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Nutrition Planning at the District Level in Uganda: Challenges and Expectations

by

Francis BYEKWASO*, Roselline NYAMUTALE** &
Emer MATHEW***

KEYWORDS. — Nutrition Planning; Decentralized Planning; Local Actors; Participation; Social Learning.

SUMMARY. — Malnutrition remains a common problem in Uganda, particularly among young children. Under decentralization, resource allocation to nutrition activities has increased through direct support to district-based programmes by both the central government and international development agencies. Efficient and equitable use of resources is however impeded by poor planning at the district and sub-district level. The main problems are related to inadequate analysis of nutritional problems, lack of integration of nutrition interventions into overall district development plans, failure to prioritize interventions, lack of effective guidelines in planning and inadequacy of staff skills necessary for participation of the local actors in planning. A study was carried out between 1996 and 2000 to examine the factors that influence decentralized planning and, based on the findings, suggest activities for improving planning at the district and sub-county level.

The research involved the adaptation of common planning tools/approaches to the decentralized context at district and sub-county level. The study made three important contributions to decentralized planning: (a) identification and documentation of the main practices in decentralized planning; (b) development of a conceptual framework for decentralized planning; (c) development of a method for planning at the district and sub-district level. This paper presents an overview of the research and the subsequent application of the research results under practical field conditions.

* Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, National Agricultural Advisory Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Kampala (Uganda).

** Agricultural Management Specialist, District Development Support Programme (IFAD), Agricultural Component, Hoima and Kibaale Districts (Uganda).

*** District Director of Health Services, Hoima District (Uganda).

1. Introduction

Uganda is one of the countries of East Africa where malnutrition remains very common, particularly in young children. Infant mortality is high. The 1999 report on "The State of the World's Children" showed that Uganda's infant mortality rate was 86 per 1,000 live births in 1997, and under-five mortality was 137 per 1,000 live births. Malnutrition is a major contributing factor to mortality and morbidity.

The Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and international agencies are well aware of the problem, and numerous projects are undertaken in the areas of public health, agricultural development, supply of cheap credit to the poor and creation of income generation activities. In spite of numerous interventions, malnutrition remains a common problem in Uganda, particularly among young children and the rural poor. Decentralization has increased the allocation of funds to sectors that have a direct bearing on nutrition improvement, *i.e.* health services (OKUONZI & MACRAE, 1995, PARIYO 1999) and agricultural extension. Efficient and equitable use of resources is however impeded by poor planning at the district and sub-district level.

A study was conducted to examine the factors that influence decentralized planning and, based on these findings, action was proposed for improving the design of decentralized nutrition interventions. The specific research hypotheses were:

- Current decentralized planning practices in Uganda do not allow the integration of the priority concerns of the people involved in planning at the district and sub-district level;
- The lack of an organizational framework to plan for nutrition in the district contributes to poor design of nutritional projects;
- A comprehensive and participatory approach compatible with the approach developed by the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp in Belgium (LEFEVRE & BEGHIN 1991, LEFEVRE 1999, LEFEVRE *et al.* 1999) is applicable at the district level in the formulation of district nutrition plans and the design of development projects;
- The application of such a method will contribute to improving nutrition intervention planning and development;
- The application of such a method will contribute to the rationalization and strengthening of development planning at the district level in Uganda.

Two lines of work were undertaken to test these hypotheses:

- Retrospective case studies to examine the main factors that influence decentralized planning in Uganda;

- Prospective studies to adapt common planning tools/methods to the decentralized context in Uganda.

2. Case Studies

In order to understand how decentralized programmes are planned and the perception of local actors related to planning, this study investigated three decentralized programmes: the Mukono District Plan of Action for Children, the Rakai District Development Programme and the Mubende District Plan of Action for Nutrition. The objective of the case studies was to understand both the technical and social aspects of decentralized planning.

