



UGANDA YOUTH NETWORK

NEBBI DISTRICT BRIEFING PAPER

Towards Better Youth Service Delivery in Community Development

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDD	Community Driven Development
CDO	Community Development Officer
DGF	Democracy Governance Facility
FY	Financial Year
GoU	Government of Uganda
LG	Local Government
LGSIP	Local Government Sector Investment Plan
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
NYCN	Nebbi Youth CSOs Network
UYONET	Uganda Youth Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief presents findings from performance monitoring audits of government programs in Nebbi district conducted by trained youth monitors. The Uganda Youth Network (UYONET) in partnership with Nebbi Youth CSOs Network (NYCN) and a team of trained Youth Councillors in Nebbi District monitored and evaluated government programs in Nebbi district specifically focusing on Community Driven Development (CDD) programmes in the financial year FY 2012/13 and 2013/14. With the aim of promoting social accountability at local government level in Nebbi District, the monitoring project was implemented in Pakwach Town Council, Nebbi and Erussi Sub-counties.

The overall objective of the project was to assess the performance and progress of CDD programme implementation and use the findings to inform Nebbi District Local Government for appropriate actions to improve the programs. The initiative focused on improving service delivery of CDD programme specifically; application process, enterprise selection, fund disbursement, enterprise management and sustainability, how it addresses youth challenges and challenges faced during the CDD implementation for community empowerment. It also looked at the role of CDD projects that are in place and helping in the empowerment of the young people in Nebbi District.

Under these government projects, groups of between 8 and 15 people were provided financial support to set up small business and agricultural enterprises. These funds were used to implement the following projects, which were monitored: jet car washing, piggery, goat rearing, poultry farming and carpentry among others.

Key activities carried out during the process included sourcing, reviewing and analysing relevant documents concerning CDD funding; using a developed tool to conduct field-monitoring visits and finally Local Government officials, beneficiaries and other community members were met and engaged in focused group discussions to evaluate the programs.

This policy briefing paper therefore synthesizes key emerging issues out of the findings from the CDD programme monitoring and evaluation to inform key stakeholders in Nebbi District Local Government including Local Government officials (both politicians and civil servants) and the general public.

The brief captures the challenges faced by beneficiaries in implementing programs, as reported by the budget monitors who were trained by UYONET and NYCN, as well as highlighting existing policy and implantation gaps that exist. These challenges are recorded here basing on reports submitted by the project monitors as well as findings from 'town hall' style meetings with the beneficiaries, youth leaders and district leaders.

Finally, this brief offers a range of recommendations from young people on how to improve the government programs and ensure the sustainability of the different projects set up by youth groups. This policy brief will therefore form the basis for young people's advocacy towards improved community services delivery and implementation of government programs targeted at the youth in Nebbi District in general that brings about sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The approach of the Government of Uganda to national planning has evolved over the last decade, with reforms of the country's public expenditure management resulting in new institutional arrangements for planning and budgeting. One critical component of these arrangements is the decentralization process, which gives Local Governments discretionary planning and budgeting powers in line with national policies and priorities.¹

Local government in Uganda functions as the immediate point of service delivery for many key services including health, education, agricultural extension, and local infrastructural development. Similarly, it serves as the key access and implementation point for government's poverty eradication programs. Because of this, the budgeting process forms one of the core development and governance processes at the lower level that provides entry for realistic decision making at the district.

Budget monitoring and evaluation involves not only ensuring that the work plan is being followed, but also that value for money is being obtained. Currently, the role of evaluating government expenditure lies with the Office of the Auditor General that has the mandate to audit all government expenditure including within Local Governments.² However, gaps still exist in the legal framework as there is little room and opportunity for citizens to share feedback at a Local Government level on government programming with regard to how the projects were implemented and what areas can be improved for better service delivery.³ This gap especially affects youth in Uganda who make up 78% of the National population⁴ and are statistically worst hit by poverty and unemployment.

The National Youth Policy defines youth as all young persons, female and male aged 12 to 30 years. According to the National Youth Policy, analysis of the trends in involvement and participation in leadership and decision making since independence shows that youth were mostly marginalized and their involved primarily as beneficiaries of programs/services rather than as active participants in the development and decision making process. While the number of youth involved in political and decision making processes has increased in Uganda, much remains to be done to ensure that this participation is more meaningful in terms of increasing levels of informed engagement as well as ensuring that it is effectively translated into better service delivery for youth nationally. Youth views still need to be integrated into budget allocation, planning and monitoring processes.

