Decentralised Service Delivery, A Makerere University Training Pilot: Cr 3624 Implementation Completion Report December 2006

1 Background

The ***Decentralized Service Delivery, A Makerere University Training Pilot project*** (2002-2006) was part of a capacity building program for decentralization. In collaboration with five universities and one other Tertiary institution Makerere University mounted this project as a responsive initiative to address the government policy of decentralization through capacity building. This was the first time that government planned together with a tertiary institution to address a government policy through higher education institutions. Activities for the program were informed by a primary research carried out by Makerere Institute of Social Research on the "*Demand for Human Resources from the perspective of the district*" in 2000. The program set out to explore and document lessons that would inform the improvement of capacity building interventions by higher education institutions through the Learning and Innovations Loan.

Specifically, the project objectives and design were relevant not only to Makerere University and its partners but were critical to the success of development efforts in Uganda. The program not only underpinned the role of higher education in national development but also highlighted the need for support from government and development partners to meet its surmounting challenges of providing and increasing quality research and relevant education. The partnering institutions to Makerere University were Mbarara University of Science and Technology, The Islamic University in Uganda, Nkumba University, Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda Christian University, and the Uganda Management Institute,

The program focused on strengthening decentralized service delivery, with specific emphasis on six areas of Health, Agriculture, Engineering, Education, Governance and Financial Management which have strong potential to contribute to the PEAP's overarching strategic results. The creation of local government capacity was seen as instrumental to improve service delivery and ultimately contribute to poverty reduction. Higher education institutions are better placed to offer sustainable capacity building and provide a continuum of activities including research, skills building, career development and curriculum reviews that are likely to outlive the external driven capacity building interventions. The program was mutually beneficial to both government and higher education institutions.

2   Assessment of project objective

2.1   Design

The Project Development Objective (PDO) as outlined in the Development Credit Agreement was to: "*develop an effective and replicable mechanism for the improvement of public service delivery at local government levels, through the improvement and restructuring, of educational and other training services offered by Makerere University and Partner Institutions*".   Commitment and involvement of the various players/stakeholders (government, Local Government and HEIs) at the design phase facilitated a sharper interpretation and internalisation of the PDO. This translated into a harmonization of the versions of the PDO in both the PAD and DCA. The working version of the PDO that is transcribed in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP)--the document that guided the implementation of the project was: "T*o facilitate the central government, higher education institutions and local government councils to jointly build relevant capacity for improved and sustainable service delivery that would contribute to poverty reduction through innovations*". In essence, the development objective focused on key operational areas of sustainable capacity of HEIs namely: teaching; curriculum review and research through innovations.

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2.2   Implementation

The project was implemented by a Committee made up of representatives of Government, HEIs, Local Government and an external member from Kenya and Tanzania.   The Committee adopted a flexible mode of operation which comprised of continuous assessment of performance and participatory decision making.

Achievement can be viewed at three levels:

i) *Higher Education Institutions.* The capacity of HEIs to reorient their curricular with the objective of continuously producing graduates relevant to the needs of society, while at the same time engaging in basic and applied research;

ii) *Local Governments (Politicians/Technical Staff).* Creation of a critical mass of staff in pilot[1] local governments with relevant and immediately applicable skills for service delivery, good governance and poverty reduction;

iii) *Central Government.* Contribution to policy formulation and review through basic and applied research.

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[1] These were Arua, Yumbe, Mbale, Sironko, Kampala, Rakai, Mbarara and Ntungamo. These have now been split into more than 15 districts benefiting from the pilot project

3 Evaluation of performance

3.1 *Evaluation*

The project team rates the performance as highly satisfactory. The project outperformed expectations on all established indicators although it had a late start. Inspite of challenges in the Monitoring and Evaluation component, there has been a consistent satisfactory rating by all supervision missions, reviews and stakeholders. Indeed the project was lauded as having the potential to improve capacity building in a sustainable manner by the OED. Likewise the project was rated among the top ten in Africa in the preparation of comprehensive Financial Monitoring Reports. The project's outstanding performance is attributed to the following:

1. Flexibility in operation. The project was treated as a learning process and the project team periodically reviewed established operational guidelines. This provided an avenue for learning outcomes and redress when the need arose;
2. Ownership of the Project was high. A joint planning team of Ugandan University and government staff worked for several months in the preparation of the capacity building program. This team transitioned into the I@Mak.com, the governing body of the project;
3. Commitment to the project was unsurpassable; Members attendance of all business and policy meeting was on average 90%. The Ministry of Finance Senior government officials and senior University academics commitment to the project was demonstrated by the time they devoted to this project;
4. Implementation was based on empirical evidence. The Makerere Institute for Social Research was employed to do a study of the staff capacity and staffing needs of local government prior to the commencement of the project;
5. The project benefited from a long term relationship between the Rockefeller Foundation (Bank's Partner) and Makerere University, while the Bank's team had a rich working experience with Ugandan local governments;
6. There was a unique collaboration between the two funding bodies, which created a synergy that brought together the higher education institutions and the local governments in an appropriate environment for a Learning Innovation Loan;
7. At the onset of the project, the implementation team received an all embracing "Quality at Exit" training in the execution of World Bank funded projects;
8. There was a demonstrated evidence of team work by all the players involved. The Task Team Leader and the Rockefeller Foundation participated in the periodic reviews by the I@mak.com. This facilitated

fast operationalisation of decision taken at the reviews and shortened the approval process in cases where a different operational arrangement was agreed.

3.2 Implementation

Overall, the project was able to achieve what it set out to do. All indicators were outperformed. The Committee undertook policy and budgetary reviews at every stage of the implementation of this project. As a result of the Committee's interventions, per activity allocations were revised and more activities were actually carried out than had been outlined at project inception. Implementation arrangements that attest to this were: the versatility of the Committee combining government, universities and LG officials to make decisions that affect academic institutions greatly contributed to this success; Credibility of the Secretariat and Makerere with stakeholders grew during the implementation, as had been hoped; Coordination with University policies was strong and I@Mak, formally became a subcommittee of the Makerere University Senate.

As a result of this intervention the project has been able to:

1. Equip University staff and students with a better understanding and appreciation of the needs of Ugandan society from the perspective of service delivery. Specifically the project has been able to make university staff understand the major policies of government especially those aimed at reducing poverty and other governance issues. This was achieved through a tailor made course on the "Basic Principles of Decentralization" which was offered to 1135 staff of collaborating HEIs, central government and local governments. The course impacted on the three cardinal roles of the University of teaching, research and community outreach while at the same time highlighting the role that local governments can play to influence HEI curricular. A collaborative arrangement among HEIs and between HEIs and Local Governments has emerged and is positively shaping how institutions relate. Several activities of this project helped to increase the relevance of their training programs to Ugandan development needs,

2. Review existing and or develop new curriculum with a view to orienting it to the knowledge and skills gaps identified in government and particularly the local governments. Thirteen new curricular were developed, 42 were reviewed. As a result Makerere and other partners can produce graduates that are immediately relevant to the needs of society. Through the different process of curriculum development especially field visits and research, academic staff were exposed to real life situations in which graduates operate after completion of studies. This has augmented the teaching delivery modes with relevant and practical examples;

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3. Equip students practical skills through internships / field attachments during which students got experiential learning has been one of the key highlights of the program. At inception the projected expected to take 400 students through the internship exercise. Due to sustainability reasons, facilitation per student was reduced enabling us to take 8137 students from Makerere and Mbarara University of Science and Technology. This entailed more than 2000% of expected output. These students benefited from the experience of practicing professionals and 59 Local governments benefited from the increased human resource during the periods that the students were attached to the different internship sites.

4. Create a critical mass of knowledgeable and experienced staff in each of the pilot local governments by providing career / professional training of selected and qualified staff at undergraduate and masters' level. 113 LG out of the DCA target of 60 staff received full undergraduate scholarships from these target districts, and 82 out of the DCA target of 20 received full Masters Scholarships. Most students returned to district government jobs during University vacations. The follow-up study of beneficiaries indicated good grades for the students. Those who had completed (95 undergraduates and 40 Full time Masters) their courses indicated a high return rate (80%). The returnees generally reported increased work assignments or supervisory responsibilities. Their supervisors have also positively rated the graduates with enhanced abilities. This aspect of the pilot programs contributed to the emerging discourse in Uganda that such staff must be offered career development opportunities and not simply skills training. This principle is being adopted for the successor project of LGPD II. Additionally, the Ministry of Local Government has established minimum requirement at university degree for key positions (e.g. sub county chiefs) as part of the recent restructuring program.