2.1. PROJECT PROFILES AND FORMULATION

- *Mukono District Plan of Action for Children*. The programme's overall strategy was aimed at strengthening the capacity of government and NGOs at sub-county and district level to plan and implement interventions that effectively targeted families and communities on health and nutrition, environmental sanitation and water, basic education, child protection, and economic policy and improved human welfare.
- *Rakai District Development Programme* began in 1992 as a decentralized programme contributing to the overall development of the district through supporting priority projects, especially planning and management, capacity building, health and nutrition, primary education, and feeder roads construction.
- *Mubende District Nutrition Action Plan* was part of the overall national development strategy to emphasize nutrition as a core in district development. The experiences and lessons learned from the exercise were to be used for replication of the strategy in other districts in the country. A participatory approach was followed at all the stages of the plan formulation during 1994-95.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION AND CASE-STUDY FINDINGS

Information on how the three projects were formulated was assembled from documents (inception reports, progress reports, and monitoring and evaluation reports), discussions between the author and project officials, focus groups with project beneficiaries, key informant interviews and self-admin-

istered questionnaires. The case studies established that, in many respects, decentralized planning practices fall short of meeting the expectations of local actors. The extent to which the current practices meet the local criteria is illustrated in table 1.

In all the three cases, institutional set-up for planning at sub-county was lacking. In particular, technical staff at sub-county did not have basic know-how in planning, especially in problem analysis, collection and compilation of basic data and record keeping. From the findings, some courses of action were suggested to strengthen institutional capacity for decentralized planning: skills needs assessment to identify vital skills required for planning at district and sub-county level; adoption of appropriate participatory approaches by district institutions at all levels; setting up mechanisms that ensure that sub-county development committees are functional; further decentralization of skilled personnel to the sub-county to match additional roles and responsibilities created by decentralization.

3. Prospective Studies: Development of a Conceptual Framework and Systematic Steps and Procedures for Decentralized Planning

The study took the form of an action research carried out on three programmes: Masindi District Food Security and Nutrition Plan, Pakanyi Sub-County Development Plan and Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO) Development Programme. The aim of this phase of research was to examine how the planning instruments could be applied in the light of the existing institutional capacity for planning under the decentralized context in Uganda. No influence was exerted on the district departments or institutions to provide extra resources that would ordinarily not be available under routine planning. Specifically, the purpose of the action research was to identify aspects in which the Comprehensive Participatory Planning and Evaluation (CPPE) approach was suitable for decentralized planning.

- *Formulation of Masindi District Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan.* The objective of the study was to test the suitability of the CPPE tools for nutritional assessment and the design of nutritional interventions in a decentralized context. This was done through a quantitative and qualitative nutrition survey followed by the selection and prioritization of interventions. The author stayed in the rural setting for over four months and had an opportunity to interact with different actors involved in planning at district and sub-county level. This case improved our understanding of

Table 1
Fulfilment of local criteria by existing planning practices

Planning criteria	Mukono	Rakai	Mubende
Analysis and conceptualization of the problems prior to data collection	III	III	I
Linkage of planning to policy-making	IV	IV	II
Rationalization of data collection and utilization, with emphasis on existing data	III	II	III
Prioritization of interventions using local criteria	IV	IV	IV
Rationalize time and cost of planning	III	III	III
Cost-effectiveness analysis of interventions	IV	IV	IV
Effective knowledge and skills of local actors	III	III	II
Effective integration of nutritional concerns into development plans and programmes	IV	IV	II
Flexibility and complementarity with other planning methods	III	II	II
Methods and tools that are simple and clear to local actors	II	III	II
Strong intersectoral collaboration and integrated planning	II	I	II
Genuine participation of local actors in planning	IV	II	II

I: criteria fully fulfilled; II: criteria moderately fulfilled; III: criteria poorly fulfilled; IV: criteria not fulfilled.

decentralized planning and the insights obtained provided important inputs into the subsequent development of planning tools.

- *Formulation of Pakanyi Sub-County Development Plan.* The objective of the study was to test the provisional method by applying it to the formulation of the Pakanyi Sub-County Development Plan. The focus of the study was to test the suitability of the tools in development planning, especially the integration of nutritional concerns into development activities at the local level. The exercise consisted of workshops conducted at Pakanyi sub-county headquarters, facilitated by the author and technicians from the district headquarters. The workshops were followed by a desk exercise to finalize the writing of the plan before it could be submitted to the local council at sub-county level.
- *Formulation of UWESO Development Programme.* The objective of the study was to test the provisional method on a project that is implemented by an NGO, *i.e.* UWESO. Table 2 summarizes the various processes of the action research undertaken in each of the three programmes.

