adult Literacy programmes be promoted as well as encouraging parents to take children to school, to reduce the illiteracy levels among the population. Local governments should also devise ways of increasing budget allocations to the information sector to facilitate dissemination of public information.

Key Words: Information, Good Governance, Rural Communities, Kalangala District