

“Towards Increased Involvement of NGOs in the NAADS Programme”



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List of Acronyms

ACODE	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
EA	Environmental Alert
IRDI	Intergrated Rural Development Initiatives
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NGOs	Non - Governmental Organisations
PMA	Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture
PEAP	Poverty Eradition Action Plan
RDE	Rural Development Extentionist
VEDCO	Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns

Executive Summary

This policy brief is a result of the issues arising out of a review of the NGO activities related to the NAADS that was carried out under the ACODE/VEDCO/EA PMA project. The main purpose of the study was to review the current activities related to agricultural advisory services with a view of understanding the nature of the services offered, gaps in the services and to solicit for possible ways of collaboration between the NAADS and NGOs in service delivery. The study was carried out in the districts of Luweero, Wakiso and Mukono. The findings of the study form the basis of this policy brief. The brief is intended to provide guidance to the NAADS on specific actions to take in order to streamline the involvement of the NGOs in service provision under the NAADS programme.

The best practices identified among NGOs in Service delivery include:

- NGOs Integrated approaches to service delivery including social economic and political issues in the community.
- NGOs are based in the communities and have created goodwill and rapport with the people.
- Using appropriate approaches such as employing community resource people. This provides an interface between the service provider and the community.
- NGOs have experience in budgeting and some have developed manuals that are used in service delivery.
- Using participatory approaches to involve communities in planning and monitoring.
- Some NGOs have a track record in community service delivery and governance.

The team found that the selection criteria for NGOs were not transparent and public officers placed a lot of monetary demands on implementing agencies. The NAADS programme is riddled with so many power structures, which slows decision processes and creates room for bureaucratic and corruption practices. Against this the requirement to have so many groups formed did not take into account the realities on the ground making impossible to reach the targets. Besides, NAADS programme is implemented as if it is a new programme and parallel to NGOs agricultural programmes yet it should only compliment them. In most cases it is the same communities that NAADS is targeting that the NGOs are working with hence there is competition for communities' time and in some cases duplication of services and programme. The idea that NGOs will not participate in successive programmes after group formation is alienative yet NGOs have a lot of experience and best practices in farmer enterprise development, marketing and technology transfer. Another issue raised was that NGOs were not party to drafting of Memorandum of Understanding signed with NAADS preferring calling them " Memorandums of Convenience".

The NGO Foras in most of the districts are not functional yet these would be used to coordinate and monitor NAADS and NGOs other community development programmes. There is need to document individual NGOs' capacities, area of coverage, budgets and programmes in the districts to ensure smooth and organized service delivery.

The main challenge faced by the organisations was limited funds for their activities since most of them were donor funded. At the same time there's no stream lined access for NGOs to funds from government for poverty eradication.

While NAADS recognizes the strengths of NGOs in service delivery, the review makes the following recommendations in order for NGOs to make a more meaningful contribution to the programme as service providers:

- The district NGO forums be strengthened to monitor and evaluate the programme and provide an NGO data base with key competences.
- NGOs with national programmes should deal directly with NAADS Secretariat to reduce the levels of power structures.
- NAAGS ought to work with NGOs to develop the Community Resource People because they provide a good interface between the service provider and the community.
- There is need to establish a district forum comprising government, NGOs, private sector associations and farmers forum to review and monitor the NAADS programme.

Introduction

The last 10 years in Uganda have witnessed an influx of NGOs and CBOs with currently over 3000 fully registered as service providers both in the urban and rural areas. They are engaged in a wide spectrum of activities ranging from community development work to micro finance, Agriculture, legal affairs, politics etc.

Government and the donor community recognize the central role NGOs play in contributing to the development process of Uganda. While in particular the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) recognizes that NGOs are essential partners in the successful implementation of the program, the view of this policy brief is that this recognition needs to be specially reflected in the NAADS procedures of recruiting and involving private service providers for the implementation of the programme.