A good example of this disconnect of youth engagement is the 44bn allocated to address youth unemployment in the Financial Year (FY) 2011/12 budget through venture capital

1 The Local Government Act, Cap 243 provides the legal basis for local government budget process. The Act is supported by the Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulations 2007

2 The Auditor General receives his mandate from Article 163 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and the National Audit Act, 2008

3 According to the Local Government Act, budget evaluation is done quarterly by the Executive Committee against approved work plans and budgets.

4 2012, State of Uganda Population Report, UN Population Fund

funding. While this was originally celebrated, it later resulted in a lot of disgruntlement as a large number of young people failed to meet the minimum requirements to access the money, a problem that could have been solved if there had been more youth consultation integrated in the planning phase.⁵ There have been a number of other youth focused budget allocations such as the Youth Livelihoods programs among others, but youth participation is still a gaping hole in budgeting processes even with regard to programs targeted towards their economic empowerment.

Active participation of youth is hinged on their ability to demand for responsive policies and accountability from their leaders. The ability of youth to demand for better service delivery, especially at the local government level, can only be achieved if youth are able to meaningfully participate in all local budgeting processes including planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. An assessment conducted by UYONET under its ‘Ours By Right’ project found that one of the biggest impediments to effective youth participation in budget processes at the district is the limited capacity of the youth leaders to research, analyse, negotiate and lobby particularly when it comes to budget decisions.

This indicates that in order to ensure young people are meaningfully involved in the budgeting process both at the national and local government level, they need to be equipped with the necessary skills and tools to monitor and evaluate government budget implementation and offer alternatives to improve effective service delivery at the local level.

Objective of Assessment

Under the *Program for Youth Democratic Engagement* project currently being implemented by UYONET in Nebbi, Apac and Arua district, the objective is to have youth demonstrate capacity to conduct local and national budget advocacy, as well as monitoring and evaluation through an institutionalized Youth Budget Advocacy Alliance (YBAA). In Nebbi district, this project is being implemented in partnership with NYCN.

The general objectives of the project include;

- i. To strengthen the legislative, research and policy analysis competence of youth leaders in the three project districts so that they are able to engage, create and exploit new and existing opportunities for leadership at the district level through the budgeting process.
- ii. To create a mechanism for sustained political accountability through regional sharing and reflection platforms (youth parliaments) at the national and participating district levels.
- iii. To establish an inclusive platform for Youth Budget Advocacy⁶ as a prime medium through which young people are able to conduct budget advocacy, monitoring and evaluation.

5 Promoting Self-Employment Through Entrepreneurship Financing: Lessons From The Uganda Youth Venture Capital Fund, Economic Policy Research Centre, policy brief issue no. 47, June 2014. Accessed at: http://www.eprc.or.ug/pdf_files/Promoting_%20Self-employment_%20through%20entrepreneurship_%20financing_Lessons%20from%20the%20Uganda%20Youth-Venture%20Capital%20Fund%20PB%2047.pdf

6 The Youth leaders Budget Advocacy Alliance is a platform that will bring together young leaders in their diversity to engage and contribute to the budgeting process in Uganda to ensure budgets are responsive to the needs of Young people.

This report is specifically focused on the views of youth in Nebbi district; their perspectives of the challenges government programs are facing in Nebbi and recommendations on how to improve the impact of these programs for youth in the district. The report will contribute to the establishment of a sustainable youth civil society and political leader's budget advocacy alliance that will act as a primary forum to take the lead in collecting and sharing the views of youth and advocate for youth-oriented local and national budgets. The aim of this is to ensure that young peoples' voices on government programs and alternative budget proposals are heard and that government programs increasingly focuses on issues affecting the youth as a critical segment of the population of Uganda.

Scope of the Assessment

This assessment was conducted in three key districts in Northern Uganda; Apac, Nebbi and Arua. In Nebbi district, the assessment was specifically conducted in 6 of the 10 Sub Counties of the district. In each of these Sub Counties, assessment was made on the challenges faced in implementing government's CDD program that youth in the district are beneficiaries of.

Methodology

Training of program monitors

In line with the above, program targets in Nebbi (made up of youth leaders identified by UYONET and NYCN) were equipped with the necessary financial and technical skills to conduct budget monitoring at sub county level in the district. Before conducting the monitoring and evaluation in the district, the youth leaders underwent trainings on budget advocacy, Uganda's budget process and the role of youth in the budget process, application of budget analysis techniques using district budgets, budget analysis techniques and the key factors affecting the budget process in Uganda. The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) conducted these trainings.