Table 2
Programmes formulated and the various stages of the action research

Steps and procedures of the action research	Masindi	Pakanyi	UWESO
Linking policy to planning		✓	✓
Analysis of the determinants of household food security and nutritional problems	✓		
Analysis of development problems of the sub-county		✓	
Determination of data needs	✓	✓	
Data collection through a complementary nutrition survey	✓	✓	
Selecting interventions	✓	✓	
Prioritization of interventions	✓	✓	
Integration of nutrition outcomes into development plans; plus cross-cutting issues — gender and environment		✓	✓
Systematic analysis and differentiation of programme inputs, activities/processes, outputs and outcomes	✓	✓	✓
Identification of indicators		✓	
Identification of external factors			✓

3.1. DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS OF PROSPECTIVE STUDIES

Data collection methods included self-administered questionnaires, key informant interviews, direct observations by the author and document reviews. From the findings of the action research, the three following new elements were identified for integration into the CPPE:

- *Policy analysis at the local level.* The use of the method would strengthen understanding of policies and decision-making at the district and sub-district level.
- *Integration of nutrition into development planning.* The technique proved useful in identifying the effects of development activities on nutrition. Using this technique, it is possible to identify nutritional outcomes of programmes that are primarily not targeted for nutritional improvement. This is an effective way of ensuring that the effects of such programmes are monitored. The technique can be applied at project design or later at project review. In doing so, planners will ensure that the interventions selected will improve the nutritional status of target groups. It is considered that the technique is applicable to the integration of other cross-cutting concerns, such as gender and environment, into development programmes.

- *Focus on social learning as an integral part of planning.* It was found necessary to consider how the application of the method influences people's attitudes, knowledge, skills and management practices.

3.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DECENTRALIZED PLANNING

The conceptual framework is a theoretical basis to guide planning at district and sub-county level. The conceptual framework developed by the current study contains five elements:

- *Technical assistance* is necessary to improve the skills of local actors in problem analysis, data collection and analysis, and policy-making. Technical assistance should, among others, aim at improving the local actors' knowledge and skills in planning. The implication is that approaches, which enhance a continuous learning-by-doing process, should be adopted since they foster sustainable utilization of skills acquired from technical assistance.
- *The contribution of local actors to planning* should be based on their ability to contribute to problem analysis, information generation and policy-making. This ensures that the local actors' skills and experiences are put to rational use at the district, sub-county and the village level. The study shows that district planners follow traditional approaches that are too technical, non-participatory and not integrated.
- *Analysis of problems.* Analytical tools need to meet local planning needs. Of necessity is the training of district planners to acquaint them with analytical tools that are applicable to emerging problems that were not foreseen decades ago when the common planning methods were developed. How, for instance, does gender analysis (MOSER 1993) fit into the Logical Framework Approach?
- *The management information system* should be continuously strengthened through improved data quality and availability as a result of planning events. This implies that data accumulation by experts and from routine planning and implementation should be seen as part of overall efforts to enrich the management information system for the various sectors. The case studies revealed that district management information systems functioned inadequately.
- *Policy analysis at the local level.* The study found that many interventions were designed without correlating them to relevant policies at both central and local government levels. Participatory planning increases people's understanding of the local situations, and this understanding enables them to question a number of policies.

4. Evaluation of the Method

The method was evaluated continuously during its development through action research. The evaluation aimed at assessing whether the objective of the study to contribute to the improvement of decentralized planning was achieved. The planning needs identified by local actors at the start of the research process guided the formulation of the evaluation questions, analysis of responses and interpretation of results. The main evaluation questions are summarized in table 3.

At the end of each phase of research, instruments were administered to different actors to obtain their perception and practical experiences regarding

