



Monitoring Resource Allocation and Utilisation in Uganda: UDN's Experiences, Success and Challenges

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1.0 Introduction

Uganda Debt Network was formed in 1996 as an ad hoc coalition of Organisations and Individuals to campaign for debt relief for Uganda under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative of The World Bank and IMF. In 1998 UDN was registered as an NGO under the NGO Registration Statute and started operating. In 1999 UDN was incorporated as Limited Liability Company with no share holding under Uganda Company Law 1964.

When it was formed, UDN had a membership of only 23 organisations and 3 individuals. By 2003, the membership had grown to 40 organizations and 101 individuals. When the organizations started, its primary focus was the campaign for debt relief. To-date, UDN has four main programme areas namely: a) Community Participation and Empowerment b) Policy Analysis and Socio-Economic Research c) Budget Advocacy Initiative e) Governance and Rights.

UDN programmes are implemented in a way that involves the people at the grassroots so that they can benefit from utilisation of debt relief. The Poverty Action Fund monitoring Committees (PMCs) composed of grassroots have been formed to spearhead the monitoring and evaluation of poverty focused programmes that are implemented by Government for their benefit.

Since its formation UDN has spearheaded a number of initiatives and campaigns. These among others include the following key activities:

- a) Actively supported and participated in the jubilee 2000 campaign the world-wide campaign for total cancellation of debt of poor countries in which over 100,000 signatures were collected and presented to the G7 leaders meeting in Cologne in 1999.
- b) Supported communities to establish PAF Monitoring Committees in 17 districts in Uganda from 1999 - 2003.
- c) Launched the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation Systems (CBMES) that now operates in seven districts with over 5,000 people participating.
- d) Was the Lead Agency for the Civil Society Organizations input in the revision of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in 2000 and facilitated the CSOs input in the formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).
- e) Organised and facilitated anti-corruption campaigns at national and grassroots levels.
- f) Participated in national and international policy initiatives such as the Reality of Aid, Civil Society Budget Initiative (CSBI), The International Forum on Corruption, the International Conference on Economic, Social Cultural Rights (ESCR), HIPC evaluation, MDG Experts Seminar etc.

UDN has in the process become one of the fastest growing advocacy organizations in Uganda. This growth has taken place despite the many challenges in the operating environment of Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) in general and UDN in particular. Both external and internal factors have largely impacted on the growth of the organization. The internal factors include the composition and capacity of the memberships, its leadership and how it is managed. The external factors include understanding and weathering the

contradictions of working to challenge public policy management in the country and the demands of a constituency seeking quick results in a complex and continuously changing macro-economic and political environment.

2.0 Legal and Policy Framework for Civil Society Participation in Policy Processes

Government of Uganda opened up space for civil society especially at national level to participate in policy planning and formulation. CSOs have been invited to contribute to critical policy inputs in the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) and through Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) workshops, Consultative Group (CG) Meetings at national level and at local (District and Sub-county) levels.

This is in line with provisions in the Uganda Constitution 1995; Article 38(1) states that *"Every Ugandan has the right to participate in the affairs of government individually or through his or her representative in accordance with the law"*. And 38 (ii) states that *"Every Ugandan has the right to participate in peaceful activities to influence the policies of government through civic organisations"*.

The constitution also compels the state to formulate and implement policies and programmes that are participatory. Article X of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy states that *"Government shall take the necessary steps to involve the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes which affect them"*.

The opening of space for civil society participation has created both opportunities challenges for CSOs in Uganda. The opportunity arises from the fact that the country can develop effective pro-poor policies on the basis of the inputs and participation of the poor people themselves. This is important because;

- a) Government has since 1997 committed itself to poverty eradication as the main goal of policy planning and has identified key social sector areas such as education, health, water and sanitation, rural roads agriculture and others as priorities.
- b) With full implementation of the decentralisation policy more resources are presently being committed to local governments both at the district and lower levels as conditional grants. This requires that Civil Society must participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the implementation of such policies for the benefit of the poor.

Key challenges for CSOs include:

- a) The policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are a complex process and need to be well understood and analysed.
- b) Both the civil society at national and local levels lack the necessary capacities to participate effectively and contribute to such processes.
- c) It will take a long time to realise the objectives of good governance and democratic accountability through empowering civil society as enshrined in the Constitution.

Therefore, there was need to build stronger and effective institutional and organisational

structures and develop the necessary partnerships with government, national and international stakeholders to ensure continued civil society participation.

