

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES (NAADS) PROGRAMS AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN UGANDA

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## ABSTRACT

*This study set out to analyze the relationship between NAADS programs and poverty reduction in Uganda. The study was undertaken because many stakeholders were increasingly less satisfied with the program in spite of the huge tax-payers' resources invested over the years. At the same time, there are many poor people, in rural areas, who had been grossly disappointed by the way the program was being managed. Respondents in the two parishes of Busiisi Sub County, Hoima district in western Uganda were reached through questionnaires and interview guides. The results of the study indicate, beyond reasonable doubt, that NAADS program had the potential to transform the rural poor if only it is well managed. Consequently, this study recommends that government [central and local] ought to re-focus attention on effective management of all poverty reduction programs. Empowering the local people to demand accountability and value for money could well be strengthened at all levels.*

**Keywords:** *NAADS programs, poverty reduction, Uganda*

## INTRODUCTION

Uganda depends on food from domestic production by mainly subsistence farmers who form about 86% of the national population and employs about 77% of the active labor force (Onek, 2006). It is estimated that agricultural sector alone contributes about 47% of Uganda's GDP, 85% of the country's export earnings and generates over 80% of Government's internal revenue (Kagina, 2003). Food production, which is mainly women activity, dominates the agricultural sector, contributing 75% of agricultural GDP (CEEWA-Uganda, 2002), comprising "perhaps the majority" in the micro and small-scale enterprises (MSE) sector and providing some 70% of the agricultural labor force (Government of Uganda, 1999). In spite of the remarkable advances, Uganda's population remains largely poor, with per capita income of about US\$ 330 GDP, whilst 40% of the people still living in conditions of poverty (MAAIF, 2000). Head counts poverty as a percentage of the total population had reduced significantly from 56% in 1992 through 44% in 1997; 35% in 2000, to 38% in 2003 (Ssendaula, 2004).

The challenges of rural economic transformation and poverty eradication are linked to progress in the agricultural sector, which is the principal source of

overall economic growth and a cornerstone of poverty reduction (The World Bank, 2003). The sector was projected to provide 60 - 70% of new employment opportunities while remaining a growth - point for the formal sector even if its inclusion in government planning had lagged (Charmes, 1997). Agricultural extension remains one of the possible alternatives to the Uganda farmer where rural poverty is as diverse as are the rural poor in their livelihood strategies (The World Bank, 2003). This extension has however, gone through a massive trajectory from the traditional public - service delivered extension to the decentralized farmer- controlled and private- sector led agricultural advisory service (the National Agricultural Advisory services program of 2001 commonly known as NAADS programme) (NAADS Secretariat, 2003).

The vision of NAADS programme was to lead to increased farmer access to information, knowledge and technology through effective, efficient, sustainable and decentralized extension with increasing private sector involvement in line with Government policy (Mwanje, 2006). More so, the devolution of functions and services by the districts to lower levels of Local Governments is an objective that was embedded in the NAADS programme (MAAIF, 2000). Actually, NAADS programme planning, implementation, functioning, monitoring and evaluation are led by sub-county local government organs which were seen as a significant step forward in ensuring the continuation of development activities (Concern Uganda, 2003). The NAADS programme is a partner in the process of enabling sub counties to get the necessary skills and enhance their capacity for managing the NAADS process.

The programme's ideology was aimed at empowering farmers, especially the poor, to demand and effectively control agricultural extension services (Ekwamu, and Melissa, 2005). This was true because the role of the people and the benefits accruing there from ought to emphasise peoples' participation and involvement (Kagwa-Ddumba, 2001). The findings of the Mid-Term Review of Programme (2005) indicated that NAADS was effective, efficient and most cost-effective than previous extension programmes (Nahdy, 2005). NAADS is a poverty-focused programme contributing to PEAP as one of the seven PMA components based on a participatory learning approach (Okecho, 2002). PEAP programmes are driven through the Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS) executed through the structures of decentralization (MFPED, 2006), which were seen as the best way of devolving powers, mandates, responsibilities and functions for service to local governments. Although NAADS is new, it's about farmer empowerment (Kazungu, 2004). The study aimed at finding out whether there was any relationship between NAADS Program and Poverty Reduction in Busiisi Sub-county, Hoima District of Uganda.

Cognizant of the fact that the underlying goal of NAADS programme was expected to reduce rural poverty, the existing situation in the countryside reveals that the poor are increasingly dropping into poverty (MAAIF, 2000). The current condition is highly absurd perpetuated by poorly functioning farmers-research linkages and the consequent failure of research and extension systems to respond to

the real needs of farmers in spite of the heavy investments from government (The World Bank, 2003). The same condition has been attributed to the failure of the delivery system to link farmers and the sources of knowledge. This situation has been exacerbated by the slow pace of NAADS programme given its age (2001-2010), which remains a disappointment to the farmers who have hitherto longed for profitable agricultural production (NAADS, 2005). In Hoima district in particular, most of the studies and assessments have been centered on the district and sub-county performances.