Table 3
Evaluation questions

1. Was the causal analysis tool effective in leading to a correct problem diagnosis?
2. Did the analysis result in improved programme design?
3. Was the policy analysis tool effective in leading to a correct policy analysis?
4. Did the use of the tool lead to improved linkage of planning to policy-making?
5. Simplicity of the tool, *i.e.* the skills required to use the tools (implication for continued use of the tools).
6. Did the method contribute to the rationalization of data collection and utilization?
7. Did the method contribute to the strengthening of the district management information system?
8. Were the prioritization criteria objective?
9. What was the reaction of the participants to the use of criteria?
10. Is the ranking technique simple to apply?
11. Was the time adequate to complete the planning exercise?
12. If planning workshops are expensive, how to reduce the costs?
13. What skills were acquired?
14. Who acquired the skills?
15. Were the acquired skills beneficial to the programme or design?
16. How does the method enhance the integration of nutritional concerns into development plans and programmes at district and sub-county level?
17. How can the effects of development programmes and policies on the nutritional status of the population be monitored?
18. How is the method compatible with the methods commonly used in decentralized planning?
19. How is the method compatible with the LogFrame (Logical Framework Approach) and the ZOPP (Ziel Orientierte Projekt Planung = target-oriented project planning)?
20. How is the method compatible with the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method?
21. How does the method enhance intersectoral collaboration and integrated planning?
22. Was participation achieved?
23. How can participation be improved further?
24. Did participation contribute to improving the design of the programmes and plans?

Table 4
Summary of evaluation procedures used

Evaluation method	Prospective studies		
	Masindi Nutrition Plan	Pakanyi Development Plan	UWESO Development Programme
Evaluation questionnaire	90	22	93
In-depth interviews	10	nil	nil
Focus groups	5	nil	2
Observation	✓	✓	✓

the suitability of the method in addressing their local planning needs. Information was collected from different respondents through focus group discussions, interviews of key informants, self-administered questionnaire and direct observations made at the various phases of the action research. The main evaluation procedures that were followed are presented in table 4.

5. Evaluation Findings and General Discussion

The evaluation demonstrated various ways in which the application of the method improved the design of decentralized planning, including the design of nutrition interventions.

5.1. STRENGTHENING DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The application of the method contributed to the rationalization and strengthening of development planning in several ways:

- *Development of integrated sector plans at district level:* responses of local actors who participated in the analysis of the factors that affect the utilization of health services in Masindi District revealed that district health services planning was poor. The district health management team was not able to “see the big picture” of district health problems, due to lack of effective tools for comprehensive analysis and integration of all the elements of health services. The team tended to focus on health units instead of the entire health services. The use of the causal analysis approach to analyse health problems revealed the comprehensive picture of health sector issues in a global way. This enabled the health sector management team to visualize what a district health sector plan should entail.

- *Articulation of data needs in the process of programme design.* The case studies showed that planners often pay too much attention to quantitative data collection, resulting in low use of qualitative techniques. Secondly, the Masindi case showed that the use of the method improved the local actors' skills in data collection analysis. This was a significant contribution towards improving the district management information system. These benefits suggest that a more process-oriented approach be adopted, and particularly allocate sufficient time to enable local staff to learn.
- *Integration of nutritional concerns into development plans and programmes:* one of the greatest contributions of the study to advancing nutrition and development planning is the elaboration of simple and workable techniques to integrate nutritional objectives into development plans and programmes (BEGHIN 1983). In the Pakanyi development plan, for instance, the effects of the various interventions on nutrition were identified during the formulation of the plan. This ensured that actions to address negative effects of the development plan on nutrition were identified and integrated in the plan. In the case of the UWESO Programme, nutritional outputs, outcomes and indicators had not been identified at the initial project design stage. The application of the method in the start-up workshops ensured that nutrition processes and outcomes were identified and contained in the work plan, including relevant monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators. Thus, in both cases — Pakanyi and UWESO — nutritional concerns were effectively integrated into development activities. In general, the application of the method strengthens decentralized planning in several ways: preparation of sectoral and development plans is improved by adopting a comprehensive approach to analysing problems; district health management information system is strengthened; district health management teams obtain a better view of the health services delivery system; local actors obtain an opportunity to contribute to the elaboration of development plans and programmes; the dominant role of experts in development planning is reduced; key development concerns, such as nutrition, are effectively integrated into the mainstream development planning.
- *Creation of demand for policy analysis at the local level:* the case studies revealed that district planning and policy-making were not linked, especially due to: (a) lack of information on policies; (b) poor definition of policy outcomes; (c) lack of effective tools for policy analysis; (d) attitude that policy-making is only for the central government; (e) tendency to confine policy-making to economic analysis (*e.g.* cost-benefit analysis). The involvement of the local people at Pakanyi Sub-County in analysing

policies (sanitation, education, and agricultural extension) was innovative, introduced as a result of this research. Participants analysed the impact of selected policies at the local level. They were able to identify policy outcomes as they perceived them. This was a departure from policy analysis by economists who focus on a "so-called" scientifically sound method of assessing cost-benefit analysis or social impact. The method provides simple operational tools that are useful in gaining knowledge and insights about policies that affect people in their real life. Therefore, the research led to an increased understanding of policies and formulation of plans that are congruent with policies, and to the realization by local actors that it is possible to analyse the effects of policies at the local level.