3.0 UDN's Experience in Monitoring Public Resources

UDN's monitoring perspective is based on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E), which is a process through which communities:

- a) Participate in acquiring and sharing knowledge and skills through learning processes to enable them act on critical issues of concern in their localities.
- b) Are facilitated to engage in monitoring and evaluating budget performance of selected programmes.
- c) Share and control the content, the process and the results of the PM&E activity with their leaders, officials and other stakeholders at local levels.
- d) Engage in taking or identifying corrective actions to inform policy processes at local and national levels.

3.1 Participatory Monitoring of Poverty Action Fund (PAF)

In 1999 UDN initiated the civil society monitoring the PAF, by establishing Poverty Action Fund (PAF) Monitoring Committees (PMCs²) in 17 districts in Uganda³ to monitor the PAF⁴ resources. The monitoring focused on the quality and provision of services accruing to the two pillars of the PEAP funded by the PAF; *"increasing ability of the poor to raise their incomes, and enhancing quality of life of the poor"*

PMC's roles/interests in monitoring included among others:

- a) Complimenting Government efforts through tracking public expenditure and ensuring value for money at local levels.
- b) Ascertaining whether funds disbursed by the central government reached the target beneficiaries i.e. Health centres, schools, roads, Water and Sanitation.
- c) Ascertaining whether the received funds are used for purposes for which they are meant.
- d) Finding out whether public expenditure addresses critical issues of poverty.

In monitoring public expenditure UDN set up complimentary strategies and mechanisms of advocacy on governance and rights, which address issues of transparency and accountability, Rights Based Approaches (RBAs) to development. All these efforts are geared towards strengthening the monitoring committees with knowledge and skills in monitoring.

UDN encourages and supports as many of the communities as possible who intend to establish monitoring committees at the local levels. UDN provides logistical and institutional support to the communities willing and able to form such committees. UDN

² These are composed of community representatives

³ Kamuli, Bushenyi, Mayuge, Mbale, Soroti, Katakwi, Luweero, Kiboga, Iganga, Lira, Soroti, Kumi, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Palisa, Bugiri, and Kanungu

⁴ The PAF was created in 1997/8 by the GoU as a fiscal module for channelling funds 'saved' from the debt relief to poverty eradication. The PAF transfers are in the form of conditional, unconditional, and block grants that are sent to local governments to fund poverty priority areas such as UPE, PHC, Water and Sanitation, Agriculture Extension, Feeder Roads Maintenance etc

believes that it is more sustainable if groups took the initiative and developed their own committees.

Since the committees were formed, UDN has been involved in the process of building their capacity to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and lobbying and in understanding policy planning at national and local levels. The training has inspired the committee members to the extent that some of them are now organising monitoring exercises, publish their monitoring reports and use them as a tool for advocacy with their leaders.

The lesson learnt here is that if citizens are empowered, they are able and willing to take charge of their own affairs and demand public accountability, good governance and effective implementation of anti-poverty programmes. However, the experience shows that communities only lack the necessary motivation, encouragement and strategic support for them to actively participate in policy processes.

3.2 The Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES)

Deriving from the experiences of PAF monitoring, in 2002 UDN initiated and piloted the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES) in four districts⁵ in Uganda. To date the CBMES has been established in another three⁶ districts.

The CBMES is an approach for engaging communities in continuous monitoring and evaluation of government programs. It is a process aimed at mobilising communities to participate fully and effectively in identifying and monitoring the quality of delivery of public services. It involves people at the grassroots to measure the performance of government programmes, their relevance and impact on the community.

Participatory approaches are used in selecting monitoring sites⁷, selecting community representatives⁸, developing monitoring tools, identifying monitoring areas, collecting and analysing of information, presentation of findings without limiting community involvement.

The process ensures that the communities understand their rights, obligations, and entitlements. Part of the methodology applies a socio-economic rights approach to build the confidence of the community to participate actively in public expenditure monitoring. This has led to creation of a conscious civil society at grassroots level⁹ capable of demanding open, accountable and transparent utilisation of public resources.