In total, 41 monitors were trained in Nebbi district, comprising 32 male and 9 female monitors.

Submitted Individual Monitoring tools based on Field Visits

The youth monitors trained conducted budget monitoring at the district level. All the youth monitors trained were equipped with monitoring tools that they had to feed data collected from their field visits including the project being monitored and allocated budget, challenges faced, best practices and lessons learnt.

Focus Group Discussions at Management Forums

In total, three management forums were held in Nebbi district; at the district level, Packwach Town council and Erussi sub county. The Management Forums involved the participation of the youth leaders and the sub county/district technical and political leadership. These forums facilitated focus group discussions that reviewed the field reports and discussed the challenges presented and recommendations made.

Both, the trainings and processes of conducting budget monitoring and advocacy were aimed at informing the process of developing budget-briefing position papers. This report therefore summarises the findings of the youth monitors in the district of Nebbi.

GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: KEY FINDINGS MADE

CDD Program Overview

As one of the mechanisms of supporting the Local Government Sector Investment Plan (LGSIP), Government of Uganda (GoU) with support from International Development Agency (IDA) earmarked funding assistance through the Local Government Management and Service Delivery (LGMSD) Program. Among others, the LGMSD Program is supporting the CDD approach as a way of redirecting and targeting resources to the lowest service delivery centers.

The CDD approach builds on experiences and practices of other government programs such as the First and Second Local Government Development Program (LGDP 1 and II/ Parish Indicative Planning Figures), Community HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI), and the first Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF 1). The approach is designed to create an interface between Government and Communities especially through integrated LG planning & budgeting as well as ensure deeper involvement of communities in decision-making and resource utilization; hence the adoption of the CDD theme as “**Communities as Drivers of Change**”.

CDD programing has been one of the government programs popular for the empowerment of communities in Uganda. It is a development initiative that provides control of the development process, resources and decision-making authority directly to community groups. In Nebbi District, CDD programs have been implemented for over 4 (four) years since FY 2009/10.

The cornerstone of CDD initiatives is the active involvement of members of a defined community in at least some aspects of project design and implementation. In addition, intending beneficiaries have to meet certain sanitation requirements at their household levels.

CDD Project Monitoring in Nebbi District

In Nebbi District, youth leaders monitored projects under CDD in 10 sub counties of the district that included the following sub counties:

1. Pakwachsub county
2. Nebbi Town Council
3. Nyaravuru sub county
4. AlwiiSub county
5. Panyimun Sub county
6. Parombo sub county

7. Atego Sub county
8. Erusi sub county
9. Ucwiny sub county
10. Wadulai sub county

Under the government projects monitored, youth groups were provided financial support to set up small business and agricultural enterprises. The youth in Nebbi district received these funds in groups of between 8-15 people and set up a number of income generating projects including; Jet Car washing, piggery, goat rearing, poultry farming and carpentry among others.

Key Findings Made

The monitors observed that the youth received one week of training and then were instructed to form groups in which they chose one activity in which they would invest the funds that they would receive. The groups were required to have a chairperson, who together with the sub county chief and accountant, were the signatories to the group bank accounts. Money was deposited into these bank accounts and the groups were in charge of deciding how to spend the money in their projects. The government requires that the seed capital be refunded once the projects start running. The monitors reported the following key observations:

Confusion over disbursement of funds

There was substantial confusion surrounding the disbursement of funds as well as the amount of money that each group should receive. The sub county officials reported a delay in disbursement of funds from the district officials without any explanation. The beneficiaries of the projects on the other hand reported that in several cases there was a discrepancy between the amount they were allocated and what they actually received. In AlwiiSub County, one group that set up a carpentry project wrote a proposal requesting for 12 million shillings but only 7 million shillings was approved. However, the group only received 4 million shillings to implement their project.

These discrepancies affected the sustainability of the projects and also strained the relationship between the project beneficiaries and the district officials.

Misappropriation of funds

Some of the groups misappropriated the funds that were allocated to them. One group in ParongoSub County diverted the 5million shillings that it was allocated to set up a jet car wash and instead bought cows with it. Some of the group members have since disappeared but one group member was arrested in a bid to recover the money. Similarly, in PakwatchSub County, a youth group that received funds to carry out cage fishing mismanaged the funds. Two of the group members have since been arrested while the rest of the group members disappeared.