- *Social learning*: participatory planning is a social activity that brings several stakeholders together. The study showed that a planning event results in several benefits, especially learning by participants, team building and attitudinal changes on the part of local actors. The tools developed in this research were found to be suitable for social learning, which is a key element to the empowerment process. The method shifts the emphasis from planning as a technical exercise to a people-centred development initiative in which the people's values, benefits and concerns are put at the centre (KORTEN 1980, BRINKERHOFF & INGLE 1989, World Bank 1997).

5.2. IMPROVING THE DESIGN OF NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS

The Masindi Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan addressed a wide range of concerns that affect the entire food system, *i.e.* agricultural, health, economic, institutional and behavioural aspects, including both biological and sociological aspects. Important nutritional deficiencies such as micronutrient deficiencies were considered but were not given prominence. The focus was mainly on intermediate outcomes such as improved growth monitoring, increased access to safe water, improved personal hygiene, increased involvement of the people in development initiatives and increased household food availability, *i.e.* processes and intermediate outcomes that are discernible at the local level (BEATON 1982, LEFEVRE & BEGHIN 1991). The use of a combination of tools, the participation of local actors, and effective technical guidance were instrumental in identifying relevant processes, outputs and outcomes. This underscores the importance of selecting development indicators that are more sensitive to nutritional interventions than traditional impact indicators (LEFEVRE *et al.* 1999, PAPPAS 1998).

The main features of the method that ensure improved design of nutritional interventions are: analysis of problems is comprehensive, participatory and

takes into consideration the context and the needs of local actors, thus ensuring that the selection of interventions considers the social, economic and biological aspects of malnutrition; technical disease investigation is based on indicators that are agreed upon by main local actors, including technicians and potential programme beneficiaries; policy analysis brings into focus policy concerns that deserve to be addressed in the project design; emphasis on identifying processes, outputs and intermediate outcomes increases the plausibility of the interventions having a positive influence on impact. For instance, in nutritional microprojects targeting income generation, the expected nutritional outputs and outcomes need to be identified at the design stage.

5.3. FURTHER RESEARCH

The evaluation of the method points to the following areas of research:

- *Effectiveness of nutritional interventions*: nutrition improvement is a priority concern for the government of Uganda and development agencies have responded by supporting a number of programmes targeting nutrition. The amount of resources is often huge. The effectiveness of the interventions is usually not analysed at the design stage, nor is post-project evaluation carried out. Thus, there is an information vacuum concerning the effectiveness of nutritional interventions. Studies are needed to determine the effectiveness and benefits of nutritional interventions.
- *Effects of development policies and programmes on nutrition*: frequently, many development programmes do not have specific nutritional objectives although they influence the income and nutritional status of target groups. The nutritional benefits of such programmes are usually mentioned in reports, without any factual evidence. Yet, programmes may have negative nutritional effects. There is a need to study the nutritional impact of development programmes. This could be incorporated into regular government planning as a requirement for the approval of projects by the District Council.
- *Social learning aspect*: the application of the method suggests that the “human” factor is the most important determinant of the success of a planning process. When people come together in a workshop to formulate a plan, they expect to interact in various ways, establish working norms and learn new things. Often, the technicality enshrined in the method (tools and techniques) does not recognize these social or interactive aspects. There is a need to investigate social learning perspectives that optimize both planning and learning.

- *Simple ready-to-use planning materials*: this concerns specific issues raised by different actors on the need to develop simple ready-to-use planning materials on the main tools. The main concern is to develop effective, yet flexible, planning materials (manuals, guidelines, etc.) that provide details on how to use the above tools at the local level. The materials should cover topics such as effective communication in planning, adult learning, social learning perspective of participatory planning, etc. The materials would be useful to experts, field technicians and development workers.

