



## Implementation of the Community Mobilization and Empowerment Strategy. What are the key issues?

### Overview

The Community Mobilisation and Empowerment Strategy is derived from the Community Sensitization and Empowerment Sub-programme of the Community Mobilisation and Mind-set Change (CMMC) Programme. This is one of the programmes in the third National Development Plan (NDIII) contributing to the objective “Enhance effective mobilization of citizens, families and communities for development.”

The strategy provides a framework for effective mobilization and participation, proposes innovative approaches to mobilization of communities, and also provide an overarching guide in community mobilization. Successful implementation of all government programmes requires responsive participation of communities. However, for communities to respond and participate they need to be mobilized and sensitized.

The strategy targets households to ensure they adopt positive attitudes, values and practices that will engender social-economic development at household level and thus rapidly and substantively contribute to poverty eradication. It also targets the leaders to deliver quality services while being accountable to the communities. Inadequate social mobilization has been the limiting factor to enable communities demand for better services, to manage and sustain community investments as well as respond to economic opportunities.

This policy brief highlights the key issues in implementation of the Community Mobilization and Empowerment Strategy and proposes recommendations.

### Key Issues

1. Limited prioritization of community mobilization and mind-set change and thus inadequate financing allocated to it.
2. Persistent, disjointed community mobilization efforts that are segmented across programmes and sub-programmes.
3. Limited institutional capacity to guide and shape the mind-sets and attitudes of the population

### Introduction

The Community Mobilization and Empowerment (CME) strategy was conceived in 2006 conceptualizing integrated community mobilization. Considerable achievements were made in terms of strengthening multi-sectoral service delivery under Government projects and programmes. For example, the Community Based Service Department of Local Governments (LGs) was the lead in mobilizing under the Programme for Modernization of Agriculture and consequently provided a non-sectoral grant for community mobilization. For the Community, Agricultural Infrastructure Improvement Programme underworks, 10% of the funds were used for mobilization and forming road user committees.

In addition, the National Agriculture Advisory Services strengthened the mobilization of communities and the formation of farmer groups using the integrated community mobilization approach. For the Directorate of Water Development Grant, 12% of funds in LGs were allocated to



software activities such as the establishment of water source committees, training and conducting post-construction support led by the Community Development Officers (CDOs). However, the strategy was reviewed due to changes in the policy frameworks of government such as the new programmes with attendant programme designs such as Parish Development Model (PDM) and NDPIII programmes.

The NDPIII forms the overarching national development framework, under which programme interventions and reforms are designed and implemented. One of the justifications of the strategy is facilitating the implementation of programme policies and successful implementation requires a response and participation of communities. Moreover, for communities to respond and participate they need to be mobilized and sensitized.

### Key Issues

**Poor mobilization:** This issue is prevalent in various sectors/sub-programmes. For example, under Education, despite the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997, some parents are still reluctant to send their children to school or allow them to complete their primary education. This evidence justifies the need for sensitization and mobilization of parents to appreciate the value of education for all as a contributor to Uganda's poverty eradication efforts.

Under natural resources, demand for fuel and wood and consequent deforestation are threatening the environment. Continued drainage of wetlands has had damaging effects on agriculture and the availability of water sources for production since some of the activities damaging the environment are carried out at the household level. Thus mobilizing and sensitizing households about the importance and means of conserving the environment is of paramount importance.

The roads sub-sector recognizes the vital role of communities in planning, implementing and maintaining the roads infrastructure. The roads committees are supposed to serve as a medium of information flow to the populace concerning the ongoing road works in communities, road safety issues, and preservation of road reserves. However, information flow is not always effective. This information which reveals opportunities as well as responsibilities for the communities needs to be disseminated and shared.

Access to justice is a prerequisite for the social and economic well-being and advancement of any community. Poor knowledge about rights and obligations by the public and the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) staff as well as poor compliance with law and order are major constraints to the quality of justice. Through the strategy, communities will be sensitized and educated about their rights as well as responsibilities and mechanisms for enforcement or redress in cases of violations.

However, due to weaknesses in coordination, the ongoing community mobilization by various actors is largely ineffective and shows little impact on the communities.

**Inadequate budgetary allocations:** Financing of community mobilization and empowerment activities at all levels of Government is still a major constraint to service delivery. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development's (MGLSD) outreach in terms of support supervision, and monitoring of community mobilization and empowerment as well as other social development sector interventions at the community level has generally been inadequate.

Currently, the annual funding of Ug shs 5.64 billion (bn) is disbursed to all Higher and Lower Local Governments (LLGs) for decentralized services translating to an average of Ug shs 295,927 per LLG per month. This is to cover Functional Adult Literacy (FAL), probation services, culture, labour, gender, social rehabilitation, etc. These funds are



not sufficient to effectively mobilize, empower and protect communities.