On the contrary, the conditions of the supposedly beneficiaries continue to dwindle and as such, Hoima's excellence (Hoima District, 2007) in 2006 National Assessments had not attempted to translate into poverty reduction. To address this melancholy, efforts were made in identifying better mechanisms of implementation. One of them was to put NAADS implementation under the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) policy guidelines and executed through the structures of decentralization (MFPED, 2006). Despite these attempts, results have been limited because of lack of a systematic prescription and examination of the relationship between NAADS programme and poverty reduction. The intention behind this study therefore, was to gather and analyze information, which would guide policy on implementation of advisory services. This study intended to analyze the relationship between NAADS programme and poverty reduction among rural communities Uganda with a systematic analysis of the transitory (economically active) poor in Busiisi sub-county of Hoima District in Uganda.

Through an Act of parliament, the government of Uganda formulated the NAADS program in 2001 to offer farming as a business (Mwanje, 2006). NAADS has managed to build farmer institutions and inculcated a sense of ownership in the stakeholders through its key principles of empowerment, decentralized implementation, commercialization and popular participation. Agricultural advisory services are services that make new knowledge available to farmers and assist them to develop their farming and management skills. NAADS is a decentralized farmer owned and private sector service extension system contributing to the realization of the agricultural sector objectives (NAADS Secretariat, 2003). NAADS program was created out of the failure of past agricultural extension program to bring about increase farm productivity despite substantial investments over the years (Ekwamu and Melissa, 2005). NAADS program was one of the seven programs under the PMA with vital principles like commercialization and market orientation that were aimed at transforming Uganda agriculture from subsistence to commercial farming (NAADS Secretariat, 2003; Okecho, 2002).

In Uganda, poverty is perceived as the inability to satisfy a range of basic human needs, stemming from powerlessness, social exclusion, ignorance and lack of knowledge, as well as shortage of material resources (The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment, 2000, 2003). Agricultural households were 10% more likely to be poor than other households, whose main activities are not linked to agricultural

production (Ssendaula, 2004). No less than 90% of Ugandans live in rural areas (The Directorate of Water Development, 2002); and of the vast majority of the poor, 96% are rural households that rely heavily on agricultural production (Government of Uganda, 2002).

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on three categories of respondents using a survey design. These respondents were selected using the stratified sampling technique among the six strata; local councilors, civil servants, NAADS structures, private companies, general public and service providers. Then a simple random sample was generated in order to capture the heterogeneity of the population. The total number of respondents was 214. The sample size was determined using the conservative estimate of the sample size and a total of 214 respondents were generated for the study. However, a total of 144 respondents were reached. Most data was collected using the questionnaire of 20 items which were scaled from 1 = strongly, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. However, some voters were covered by the use of interview guides of 15 items. All outcomes were then put to both face validity and content validity tests where two Research Consults were used. The results generated from validity tests have been presented on table 1.

**Table 1:** Validity

Demographic features	Validity (Inter-Consult Coefficiency)
Demographic features	2/2 =1.0
Literacy levels	1/2 =0.5
Economic status	1/2 =0.5
Gender	2/2 =1.0
Age	1/2 =0.5
Total	0.70

Moreover, the inter-consult coefficient validity average for the five scales was 0.70. In addition, face validity, content validity, concurrent validity, criterion validity were used to examine the dependent variables against the core items and results reveal that, the study outcomes were valid. More so, the Kuder-Richardson formulas were used to generate a reliability coefficient  $\{KR_{20} = \frac{5}{5}^{-1}(1 - \frac{.76}{.7})\}$  to institute reliability test and the following results were realized.

**Table 2:** Reliability

Demographic features	Reliability (Kuder-Richardson)
Demographic features	0.313
Literacy levels	0.411
Economic statuses	0.426
Gender	0.410
Age	0.314
Total	0.72 (R.C)

Hence, the Kuder-Richardson established that, the Reliability Coefficient (R.C) was 0.72, implying that the questions were appropriate. A simple ordinal level of measurement  $\{(r_s = 1 - 6 \sum D_n^2 / (n^2 - 1))\}$  was applied and the outcome was 0.52, reflecting a significant positive relationship between NAADS program and poverty reduction. A test re-test was administered on a group of 13 respondents comprising of CBFs and FF in an interval of three days and the reliability coefficient was normal. Secondly, multiple forms were administered to the PCCs in Kibingo parish on day four and day seven. Results were consistent to the objectives.