6. Conclusion

The objectives of this research were (i) to examine factors that influence decentralized planning and (ii) to develop effective techniques/tools for improving the design of decentralized nutrition interventions. The research results, as discussed above, do provide practical and innovative techniques/tools that enhance decentralized district planning when applied at district or sub-county level. The five main research innovations are discussed below.

- *Development of a conceptual framework for decentralized planning*. In doing so, the linkages or interactions among the elements of the method are explained. In particular, the conceptual framework considers that actor-oriented factors (their skills, knowledge and attitudes) have a great bearing on project design. Influencing actor perspectives implies adoption of a system approach to decentralized planning.
- *Practical technique for integrating nutritional concerns into development programmes*. Literature abounds on the integration of nutritional considerations into development programmes (ACC/SCN 1991, FAO 1983). Given that nutrition is a cross-cutting issue, the emphasis is the integration of nutritional (or environmental and gender) concerns into development rather than specific interventions. Integrating nutritional considerations into development programmes ensures that nutritional effects of development activities are monitored in the implementation. However, ways of achieving this are rarely mentioned. The present study provides a simple practical procedure. The technique is effective in identifying nutritional outcomes of interventions that primarily do not target nutrition improvement. This approach broadens the scope for improvement of nutritional status by monitoring the effects of development activities on the nutritional status of the people affected by the programme.

- *Development of planning steps into self-containing modules.* The development and presentation of the method into self-contained modules is a departure from “single workshop” planning approaches. The modules are not a rigid format to be applied at the same time. They only constitute a package of tools and procedures from which to select what to use as demanded by the nature and scope of planning.
- *Policy analysis.* The analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) of a policy or a programme provides insights on what interventions are necessary. The method makes it possible to bring policy-making into the planning arena. The experiences in the three prospective studies show that policy analysis is feasible at the local level, and it leads to improved programme design.
- *Social learning dimension.* This experience with the research suggests that one of the keys to genuine empowerment is social learning. The method provides an effective tool for social learning at the local level. The main emphasis is that planning is a highly iterative process with varying influences on the actors and the entire system. In addition to the traditional characteristics of the ITM approach (participation, comprehensiveness, flexibility and implementation-oriented), it was found necessary to consider how the application of the method influences people’s attitudes, knowledge, skills and management practices. By integrating these considerations, the method makes a significant contribution to the improvement of existing decentralized planning practices in which the concerns and expectations of the local actors were not emphasized.

7. Practical Application of the Research Results

Over the last four years since the conclusion of this research, government and development partners in Uganda have continued to support initiatives that aim at strengthening decentralized service delivery. A major element in the improvement of service delivery is the increase in stakeholder participation in planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects/programmes. Consequently, the results of this research have been found to have practical relevance to a number of planning, monitoring and evaluation contexts in Uganda. To-date, the research results have been applied in three ways: planning (design) of interventions or strategies at the district level (Hoima and Kibaale); development of M&E Systems for National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and the Decentralization Programme at Makerere University; evaluation of UWESO Development Programme.

7.1. FORMULATION OF NUTRITION STRATEGIES FOR HOIMA AND KIBAALE DISTRICTS

The author was requested by the two districts to guide the district technical planning team in formulating comprehensive nutrition strategies. In both cases, he provided technical guidance to the planning process through facilitating i) a three-day multistakeholder workshop in each district to analyse the causes of malnutrition. Participants were drawn from various district departments, including health, agriculture, administration, community development, farmers, NGOs and the private sector; ii) a nutrition survey for Hoima district, including both qualitative and quantitative assessment; iii) a two-day multistakeholder workshop to select interventions and formulate a comprehensive district nutrition strategy for Hoima district. The nutrition strategy was not the only important result of the exercise. The other results were related to the learning aspect in which district officials were able to visualize the role of each sector in the improvement of nutrition. The complementary roles of agriculture and health sectors became particularly clear. Henceforth, staff from the two sectors worked amicably in identifying activities relevant to each sector. As a result, it was agreed to hold joint review of the progress made in implementing the nutrition strategy, after one year of implementation.

The Hoima experience shows that the application of the techniques strengthens government's efforts to develop strategies and programmes that address the needs of the rural poor. It also strengthens teamwork, and encourages experts to work with local people as facilitators, *i.e.* to participate in providing answers to questions that increase the likelihood of programme success, rather than emphasizing the techniques. This creates more incentives for participants to learn.

