

Title: Evaluation of CBMIS and Behavioral Change Initiatives Under Component One of Coordination, Communication and Advocacy Programme
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Executive Summary

Background

Among the mix of Component One capacity building interventions adopted by Co-ordination, Communication and Advocacy (CCA) are two prominent ones: Community-based Management Information System (CBMIS) and Behavioral change and Community Action. The past country programme (1995-2000), in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Labor and Social Development, made efforts to develop the CBMIS concept and established it in several pilot districts and facilitated district teams to ensure it takes off in selected villages and parishes. CBMIS aims at introducing a culture or a discipline among communities (local leaders) to collect, record (and store), analyze and update their own information and use it for the benefit of their community in a decentralized context.

On the other hand, Behavioral Change and Community Action strategy is a direct result of the realization at national and district levels that a lot of funds, from both local and international sources, had been sunk into the social sector (including health) at community level for quite some time without any significant positive effect (behavioral change) on household practices. It was thus, felt that there was a need to undertake a rapid participatory (involving the community) needs assessment survey to establish the extent to which the anticipated behavioral changes had taken place with a view to establishing the factors underlying the non-compliance. Among the major factors identified, was the top-down nature of government interventions without community consultation. As a remedial measure, it was found necessary to adopt a participatory, needs-based, bottom-up community action planning /initiative. By definition, this process would inevitably require an operationalization of CBMIS, which in a way is another dimension of behavioral change initiative.

Purpose / Objective

At the time of this study, CBMIS and Community Action initiatives had been in operation for almost one and a half years in a few selected pilot districts. Therefore, it was found necessary to document the progress and lessons learnt before spreading the concepts to other areas in the country. Hence, the justification for this evaluation.

Objectives

- To assess the process, impact and performance of communities involved in the execution and promotion of CBMIS and behavioral change initiatives and document best practices for improved performance of the component and shared learning among other sectors and future reference
- To establish and verify the issues that might affect performance and require immediate attention in terms of management quality control and advocacy for policy guidelines

- To identify a coherent strategy which considers the different approaches that complement each other and not parallel
- To determine the critical stages for follow-up and define the form of follow-up required and identify the most important strategic audience to train
- To explore more on the potential of using a multi-disciplinary team of facilitators in the non-formal sectors (e.g. members of PDCs; women and youth groups; LCs; etc.) so as to build on and improve the community-focused and capacity development strategy proposed in the new country programme for 2001 - 2005
- Make recommendations for a coherent strategy and in light of the new country programme

Methodology

Four CBMIS sample pilot districts (Apac, Kabale, Kamuli and Mukono) were selected for the study. In each district, with assistance from key informants at the district level, two CBMIS implementing sub-counties, one urban and one rural, were purposively selected. In each of the two sub-counties, with assistance from sub-county key informants, one "best CBMIS performing parish" and one "weak performing parish" were identified for a visit by the research team, adding up to 4 parishes per study district.

Data collection was done using three main approaches: i) Documentary review at national level; ii) Key informant interviews at national, district, and sub-county levels; and iii) Focus group discussions (FGDs) at parish level where two FGDs were conducted per parish; one composed of PDC members and political leaders/facilitators trained in CBMIS, while another was composed of community members

Key Findings

Awareness of Community Capacity Building (CCB) & CBMIS Concepts:

Awareness among technocrats at district level, especially those from departments involved in the implementation of the two concepts (Health, Community Development & Planning Unit), was found to be high. Other technocrats from non-implementing departments, especially in Kamuli and Mukono Districts, were not fully aware.

As for technocrats at the sub-county level, those who were taken on board as CCB Sub-county Trainers are fully aware and have a positive view about CBMIS as a prerequisite to decentralized planning. However, those extension workers who were not trained as sub-county trainers lack awareness about the two concepts and instead view non-extension sub-county trainers involved in CCB/CBMIS activities as interfering in their work instead of viewing them as counterparts in provision of CBMIS extension services.

Among the political leaders, awareness at the district level was reported to be high in Kabale District but relatively weak in other districts visited. This was attributed to the limited sensitization of the district councilors. For the same reason, awareness among councilors at the sub-county level (LC III) was also found to be low.

Local communities in all the study sites were found to be totally unaware of the two concepts basically due to the fact that PDCs had not yet sensitized them allegedly due to lack of facilitation (i.e. transport and subsistence allowances) for undertaking the exercise.

Training of PDCs in CBMIS:

Very few PDCs have been trained in CBMIS despite the big number of PDCs established so far.

All the PDCs trained in CBMIS felt happy with the content of the CBMIS training programme; but complained of the intensive nature of the training (non-stop) that was hurriedly done in only 3 days irrespective of the fact that some of the trainees lacked a minimum level of basic education to enable them grasp issues so fast.

Factors for and Against Performance of PDCs in CBMIS:

Given the limited timeline within which CBMIS training had to be conducted and the fact that no follow-up training programs have ever been conducted since the initial training, it is no wonder that most members of PDCs lack the capacity to relate the demographic data in VRBs and Parish Summary Registers (PSR) to community needs.

Among the PDCs visited, less than half had successfully completed the VRBs and PSRs. The rest had incomplete records allegedly due to lack of motivation and low levels of education made worse by insufficient training in CBMIS.

Location (residence) of CCB/CBMIS sub-county trainers (extension staff), in relation to the location of PDCs in the sub-county, impacts on the performance of PDCs due to ease (or difficulty) in reaching them for follow-up supervision. Location of the sub-county, in terms of distance from the district headquarters, affects effective follow-up supervision of PDCs involved in CBMIS initiative as remote sub-counties have a problem in attracting qualified extension staff compared to the nearby sub-counties.