5. Benefit LG staff through participation in short courses including refresher courses. The universities involved in the project successfully developed a menu of appropriate, well designed short courses and degree programs aimed at strengthening the skills and capacity of the staffs of local governments. Some of the courses developed have been adopted as part of the priority training programs in the ministry of local government for which the LGs can contract authorized providers, including Makerere and its partner institutions for training and educational services. Capacity building in Local governments was not limited to technical staff. Besides the technical staff, the project supported seventy three (73) political leaders from the pilot districts benefited from training on the roles and responsibilities of politicians in a decentralized environment

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6. Stimulate competition in service delivery through the Vice Chancellor's Local Government Award for innovations. The three year initiative gave first, second and third place prizes to local government innovative achievements. These prizes served to draw national attention to important innovations made at the local level, and to encourage wider efforts to innovate.

7. Stimulate competition in academic innovation through the Vice Chancellor's Academic Excellence Award for Innovation. Eight awards were given to deserving projects both curricular and research in the participating universities. Some of these technologies such as the soil kit, and the soil stabilized building materials have been disseminated and adopted through the model villages. Government has adopted the use of soil stabilized building materials to construct teachers' houses cheaply.

8. Strengthen collaboration between higher education institutions and local governments. The project worked closely with the Ugandan Local Governments Association (ULGA). Activities with ULGA included: 52 weekly radio program; development of the ULGA website http//:www.ulga.org; establishment and holding of seven communities of practice. The communities of practice served to disseminate the VC award winning innovations and draw attention to key service delivery issues. As a result the Uganda Local Governments Association has been strengthened, as has the Universities – Ministry of Local Government cooperation.

9. Support staff and student research on and for decentralization. A significant amount of research was funded, far beyond the original targets. As a result of the budgetary revisions 116 instead of 75 Masters students who had already completed coursework were supported to undertake research. The DCA target was 15 students. 43 students have since completed their masters programs. In addition eighteen (18) staff at Makerere University were supported to undertake PhD level research. Sixty six staff from Makerere and Partnering Institutions were supported to undertake research projects.

10. *Disseminate Research Results.* Research has been disseminated through the model villages, presentations at international and national conferences, publication in refereed journals, exhibitions, newspapers and stand alone books. The outcome assessment study revealed that little had been done to disseminate the results from the student research. Sixteen (16) publications that can improve service delivery local government and serve as teaching materials resulted from the project. For example a dictionary of Decentralization was produced that explains the terminology of decentralization in the local context of Uganda. '*Enkuluze*' Luganda dictionary was produced. Teachers and student Swahili books were produced for primary schools. A manual was produced for those training local health workers on how to deal with mental health problems. A book was

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published on the proper use of indigenous construction materials. Local reading materials as stated by the Ugandan Prime Minister when he launched the publications contextualize the local conditions. The project also initiated the Makerere University research Journal which will ensure that research materials from the project and other research work get appropriate avenues for dissemination.

11. Build institutions of excellence. The project provided for study tours in an effort to benchmark good practices and to facilitate the establishment of institutions of excellence relevant to local needs. Four Faculties from Makerere visited universities in Thailand, South Africa, USA and United kingdom. One of the offshoots of this was the establishment of two model villages (Obayia in Arua and Nsumba in Rakai districts) to disseminate research findings and directly link HEIs to local conditions.

One of the project challenges was the procurement of an M&E consultant. Initial baseline surveys that ought to have informed subsequent M&E in the pilot districts were unsuccessful after two initial attempts to contract an external evaluation firm. The information on the impact of the effort in the pilot districts may therefore be inadequate for evaluation purposes. Nonetheless, the substantive report on LG capacity done by the Makerere Institute for Social Research as part of the preparation for the project has been used to substantiate the evaluation of project implementation.

4 Lessons learnt

1. Universities as a constituent component of the higher education system are better placed to address key government policies even in the African Context. A collective effort by the various players is likely to have more impact than individual institutions.