⁵ Tororo, Kamuli, Kanungu and Bushenyi

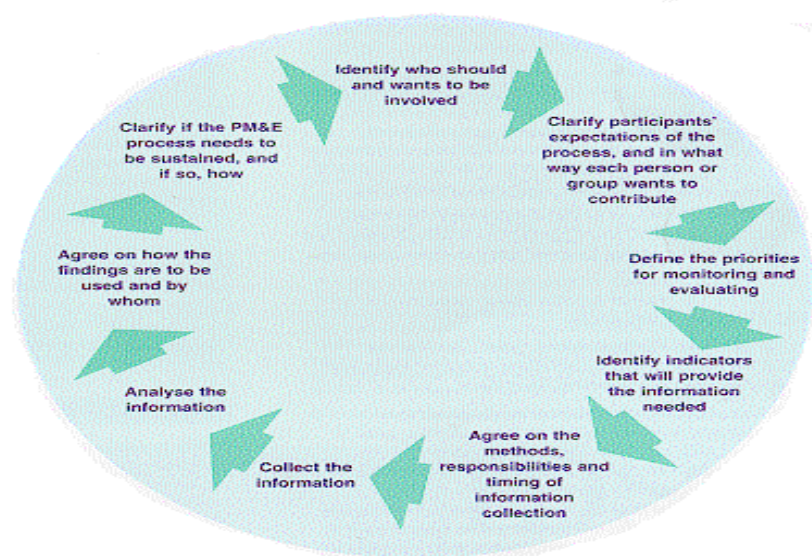
⁶ Iganga, Kumi and Bugiri

⁷ Sub counties and Parishes.

⁸ These are trained in participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

⁹ Three grassroots civil society coalitions have been formed. These are Teso Anticorruption Coalition (TAC) (four districts in North Eastern Uganda), Busoga Anticorruption Coalition (BAC) (Four districts in Busoga region) and Eastern Region Advocacy Coalition (ERAC) (six districts in Eastern Uganda). All these are community lead initiatives.

Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation Process



The Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation information flow- diagram

Level	Activities	Outputs
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting stakeholders; Donors, parliamentarians, Ministry of Finance and other policy actors to present and discuss findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciation of UDN efforts Improved media coverage
↑ District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Dialogues District reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased interaction, relationships & collaboration Radio programmes
↑ Sub County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub County Dialogues Compiling Sub County Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub County Reports & Action Plans
↑ Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing indicators Monitoring Analysis of findings and report writing Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of Coalitions Radio songs and jingles Monitoring and Evaluation tool

4.0 Lessons Learnt, Achievements and Challenges

4.1 What are the lessons learnt so far?

- Local government leadership support to community monitoring is very important. Communities that have been supported by local leadership have accrued benefits from

monitoring. For example, Kamuli district (Eastern Uganda); local government leaders recognised community monitoring and effectively supported the community monitoring work.

- b) Low literacy levels hamper community participation. Monitoring requires some one who can at least read and understanding the figures, recording information collected and analysis.
- c) Inadequate women participation. In most the districts where community monitoring is taking place, despite emphasis on gender balance women have not effectively participated in these processes due to patriarchy.
- d) Continued learning by all stakeholders on the importance of community participation in policy process. In most districts leaders still question the legitimacy and representation of community monitors.
- e) If empowered communities can hold their leaders accountable and ensure effective provision of public services. The importance of grassroots people holding their leaders accountable cannot be overemphasised.
- f) The process of community empowerment though not directly political, has indirect consequence on how political agendas are determined at local levels. For instance, some of the community monitors are beginning to take-up political positions due to their active involved in monitoring.

4.2 What are the achievements of community monitoring?

4.2.1 At community level

- a) A framework¹⁰ for monitoring provision of public services has been established. The structures are used to monitor poverty priority sectors¹¹. This has led to:
 - Improved quality and delivery of services i.e. teachers and health workers performance improved, availability of drugs
 - Repair of poorly constructed school buildings
 - Return of stolen building materials
 - Arrest of thieving chiefs
- b) Active interaction between communities and their leader through lobby meetings (dialogues) and radio programmes¹².
- c) Increasing access to public information at local levels. Communities have laid strategies on how to access information on public expenditure through building strategic alliances with local government officials and councillors.

4.2.2 UDN/Civil Society Level

- a) Formation of regional civil society coalitions to monitor public resources. These include: the Eastern Region Advocacy Coalition (ERAC)¹³ and Busoga Anti-Corruption Coalition (BAC)¹⁴, and Teso Anti corruption Coalition¹⁵.

¹⁰ The include monitoring indicators, structures, committees, tools -monitoring *score card*.

¹¹ such as health, education, water, roads, agriculture extension services, water and sanitation

¹² UDN sponsors radio programmes on three community FM radios were community monitors present and discuss their monitoring findings

¹³ ERAC is comprised of nine members (5 male and 4 female) representing civil society organisations of Mbale, Tororo, Busia, Sironko, Kapchorwa and Pallisa districts

¹⁴ BAC is comprised of nine members representing four districts of Kamuli, Iganga, Bugiri, and Mayuge

¹⁵ TAC comprises of districts from Teso region.