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Background

In 1997, the Government of Uganda put in place the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) as a framework to guide sector planning for poverty eradication. The PEAP has four main pillars; fast and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation; good governance and security; increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes; and increased quality of life of the poor. Under the PEAP, the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) is the operational and institutional framework for the transformation of Agriculture. Falling under pillar three (increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes), the PMA mission is to eradicate poverty by transforming subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture. Among the broad strategies for achieving the PMA strategies is the deepening of decentralization for effective service delivery, reducing public sector activities and promoting the role of the private sector.

The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) is one of the seven pillars of the PMA whose vision is to have a decentralized farmer-owned and private sector serviced extension system contributing to the realization of the agricultural sector objectives. The rationale for this programme was the failure of the traditional extension approach to bring about greater productivity and expansion of agriculture, despite costly government interventions. Therefore one of the principles in the implementation of the NAADS is increasing institutional efficiency in providing agricultural advisory services through contracting out of services.

Synthesis of Key Issues Arising from the Review

1. The NGO and NAADS interface

NAADS recognizes that NGOs have a number of features that make them essential partners in the successful implementation of the NAADS programme and therefore NGOs have already been involved in the programme in a number of areas. Some NGO staff are members of the NAADS national and district core team, which carries out sensitization at district and sub-county levels while other NGO staff were members of the NAADS annual review team in 2002, providing an independent view point. NGOs have given support in farmer group mobilization, verification, planning and enterprise selection. In addition, NGOs have been involved in providing components of the re-tooling training programme to help government extension workers develop skills for private sector service provision. To a lesser extent unfortunately, NGOs have been involved in providing direct technical advisory services to farmers, as an interim measure while the private sector develops.

The participation of NGOs has mainly been at the level of staff being members to the National and district teams and less at the community level where the NGOs are based. As mentioned earlier, there are two main methods of engagement of NGOs in the NAADS; through an MOU or through a contract.

Where NGOs have been contracted, the majority have been contracted through Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) to carry out farmer institutional development and support activities. An MoU had to be signed between the sub-county and the organization/selected service provider who was not given a chance to participate in the drafting of the MoU. Consequently it did not take into consideration the concerns of the other party in the partnership. For example when there was a breach of contract on the part of the service provider, the latter could be sued and not vice versa. More importantly however, terms were not drawn in consideration of the NGOs experience in the area. The review points out that NGOs ought to have more participation and a wider interface with the NAADS programme due to their vast experience in agricultural service delivery. The terms of their participation should be drawn in consideration of the NGOs experiences.

2. Gaps within the NAADS/ NGO Interface

The gaps identified within the interface had to do with the programme design, implementation, and the identification of service providers. These are elaborated below.

i) NAADS Programme Design

While it is understandable that the activities of the NAADS programme and their set targets must be achieved within a limited period of time, the findings from the study revealed that the time limits given so far were unrealistic. An example was the formation and establishment of farmer groups in a period of two months. In some cases the groups went up to over 90 days. The experience of the NGOs that participated in the study was that this was rather artificial. NGOs in the areas where NAADS is operating could be very instrumental in providing NAADS with the existing groups that they work with, and use their experience in the formation of new ones.

It was also evident that special groups in the community such as the very needy and in some cases women, could not be reached in such a short time. Different strategies/approaches need to be instituted to ensure reaching out to these groups. Targeting of such groups could be done whenever possible through those NGOs that work with them.

The element of decentralization is key in the operation of the NAADS programme to allow the local governments to be in charge of the activities together with the communities. This however creates numerous power centres; at the district, sub-county, implementing agency and the NAADS itself which cause a lot of delays in the planning and decision-making processes. At the same time the numerous power centres have been found to create loopholes for bribes. This needs urgent attention and review.

ii) NAADS Programme Implementation

The programme seems to be running as a completely new intervention and parallel to the existing interventions of other service providers in the community. Yet, as the study revealed, NGOs have a variety of services and technologies that they provide, and possess various institutional capacities. NAADS should take stock of these services to determine suitable entry points for the NGOs and replication of their best practices. Worth noting among the best practices are the NGOs community based models, their intergrated approaches, and developed extension packages.