2. Collaboration among higher education institutions is key to quality higher education in Uganda through joint programs including resource mobilization. Before the pilot individual HEIs were competing with each other in an environment where HE is marginalized with limited resources.

3. Implementation risks are minimized through robust governance structures (committees and existing institutional arrangements) which allow for flexibility in operation (reviewing policies and guidelines) to respond to a volatile social, political and economic situation as that in Uganda.

4. While HEI impart knowledge through long term degree and skills building course, the HEIs have a lot to learn from the private sectors, central and

local governments. Service delivery capacity building is a dual track system that benefits both the local governments and the higher education institutions.

5. University education can be made more relevant through regular field attachments. These have the potential to change the mindsets of students to work in a rural setting.

6. Combining the flexibility of the Foundation and the more structured operations of the Bank provide a balancing environment that ensures crosschecked implementation without suffocating the operations of the project this has partly contributed to the unprecedented absorption capacity of projects in Uganda. This enabled the project to continuously access funds for implementation of project activities.

7. Higher education institution can produce change and innovations relevant to political and socio-economic development even with modest amounts of funding.

8. A facilitated and participatory based process of grant management offers a transparent mechanism for accessing competitive innovation funds.

9. In addition to the traditional supply driven curricular, university education can be more appreciated by the community through direct provision of services and knowledge using a demand driven approach.

5 Evaluation of Performance for Effectiveness/Lessons learnt

5.1 Bank

Exceptional cooperation and commitment was experienced with the first Task Team Leader was fundamental to the success of the design phase and the initial implementation arrangements of the project. Where weaknesses were identified mitigating measures were put in place for example, training in the management of World Bank projects, procurement and other fiduciary aspects. A holistic arrangement was realized between the Bank, the co –financiers (Rockefeller Foundation) and the Government of Uganda who met the project implementation team at periodic policy meetings to review and map out new implementation issues and procedures. The project received negative support from the first financial specialist in the country office attached to the project. The

ingenuity of the second task team leader eased the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation.

Change of the Task Team Leader created a lapse in the conceptualization of the design objective and its constituent activities. Naturally the TTL had to go through a learning curve for effective supervision. Moreover, this was at a period when a new project in Uganda was being initiated by the same Task Team Leader addressing a number of components that were similar to the training pilot.

5.2   Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation not only provided the seed funding for the Project and a planning phase budget, but it also facilitated the negotiations that brought on board the World Bank. In such a conducive environment, the working relationship with the Rockefeller Foundation was smooth, and beneficial to both the project implementation team and the Bank leading to an exceptional performance of the project.

The flexibility of resources from the Rockefeller Foundation ensured that the project had a running budget even when conditions entailed that disbursements from the IDA Special Account could not be timely accessed. Most importantly the implementing team of the project greatly appreciated the nurturing approach of the Rockefeller Foundation to institutional capacity building, particularly the Associate Vice President and the first Regional Director based in Nairobi.

5.3   G.o.U

By design the project benefited from the Government through participation of key government ministries, specifically Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Local Government and Education. The commitment by government and higher education officials to the implementation arrangements of the project ensured visibility of the program at the national level. The role of the Ministry of Education and Sports continued to diminish as implementation progressed. This was partly due to the change in the membership of the committee and redesignation of active participants through retirement and other avenues.

6 Proposed future arrangements

The higher education institutions involved in the project are committed to reforms that will link teaching and research to government programs focused on

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improving service delivery. Institutional framework has been established to ensure continuation of the synergies created among HEIs and between higher education institutions and local and central government. Local governments are will continue to use local higher education institutions for skills capacity building. Academic and skills development programs developed with the support of the project have been or are being institutionalized and will be offered by the institutions on a regular basis. In the immediate future, the Rockefeller Foundation has extended support for a new 18 months grant to complete some of the activities that have been started. The grant will also be used to disseminate more research findings and test out new technologies through incubation centres.

From the Banks side this was a Learning and Innovation Loan. Future capacity building programs in the country will be informed by the lessons learnt under the project. In particular the Uganda Joint Assistance Strategy (UJAS) has been informed by the same lessons. Discussions are ongoing with government to try and adopt long term career development through University training under the proposed successor project to LGDP II. In the long term government intends to approach the Bank to support the Higher Education sector to scale up the activities undertaken by the pilot.

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