Lack of information from the local government officials

Majority of community members were unaware of the CDD and other government projects and could not therefore participate or benefit from them. Likewise, hoarding of information by district and sub county officials seems to be a big problem in Nebbi district. Unwillingness by certain local government officials to disclose pertinent information was a challenge to youth groups during the implementation of government projects as well as during the monitoring exercise.

Failure to Sustain Projects

The sustainability of the projects was affected by the manner in which the youth groups were selected. The youth reported limited participation in the initial stages, which were the application, and group selection stages. Sub county leaders in some cases handpicked people that were known to them and constituted them into groups and in some cases even selected the activities on behalf of the groups. One group in Nebbi Sub County was constituted to carry out agriculture but was instead directed to practice poultry farming and the project eventually collapsed because the group members had neither the skills nor the interest in carrying out poultry farming. The groups also faced a challenge of developing the rapport and cohesion required to work together which eventually led to the collapse of certain groups as members did not hold group meetings or make decisions concerning the running of their projects together.

Finally, because the seed funding for the projects was received from government, most of the groups did not come up with sustainability plans for the projects because they expected more money to be injected into the projects from government. This led to the collapse of a number their projects.

Poor group leadership and enterprise selection

The groups did not have access to pertinent information on their choice of projects, for example, one group in Nebbisubcounty that set up a piggery project failed to consult veterinary doctors and their pigs ended up dying. Some groups fell apart because they failed to hold meetings and agree on how to conduct their activities. Groups failed to conduct meetings and maintain records of their discussions and decision making process. This made it difficult to hold group leaders who misbehaved or misappropriated funds accountable. The lack of records also made it difficult to track down the different group members when it came to collecting the payments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made by the monitors basing on their interactions with the youth beneficiaries of the government projects. We felt that it was equally important to capture the concerns raised by local government officials as these are usually the first point of contact for the beneficiaries and their recommendations will contribute a great deal towards the improvement of the implementation of these projects and service delivery. These recommendations are divided into two broad categories, the first being recommendations intended to improve implementation of government projects in general and the second being those intended to improve the management and sustainability of projects by youth beneficiaries.

1. Openness and transparency in the selection of groups that should benefit from the projects in Nebbi district.

To improve government project implementation: government needs to set and enforce policies that ensure the selection criteria is applied in a transparent and impartial manner as opposed to the arbitrary selection that was done by the district leaders. This would not only reduce on the confusion and animosity towards leaders who were perceived as unfair, but would also promote efficiency in the implementation of the project. A number of beneficiaries interviewed stressed the importance of maintaining communication between the youth groups and district leaders at all stages of the implementation of the project.

To improve group project management: Consultations with the different youth groups in the district should precede the group selection. Furthermore, young people should be prioritized since they constitute the largest proportion of the population. The youth of Nebbi were quite disgruntled that some of the groups that benefitted under youth-oriented projects were over 40 years of age.

The apparent fairness of an objective criterion would also improve the morale and attitudes of the youth in Nebbi district towards the different government projects. The current perception among a number of youth in the district is that friends and relatives of the district and Sub County officials are given priority over everyone else.

2. Recovery of Government funds.

To improve government project implementation: Groups which have failed to return money (those that are known to have misappropriated funds or that have made no effort to start repaying) should be blacklisted in order to ensure that government resources are not wasted on groups who have already shown themselves to be dishonest and instead spent on new or already successful groups so that the government has higher chances of recouping its investment. Groups that received funds MUST pay.

To improve group project management: Prior to receiving the allocated funds, each group should have a recovery plan developed by them in consultation with the accounting officer, which should be strictly adhered to once their projects start running.

Recovery of funds from groups who received funding in the first cycle should be prioritized. They are invested in the successful running of government projects and

are worried that the bad track record set by groups who fail to repay government funds will impact allocations to Nebbi district in the future.

3. A more comprehensive training for the youth before the selection of beneficiary groups and disbursement of funds.

To improve government project implementation: A longer training period, preferably one week, targeted at imparting knowledge on project selection, financial management, value addition and record keeping should be done. This will ensure that the youth are better prepared to take on these projects and manage the funds disbursed to them. Training was done in the last cycle but it only lasted for 1 day which was not sufficient as pointed out by both the youth groups and the district leaders who did the training.