**Inadequate staffing of community development workers:** Since 2002/03, the government embarked on the process of revitalizing the community development function in LGs by having two Community Development Workers (CDWs) in each sub-county countrywide. Presently the structure provides for one CDW at the sub-county and two in the Town Councils. This makes it hard for one CDW at the sub-county to deliver services under various social sectors adequately. Whereas there are supposed to be 2,325 staff, the human resource strength of the Community Based Services Department in the Higher and LLGs stood at 2,033 staff in post for FY 2020/21. These are inadequate to fully meet the set standards for the function.

In addition to inadequate staffing, is the demotivating structure of the Community Development function which doesn't allow progressive promotions from Senior Position to District Community Development Officer.

**Parallel recruitment of CDWs by different sub-programmes:** Several Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have contracted civil society organizations and recruited sociologists and social workers with varying skills and competencies to spearhead the community mobilization function in their institutions. However, these recruited staff are applying ad-hoc methods of community mobilization which do not catalyse communities to own and demand government services. Instead, they have propelled counter-community mobilization processes which are highly monetized and politicized.

**Poor community mobilization infrastructure at the LGs:** The Government committed to promoting the socio-economic well-being of communities through the establishment of 668 community centres at sub-county levels countrywide. These were to support the sensitization, empowerment and training of citizens for the improvement of literacy and

numeracy skills. A total of 213 community centres are in existence with varying statuses of the physical structure and use. Currently, most of these centres are completely out of use and in dire need of renovation and equipping. Other centres are being used for other purposes, completely different from their original intended objectives. Consequently, this is likely to result in low participation and uptake of development programmes.

**Persistent disjointed community mobilization efforts that are segmented across sub-programmes:** The MGLSD has the Constitutional mandate to undertake community mobilization activities to increase uptake of various services including health, education, works and technical services, production and marketing amongst others. However, other implementing institutions also implement community mobilization, yet this requires a systematic continuous engagement which time other institutions do not have. This has resulted in low community response and uptake of Government programmes as a result of the disjointed nature of community mobilization undertaken by the different MDAs.

**Limited institutional capacity to support the CMMC Programme:** Many Programme institutions undertaking community mobilization cannot carry out training and capacity building to create awareness of the programme's interventions. However, some key programme actors were not allocated resources to undertake the programme activities. These included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Local Government, and the LGs. This could be a result of the unavailability of funds, unqualified personnel, and a lack of monitoring and evaluation systems in place to monitor progress.

**Limited prioritization of CMMC interventions:** These are usually software interventions and are not prioritised as their outputs are difficult to quantify and outcomes may take very long. To that effect allocating their funds may not usually be the first call.



This implies that if the government does not prioritize resources for community mobilization, the function will continue to be weakened and the government will suffer losses occasioned by the non-participation of citizens in the government programmes.

**Lack of an enabling law:** This law is meant to promote community participation, strengthen institutions for community mobilization and encourage households to put in place basic facilities for their wellbeing. Provisions for community mobilization and empowerment under other existing laws are generally deficient. For example, while in the past the administrative cadre comprising the sub-county chief, parish chief and sub-county chief were the key enforcers of the law, the emergence of politically powerful Local Councillors has in essence overshadowed their influence. Secondly, politicians are less keen to enforce laws because of the risk of antagonizing the voters in the community.

### Conclusion

The Community Mobilization and Empowerment Strategy has both financial and human resource implications for many stakeholders to participate in the requisite interventions. While Government's effort to reduce the fiscal deficit is appreciated, funding this strategy which is a priority cannot be ignored. One of the available options is to reprioritize within the Medium Term Expenditure Framework ceiling.

The Community Mobilization and Empowerment process encompasses and cuts across several sub-programmes and institutions. The availability of funds for the implementation of the Strategy is essential for realizing its extended outcomes.

### Recommendations

- The MGLSD with other implementing agencies should engage stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and allocate resources to ensure that their efforts are consistent and complementary.

- The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) should prioritize funding to strengthen Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation to ensure efficient and effective delivery of community mobilization services. This includes: the construction of community centres and regional rural training centres, and increasing the number and quality of CDWs to coordinate the community mobilization empowerment function.
- Civil society should empower citizens to demand for services, accountability and transparency from implementing agencies. Communities wait for things to be done for them and this is attributable to the predominantly top-down approach to service delivery, which must change.
- The MGLSD and other implementing agencies should develop an enabling law to promote community participation, strengthen institutions for community mobilization and encourage households to put in place basic facilities for their wellbeing.

### References

1. BMAU Community Mobilization and Mind-set Change Annual Budget Monitoring Report, FY 2021/22.
2. Community Mobilisation and Empowerment Strategy, October 2021.
3. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development Strategic Plan (MGLSDSP) 2020/21 -2024/25.

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