NGOs have integrated approaches of service delivery that aim at addressing a number of social and economic issues affecting the community. In this way they ensure balance in their development activities and the sustainability of their interventions. The NAADS programme seeks to offer demand driven services to the community. However certain services that are crucial may not be demanded. Yet, NGOs have a way of providing those services together with the agricultural services demanded by the community. The NAADS programme would stand to benefit since they address a number of other social issues in the community that surround and contribute to agricultural production and marketing. The District NGO forum would be instrumental in this aspect.

A number of NGOs had also developed some training guides on various relevant aspects for purposes of agricultural service delivery. These could be employed and integrated in the NAADS programme in order not to duplicate services. NGOs could also be used in monitoring and evaluation of the NAADS activities, training and information dissemination.

At the same time the review notes that the accounting and financial requirements of NAADS for implementing agencies ignore the fact that NGOs already have established systems, and that there is need to re-align NAADS demands within the NGOs' established systems in order to ensure continuity and avoid duplication of work for NGOs.

iii) Identification of Service Providers

Guidelines on the identification of service providers indicate that these must be profit-making entities. This rules out most NGOs who by virtue of their registration regulations are required to be non-profit making. For NGOs to participate in service provision this requirement would have to be modified to suit them.

3. Contracts

The contracts made so far by the NAADS and implementing agencies had not taken care of the requirements of the agencies during their formulation. This had been reported by the NGOs that had so far participated with the NAADS. The NGOs suggest that drafting of the MoUs should be participatory. The participating NGO should be given a chance to negotiate the terms with the NAADS.

4. Best Practices among NGOs

i) NGOs are based in the Community

The NGOs interviewed were based in the communities where they worked for example; World Vision has offices in Kasawo sub-county in Mukono district and also in Nakaseke in Luweero districts, Grassland foundation has field offices in Kakiri, Wakiso district in addition to the head offices in Kampala, Plan International has offices in Katikamu sub county and Bamunanika sub-county in Luweero district and all other organizations have field based offices that over see their programme activities. They have all worked for more than three years in these areas and have learnt and developed good social working relationships with the respective communities. As such these NGOs had gained the people's respect and goodwill. Infact organizations are identified by their activities for example PLAN for orphans, AMREF, for water and sanitation etc.

NGOs employ community based models, where they have community resource persons who provide a good interface between the NGO and the community. These are called Rural Development Extensionists (RDEs) in the case of VEDCO, and Community Facilitators in the case of IRDI. They help to sustain the activities of the organization in the community. This mode of operation helped the NGOs to know who the 'real' farmers were and could reach out to those who needed the services instead of reaching active people in the community with other intentions other than representing farmers' concerns.

ii) Established Systems

A few NGOs have established programme systems such as financial, accounting, and monitoring and evaluation. World Vision, AMREF, VEDCO, EA were some of those pointed out to by the review to have sound financial systems with audited reports. The review did not make critical comparisons of the systems in each of these organizations. However the NAADS programme could take advantage of this by allowing the organizations to handle their own funds for the NAADS activities and account for them using the established systems. This would reduce the time spent by the organizations in requisitions and accounting for funds in a completely different system.

iii) Integrated Approaches

The intergrated approaches of the NGOs as recognized by the review aim at addressing a number of social and economic issues affecting the community, hence ensuring balance in their development activities and the sustainability of their interventions. The review notes that while the NAADS programme seeks to offer demand driven services to the community, certain services that are crucial may not be demanded. NGOs however have a way of providing those services together with the agricultural services demanded by the community. The review emphasizes that the NAADS programme would benefit from the NGO experience since they address a number of other social issues in the community that surround and contribute to agricultural production and marketing.

iv) Experience in Budgeting

Due to most NGOs being donor funded in their activities, they had sufficiently handled large sums of money, and had experience in budgeting and financial management.

The NAADS funds given out to the service providers were found to be unrealistic compared to the amount of work that had to be done especially in sub-counties which were very big, with impassable roads, and others that had many groups of farmers. NGOs could bring along their experience in budgeting and managing finances into the NAADS programme.

v) Developed Extension Packages

The NGOs that participated in the review had well developed interventions to deliver agriculture-related services and had very good lessons that should be replicated. VEDCO was employing the farmer-to-farmer extension approach and had trained model farmers also known as RDEs (Rural Development Extensionists) to train other farmers in Luweero district. EA had demonstration farms in Wakiso, while IRDI had farmers with energy saving stoves and community facilitators for their activities also



in Wakiso district. Such resources could constitute a strong entry-point for NAADS programmes in the districts where they exist.

vi) Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation with the community.