To improve group project management: Continuous follow up and monitoring of the beneficiary groups by sub-county officials is also necessary to facilitate the assessment of progress, identification of challenges they are facing as well as the provision of technical support in areas of weakness to ensure sustainability of the projects.

4. Access to complete information regarding the government projects and their obligations as beneficiaries.

To improve government project management: The Sub county authority should allocate office space to the Community Development Officers (CDOs) for smooth operation including proper filing of documents and reports. The inadequacy of information was attributed to the weakness of the CDO with regard to the keeping and sharing of records. Official documents should be kept at the office instead of at the CDO's home as was previously done.

To improve group project management: Youth groups should be required to maintain files in which records of members, activities and group decisions are kept. This would go a long way towards improving the communication between the District officials and the project beneficiaries by reducing the bureaucracy and political posturing at the District level.

5. Mentorship and capacity building for the youth beneficiaries.

To improve youth project management: Most of the project beneficiaries are people who have not run a business or a farm before and as such need to have consistent training and monitoring of their progress if the projects are to survive the initial stages and thrive even after government support is withdrawn. In addition, the youth proposed to have mentors from each subcounty and not just at the district level so that they can reach everywhere and increase access to information and support.

6. The Ministry should increase the funds allocated to individual groups or in the very least provide an explanation to the District officials when less money than was projected is disbursed. This would improve the relationship between the district leaders and the youth that is currently one of great distrust as the youth do not feel like they received all that was due to them while the officials insist that they disbursed all the funds that they received from government. Transparency and openness in discussions on funding are of utmost importance if the cooperation and participation of youth in government projects is to be maintained.

CONCLUSION

Having reviewed and seen the weaknesses and success stories, it is clear that programmes are capable of solving the problems of youth unemployment and underemployment in Nebbi District. The weaknesses and challenges noted from the beneficiaries and government agents revolved around issues like inadequate information, instances of poor leadership and dishonesty, which can all be addressed through minor structural adjustments and an emphasis on transparency.

The recommendations above were made by members of youth beneficiary groups, youth leaders and the district leaders and are intended to improve the implementation of the government projects as well as increasing youth participation in the projects. The ultimate goal is to guarantee the sustainability of the different youth projects which is of utmost importance not only for the young people who are earning a living from them but also for the government which should be able to recoup its investment into these projects so that more youth can continue to benefit for a longer time. Participation of the youth and effective implementation of the projects are key in order for all stakeholders to achieve the desired outcomes.

As such, the recommendations from all stakeholders should be given the attention that they deserve and all efforts should be made to implement them. The youth of Nebbi remain eager to participate in government projects and ensure their success despite the many challenges that they have faced. They are waiting for the next budget cycle in the hopes that their concerns will be addressed and that they will have better chances of succeeded in their various ventures with the support that they need.

ANNEXTURE 1: MANAGEMENT FORUM PARTICIPANTS' SUMMARY

District management forum

Local Government officials	Titles	Number
	District officials	07
	Resident District Commissioner	
	The Vice Chairperson, LCV	
	Senior Community Development Officer for District Community Development Officer	
	GISO, Nebbi Town Council for DISO	
	Police Officer for District Police Commander	
	District Male Youth Councilor	06
	Sub-county/Town Council officials	
	Community Development Officers (03)	
	Sub-county Chiefs (01)	
	Gombolola Internal Security Officers (02)	
Other participants	CBOs' including youth groups' representatives and other community members	28
Total		41 (07 females and 34 males)

Pakwach Town Council management forum

Council's officials	The Senior Community Development Officer	05
	The Chairperson, General Purpose Committee	
	The LCIII Vice Chairperson/Female Youth Councilor	
	Town Agents (02)	

Other participants	CBOs' including youth groups' representatives and other community members	21
Total		26 (08 females & 18 males)

Erussi sub-county management forum

Sub-county officials	Volunteer for Community Development Officer The LCIII Vice Chairperson GISO Sub-Accountant Parish Chief	05
Other participants	CBOs' including youth groups' representatives and other community members	24
Total		29 (09 females & 20 males)

ANNEXTURE 2: BUDGET MONITORING REPORTING TOOL

Date: _____

Name: _____

Subcounty: _____

Project No: _____

Project Name				
Budgeted Amount	Actual Funds Released	Amount Spent	Data Source	Reason for Variance (if any)

Challenges:

Best Practices: _____

Lessons: _____

Recommendations: _____

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