The existing phenomena were related to the respondents' views, analyzed and grouped according to the emerging themes. Different respondents yielded different views on the subject matter in question though these were finally aggregated in line with NAADS program and poverty reduction in Busiisi sub-county. Data was organized using tables, frequency distribution and percentages in order to compare means of the respondents drawn from the two parishes. Qualitatively, data was analyzed using both descriptive analysis and inferential statistical analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Citizens' Participation in the NAADS Program**

**Farmer Groups (FGs):** NAADS has promoted the formation of a hierarchy of farmer institutions rooted in village level Farmer Groups. Such links have been used to facilitate the community participatory process of needs identification, priority setting, monitoring and evaluation of activities. In Busiisi, 53 Farmer Groups were identified but 42 had been registered (Hoima District Quarterly Report, 2006/2007). Their roles were data collection, reporting, evaluation, verification and meetings/workshops.

**Parish Co-ordination Committees (PCCs):** The PCCs are a result of the Farmer Groups' federation within the parish. The entire registered groups' executives converge at parish and democratically elect the PCC members of their choice who perform several duties such as reporting, meetings/workshops, data collection, verification of contracts and evaluation of activities. A total of 80% were reached out of 10 targeted for PCCs.

**Sub-county Farmer Forum (SFF):** The SFF executive composed of 8 members, 3 of whom are elected from the PCCs (one ought to be a female) plus the chairperson of each PCC, the secretary production (LC III) and an ex-officio. The overall SFF is composed of 2 representatives from each FG in the whole sub-county; Busiisi then had a SFF of 84 members drawn from 42 registered groups. In addition, each parish had a Community Based Facilitator (CBF) who was a member of the SFF.

### **The Roles of Local Governments in Resource Control**

All the respondents agreed with the fact that their sub-county co-funded in time, which was equivalent to 5% (3.6 millions) as contained in the NAADS policy



(NAADS, 2003). Accordingly, the overall sub-county performance in co-funding was 40.6% (2005/06) as provided in the NAADS Policy (2006). Nevertheless, the loss of graduated tax had derailed the availability of funds at the sub-county. Local governments (districts, 5%; sub county, 5%;) are statutorily obliged to co-fund (MAAIF, 2005) together with farmers (2%) alongside donors (80%). A relative number of 62.5% agreed that internal audits were held by the sub county local government, 25% disagreed that the sub-county liaises with the district to hold quarterly internal audits. However, Hoima scored 100% here (NAADS, 2006). Over 50 spot SMSs were also aired on the benefit of NAADS (Hoima District, 2007). This coincided with the postulation of NAADS (2006).

### **Decision-Making among NAADS Stakeholders**

***Farmer Groups (FGs):*** According to the CBFs for the two parishes of Kibingo and Kasingo, a total of 53 groups were identified but only 79.2% were registered in Busiisi Sub County. This number forms a 6.4% fraction of the 656 FGs registered in the whole district. Members to these FGs made micro-decisions, which had little or no significance on the ultimate plans made from the sub-county according to FG members in Kasasa village, Kasingo parish. But those NAADS FGs in Busiisi Sub County could be elevated to the next level by intensifying group meetings where their priorities could be aggregated into neighborhood priorities for attention by higher authorities. Such a formula had generated citizen trust in several countries like Columbia, Croatia, Ukraine (Narayan, 2002).

***Parish Co-ordination Committees (PCCs):*** All the three parishes in Busiisi had PCCs, which met quarterly and also undertook quarterly monitoring of activities as demanded by the policy (NAADS, 2006). The Sub County chairman noted that, most of the PCCs, although in place, they rarely held quarterly meetings and had no sign of written minutes of meetings. Nevertheless, the PCC members of Kibingo reiterated that they held meetings and did a lot on monitoring and report writing though they were never facilitated. It was through such meetings that they assessed the SPs' performance in their parishes.

***The Sub-county Farmer Forum (SFF):*** Busiisi had an 84 member Farmer Forum at the sub-county whose composition reflected an even representation of all the parishes therein. Members to the SFF ought to effectively control the delivery of services (Kazungu, 2004) especially the SPs and SNC's operations. Five of the SFF members from Kasingo noted that their forum could opt for the cancellation of the SP's contract in case they were not satisfied. They pointed out that if the SP didn't adhere and fulfill their obligations of training and advising farmers as specified in the contract, the contract could be terminated as had been the case in Bukinda, Kabale district (NAADS News, 2003). The chairperson of the SFF reiterated that NAADS had given farmers a 'powerful voice' in decision-making.