Though not all NGOs have the skills in participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, a number of them do involve farmers in these activities. For instance there is annual and quarterly planning sessions with the community in VEDCO, and involvement of farmers in evaluation and transfer of technologies in Environmental Alert. These skills could be very useful for the NAADS programme.



Key Policy Recommendations

The review was carried out with a view of finding ways to improve the collaboration between the NAADS and NGOs in service delivery. The nature of services they offer has been pointed out and the best practices that support their capacity to offer them highlighted. While the role of NGOs was recognized in farmer group mobilization and capacity building phase, It is recommended that the NAADS consider the participation of NGOs in the provision of agricultural services as well. The review further recommends the following:

i) Review of guidelines and requirements for service provision in the NAADS

The requirements for service providers should be reviewed to make provision for NGOs to equally participate. Particular reference is made to the clause that requires service providers to be profit-making entities. NGOs are normally registered as non-profit making institutions and hence if they are to participate as service providers they need to register a profit-making arm. Yet, NGOs are bound by law to operate as charity organisations and not for profit.

There should be a clear and transparent selection criteria and framework. This could be done by NAADS sharing the selection criteria at the district level as well as with the NGOs in the district. The selection committee to be comprised of a number of stakeholders. The number of contracted service providers should be limited to minimize administrative demands.

ii) Replication of best practices

NAADS should take stock of services and technologies provided by existing NGOs, areas of operation and institutional capacities to determine suitable entry points and replication of best practices. The best practices for particular consideration include:

- NGO integrated approaches to service provision.
- The use of Community Resource Persons to deliver Services

- Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation methods.
- Developing and using extension packages
- Farmer enterprise development, marketing and technology transfer

iii) District NGO forums as an entry point for NGO participation in the NAADS

District NGO forums should be strengthened and used to monitor and evaluate the programme. They would also be instrumental in developing the NGO database comprising of the various NGO competences that could be drawn upon by the NAADS. This would provide an entry point for an improved NGO-NAADS interface so that NAADS does not appear to be running a programme that is parallel to the NGO activities in the communities. Services in Fisheries and Forestry were found to be limited among NGOs. NAADS could consider building the capacity of the NGOs to provide these services in the NAADS arrangement.

iv) Administrative Structures, Budgeting and accounting systems

The roles of the administrative structures in the implementation processes should be reviewed to reduce on bureaucracy, corruption and unnecessary delays in implementing the programme. The implementing agencies with national programmes should deal direct with NAADS Secretariat both for programme implementation and accountabilities. There should be a one administrative center at the districts fully responsible for the NAADS programmes.

Accountabilities and reporting requirements need to be reviewed to take into account the fact that NAADS programme form an integral part of other NGOs programmes and systems. Budgeting should be based on additional benchmarks like size of the geographical area, physical features and infrastructure ,size of clientele and market price rates of each district to avoid financial mis-matches and imbalances.

v) Establishment of district fora

District fora (farmers, NGOs and governments) should be periodically convened to review progress and provide new insights preferably bi-annually.

vi) Contracts between NAADS and Service providers

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NAADS and the service providers should be reviewed to take into consideration the interests of either party. Drafting should be participatory with the NGO given a chance to negotiate the terms with NAADS.

Conclusion

This policy brief has outlined key policy recommendations and actions arising from a Review of NGO activities related to the NAADs which was carried out under the PMA project. The study was carried out with a view to strengthening and streamlining NGO involvement in the NAADS programme.

The involvement and facilitation of the District NGO fora in particular, are expected to be instrumental in enhancing NGO participation in the NAADS programme. At the same time the participation of NGOs in monitoring and evaluation of the programme as well as periodic reviews will go further to ensure regular contribution of the NGO experiences that will enrich the activities of the NAADS programme.