Political will of the local leadership (or lack of it) towards the services of PDCs, positively or negatively affects the performance of PDCs.

Recognition of PDC Action plans, i.e. inclusion and consideration of their identified needs and priorities for funding in the sub-county/district workplans makes PDCs proud of their input to community development, and this is one of the factors that has kept the PDCs in place, though without financial or material facilitation.

Influence of Parish Action Plans on sub-county plans and budgets is non-existent in all the study districts, with the exception of Kabale, basically due to the fact that Parish Action Plans were written only once and at a time when sub-county plans and budgets had already been passed.

Duplicity/Integration of CBMIS Activities:

Harmonization and integration of CBMIS with CCB activities at the implementation (district) level was noted to be very poor, if not totally lacking, in all the CBMIS districts visited, excluding Kabale where a holistic approach has been started.

At the community level, un-coordinated parallel programs collecting more or less similar information to information collected under CBMIS was reported in Apac, Kabale and Mukono Districts; and this has led (reported by some sub-county trainers) to respondent fatigue (and time wastage) among the community.

Sustainability of CBMIS:

Political leaders at the sub-county level generally do not seem to be supportive of the PDC roles as "Planning Units" for parishes as may be derived from allegations (made by some councilors in Apac and Kamuli Districts) that "PDCs are a creation from above (UNICEF) but not committees set up by the local councils as enshrined in the local Government Act". This kind of attitude from the sub-county political leaders puts sustainability of CBMIS initiative at great risk.

Lack of financial and material support was the most common complaint raised by PDC members interviewed by the study team and posed to be constraint number one (according to PDC members) towards the sustainability of CBMIS.

Based on the arguments advanced by both technocrats and PDC members talked to by the study team in all the districts visited, it is likely that CBMIS initiative (good as it is) may face a difficult time in the near future unless PDC members are motivated to boost their morale.

Recommendations

Awareness of CCB & CBMIS Concepts:

Borrowing from the success story of Kabale, in comparison to Kamuli and Mukono Districts, there is need for a deliberate effort to sensitize (prior to initiation of CBMIS in a district) the political leadership at all levels on the importance attached to the decentralized planning and the likely roles PDCs can play in the bottom-up planning process.

Sensitization of the community, prior to the introduction of CBMIS, is a worthwhile undertaking and should be emphasized wherever CBMIS is being introduced for the first time.

Improved behavioral change at community level is likely to face problems if the political leaders are not enlightened. It is therefore important to change the community leaders' behaviors first (through straining and sensitization) before they take over the roles and responsibilities of CBMIS.

Sensitization/ training of PDCs in CCB/CBMIS should, as much as possible, involve all the technical staff across all the sectors at the district and should also involve councilors at all levels. This is a very necessary procedure if PDC functions are to get the political and technical support they deserve for the performance and sustenance of their activities.

Training of PDCs in CBMIS:

The practice of conducting separate (sectoral) training programs for PDCs, one by CCB and another by CCA, is resource wasteful, time consuming, and perpetuates duplication of effort by sister programs. It is therefore recommended that CBMIS and CCB training modules should be merged into one programme for purposes of consistency and efficiency.

It is necessary to fund some retraining exercises for all the PDCs involved in CBMIS in order to strengthen their capacity and confidence in the bottom-up decentralization planning process. A one-shot (and rushed) initial training exercise (lasting for only a couple of days) PDCs went through was not good enough to equip them with the skills necessary to stand on their own given their low levels of educational background.

Performance of PDCs:

Timing of PDC training in CBMIS in all the pilot districts affected integration of Parish Action Plans into Sub-county Plans and budgets. It is therefore recommended that future training exercises of PDCs in CBMIS should take into consideration the timing aspect so that Parish Action Plans get written early enough for incorporation into the Sub-county Plans.

PDCs should be visited regularly not only by sub-county trainers, but also by technical officials from both district and national levels for purposes of morale and technical boosting.

For purposes of efficiency and timely planning, it is recommended that data recorders at both village and parish levels should be of some minimum level of education, preferably P7. In addition, regular supervision and occasional short courses should be organized for this category of PDC members, if not all of them.

Given the fact that indefinite voluntarism, without some form of motivation, may not be sustainable in a subsistence economy where the opportunity cost for time spent on voluntary work is measured in terms of time lost for casual employment, sub-counties should consider providing transport and lunch allowance for days PDC members spend on PDC work.

Integration of CCB and CBMIS:

As a matter of principle, CBMIS in whatever district it is introduced should first target those sub-counties and parishes where CCB has already been established for ease of implementation and integration of the two concepts in a holistic manner.

At the national level, for purposes of minimizing conflicts at service delivery and community levels, CCB and CBMIS should be merged. For example, separate approval/ funding of CCB and

CBMIS activities through the District Health Dept and District Planning Unit, respectively, should be stopped as this practice perpetuates a sectoral approach at the implementation level. Instead, funds for both programs could be bundled together and sent direct to the District Accounting Officer (CAO) instead of the implementing technocrats

Sustainability of PDCs:

PDCs should be legitimized (but not just implied) under the Local Government Act to eliminate the tendency for being ignored by the local councils.

PDCs being development planners for parishes, just like District Planning Units, should be placed under the authority of the local administration (i.e. Parish Chiefs) for effective implementation of their roles.