- b) The analysis of government policies such as the budget and their impact on poverty has lead to increased expenditure in social sectors such as education, health care etc.
- c) Engagement with policy makers to become more responsive to the needs, interests and demands of the poor people has increased Civil Society input in the policy process – Ministry of Finance (Poverty Monitoring Network), MPs, district leadership.
- d) Development of close linkages with the media who support the work of the network in information disseminated on a regular basis to a wider audience.

4.3 Key challenges

- a) Sustainability of community efforts- CBMES initiative. Several community members join the monitoring with high expectations that include financial gains which might not be met.
- b) Costs of replication. There are increasing demands from various communities who want to monitor, however, UDN has limited capacity –human and financial to facilitate the process of replication.
- c) Ensuring that policy makers and stakeholders appreciate the value of community participation. Some times government officials and technocrats have queried the mandate of civil society monitoring.
- d) Access to information and interpretation of public expenditure figures hinders timely analysis and monitoring. This undermines effective participation in policy processes at national and local levels.
- e) Increasing voice beyond the local levels. Linking community indicators and concerns with national level priorities.
- f) Linking macro-policy with micro-policy. How can micro- level concerns- such increasing spending on primary health care – be reflected in the macro-level policy of reducing budget deficit.

5.0 Conclusion and Way Forward

Participatory community monitoring is an effective strategy for increasing accountability and transparency from government in the way it manages public funds. It enables the poor to increase their choices and voices in policy formulation and implementation. It helps in opening up traditionally elitist political exercise that has led to control over policy processes and decision making to civic participation. Therefore there is need to:

- a) Strength civil society - guarantors of their participation and rights
- b) Increase choices and voices of poor people in all aspects - Policy processes, monitoring and evaluation - e.g. women participation
- c) Advocacy on poverty focused policies - PRSPs, Budgets, Taxation
- d) Increase democratic space - increasing participation of poor people in decision making processes
- e) Give strategic support to community based monitoring initiatives

Case Studies on Community Monitoring

I. Community Monitoring in Tororo District

During the inception of CBMES Pilot in Tororo District in Nov- Dec 2002, a district dialogue meeting was organized by Budget Community Monitors to present their monitoring findings to local leaders & community members.

The Health sector particularly raised concern on poor management, procurement & control systems in Mulanda Health Centre where 31 mattresses out of 40 had disappeared and 7 out of 8 bicycles purchased for the centre were also missing in less than a year since August 2000.

The monitors found that there was no evidence of purchase of health materials; they could not ascertain the cost of drugs & other utensils.

The Local Officials took interest to rectify the situation. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) interrogated the in-charge of the Health Centre. The stolen materials were recovered in less than a month.

II. Changes brought about by CBMES in Bushenyi District

The CBMES was launched August 2002, since then communities have been monitoring. Communities in Kakanju S/C complained about the loss of Iron sheets from Kakanju P/S. At first the District Officials were reluctant to follow-up the case. But after a district dialogue, they took up the matter. The Head mistress paid back an amount of money equivalent to the stolen property. Iron sheets were bought & returned to the school.

Communities reported poor health services in Kakanju Health Centre III which had been aggravated by: bribery to get served, patients buying of their own syringes & medicine from the local shops, poor hospitality of medical personnel, late opening and early closing. The Health personnel are now punctual and the Centre opens and closes in the right time. As of now drugs are available and delivery is done twice in a month; packaging materials and syringes are available at a free cost to the patient and health workers are responsive to patients.

III. CSOs Investigation of Utilization of School Facilities Grants in Katakwi District

In April 2002, UDN together with CSOs in Teso region-Eastern Uganda investigated and produced a report on the misuse of SFG in Katakwi district. The report was widely disseminated and shared with various stakeholders including government; Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The report was first refuted by some government officials and local leaders in Katakwi.

The OPM together with MoES carried out an independent investigation and found out that CS findings were true. In August 2002 the OPM organized several meetings with various stakeholders including UDN and CSOs in Teso to discuss the findings and the way forward.

Consequently, a number of actions were taken including the dismissal of the district tender board; signing of an agreement between Katakwi district and the contractors to re-build the classrooms; recruitment of a new district engineer and temporarily suspension of SFG funds to Katakwi district was until the conditions were fulfilled.

The SFG guidelines have been revised to ensure quality construction of classrooms. Gov't now appreciates CS monitoring work and is willing to support it. The OPM has expresses interest in signing a MoU with UDN on coordination of monitoring activities.