7.2. DEVELOPMENT OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) is a national programme mandated to guide the delivery of agricultural advisory services to farmers. As the programme planning M&E manager, the author is directly responsible for guiding the head office and local governments in undertaking the M&E function. The author has guided the planning team to apply the research results (methods, tools and knowledge) in the elaboration of an M&E framework, containing programme inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and relevant indicators. NAADS staff, personnel from other agencies, ministries and donors have appreciated this approach, the major strength being that it is comprehensive and encourages participation. Following from the framework,

a baseline survey was designed, focusing on key output and outcome indicators. This made the survey focused on relevant indicators. The design of the baseline survey was conducted by the district and sub-county teams, the secretariat staff only providing the necessary technical guidance. District personnel have also been directly responsible for the collection and analysis of the baseline data, a principle objective of this approach being to build the capacity of local government staff.

Makerere University is implementing a three-year pilot training project for capacity building at Makerere and other tertiary institutions, for improving decentralized service delivery. The major focus of the project is to build sustainable capacity in the local governments for improved service delivery. The project targets personnel of local governments, students and staff from universities and other training institutions, to establish a practical oriented curriculum to improve service delivery. The project has four components: enhancing academic institutional capacity building; support to local government staff capacity building by universities; enhancing decentralization policy research; monitoring and evaluation. The author has guided a task force responsible for developing a comprehensive M&E system and carrying out a baseline survey among participating institutions and local governments. The team elaborated an M&E framework detailing project inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes; this was followed by the identification of output and outcome indicators. The participatory approach was intended to strengthen internal monitoring processes, not only through the articulation of indicators but also passing over knowledge and skills to people involved in implementing the programme at various levels.

7.3. EVALUATION OF UWESO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The method has also been applied in the pre-midterm review of UWESO Development Programme funded by the Belgian government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The programme is implemented in five districts (Lira, Soroti, Kumi, Masaka and Mbarara). The overall objective of the programme is to improve the status of needy orphans in rural areas, including nutrition education. UWESO relies on the local government staff to implement activities, especially in technical areas that the programme staff is not able to provide. In 1999, prior to implementation of the programme, the author facilitated start-up workshops in the five participating districts to elaborate the activities of the programme and to formulate a workplan. The current method was applied in all the four workshops (Soroti and Kumi had a joint workshop). The exercise demonstrated the utility of the

method in elaborating activities and defining the outputs and outcomes of a programme that is already designed. The exercise was particularly useful to implementers who sometimes find it difficult to translate programme designs into consistent operational plans. It also provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to analyse the programme objectives. As a result, they obtained a comprehensive understanding of the programme. In 2002, the author was again requested to guide the UWESO secretariat in conducting internal review of the programme, prior to the midterm review by the sponsors. A comprehensive and participatory approach was used to evaluate programme processes, outputs and outcomes building on the work done at the start-up workshops in 1999. The indicators and external factors identified in 1999 were used as the basis for reviewing programme components.

7.4. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE APPLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

As presented above, the author has had several opportunities to apply the research results. To a great extent, the author has successfully responded to the demands of different agencies to provide technical support in planning and evaluation. However, an institutional framework within which the research results — at least the best practices — would be sustainably up-scaled does not back these efforts. There is no forum that would enable the author to share the research results widely at national and district level. Sharing of the results would also include a systematic mechanism to popularize the innovations of this research, through the application of relevant tools in the design and/or review of development and/or specific nutrition strategies. Operationalizing such an arrangement would include among others, the generation of a cadre of trainers at central and district level to scale up the application of the results. This would however be feasible within an existing institutional arrangement. To some extent, this may be done within the existing NAADS institutional arrangement, but greater scope for utilizing the research results (especially the research component) would necessitate active engagement with institutions involved in applied nutrition research, including institutions of higher learning. Opportunities therefore exist to develop and implement a research agenda focusing on applied nutrition and decentralized planning. The exploitation of such opportunities will only be possible if additional efforts are made to catalyse these initiatives. It appears that a feasible way to start is to identify a host or “nuclear” institution that would kick-start the replication of the research results, starting with the identification of the elements of the research that can be implemented jointly with existing institutions. This initiative would also entail popularization of the research

results through publications locally and internationally; this has not been possible to-date.

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