***The Procurement Committee (PC):*** Busiisi sub-county had 95 members PC where 60% emanated from within the farmers themselves plus the chairperson of the SFF. Members to this committee noted that they recruited service providers and contracted suppliers after a series of progressive stages where vital decisions were taken. In fact, they (PC members) invited bids and evaluated them before awarding contracts to SPs deemed competent. This was in consonance with the whole spectrum of service delivery (NAADS secretariat, 2005). A good number of institutions were available to farmers in Busiisi Sub County to route their decisions concerning the way NAADS program should be conducted in order for them to find an escape route from poverty. Unfortunately, much of the decisions were taken by the SFF, which rarely sat save for confirming the resolutions of the executive. It was such an executive committee of eight members with only 37.5% farmers' representatives which were intimidated with policy guidelines, such a formula had left them as passive recipients contrary to the contentions under NAADS (NAADS Secretariat, 2005). Such scenarios have continued to pull back the poor in conditions of poverty. Most farmers participated in decision-making regarding training, while the PC fully made decisions on bids' evaluation and awarding contracts to SPs.

More so, monitoring and evaluation (M & E) was participatory especially by the PCCs and SFF. Host farmers fully participated in the welfare of TDs formation, technology, demonstration plus other farmer groups. Selection of enterprises was seen to be too technical and therefore, a preserve of the NAADS coordinators. In fact, farmers made little decisions, though much was mainly consultant by the sub-county technical and production staff. Finally, little decisions were made on finance management to save the FGs' subscription fees of 2%. Linkage to markets was not yet forth coming, as farmers were still producing at subsistence levels for local markets. A close analysis reflects that NAADS farmers do make decisions even if inputs were yet minimal. Worse still, fewer farmers had subscribed to the NAADS in the whole sub-county, which created a drift among the subsistence from the most few. In addition, the Ministry of Local Governments still had a big challenge of improving NAADS implementation in order to ensure that capacity is fully built for the lower units to handle bulk resources and programs (NAADS News, 2003).

### **Decentralization of Agricultural Advisory Services**

Uganda Government adopted decentralization as a policy (Mwesigwa, 2007), this has been integrated into the Country's overall approach to poverty reduction. In order to lift Ugandans out of poverty, government has been implementing the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) since 1997. In effect, four core issues have emerged under the government's efforts, which are strengthening good government security, increasing the capacity of the poor to raise incomes, creating conducive framework for economic growth and structural transformation and improving the quality of life of the poor. The PEAP mainly focused on the Economically Active Poor (EAP) in the rural areas.

The second schedule of the Local Governments Act (1997) identifies devolutionary powers, functions and responsibilities to popularly elected local government. Such devolution of power was aimed at improving service delivery by shifting responsibility for policy implementation to local beneficiaries in a bid to:

- (i) Develop, broaden and deepen political and administrative competence in the management of public affairs.
- (ii) Democratize society by promoting inclusive, representative and gender sensitive decision-making, and
- (iii) Alleviate poverty through collaborative efforts between central and local governments, donors, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders (Republic of Uganda, 1994).

The resource envelop for sector planning and budgeting indicated in the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) including the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) was developed to earmark resources for Poverty Reduction Program Areas (PRPAs) of primary education, Primary Health Centre (PHC), water and sanitation, rural wards and agricultural extension. The MFPED (2004) argues that the PAF encompasses Government of Uganda funds, Donor contributions and savings from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and it was ring-fenced to protect its funds from budget cuts.

### **The Challenges of Decentralized Agricultural Advisory Services**

The NAADS policy points out those co-operating partners would fund 80%, Government of Uganda 8%, local governments 10% and farmers 2%. These shares would change over the 25 year-period of NAADS program leading to farmers and local governments taking increasing funding responsibilities (NAADS News, 2003). This anticipation was however, faced with financial constraints especially following the abolition of graduated tax (NAADS, 2005). The amount of financial resources invested in agriculture is still very low in spite of the fact that agriculture has been one of the fast growing sectors in the MTEF (Nyamugasira, 2004). This has vindicated the poverty alleviation funds national budgetary allocations (1.9 % to NAADS program).

Busiisi Sub-county got only 72 million for the financial year 2006/07 under the NAADS grants. This figure would lead to 34 million for each of the three parishes and 1.7 million for each of the 42 FGs registered. This figure was still insufficient given the costs of public administration and late Central Government disbursements. Under the PMA, the Non Sectoral Conditional Grant (NSCG) was introduced for the first time during the financial year 2001/02 to empower local communities and assist them in identifying priorities and addressing them with a view of enhancing agricultural productivity (PMA, 2003). Furthermore, a total of Shs. 2 billion was disbursed to 17 districts, and increased to 4.4 billion for 24 districts in the financial year 2002/03. Unfortunately, Busiisi Sub County was not part of that 'bonanza'. Therefore, government needs to sort out this structural constraint (FOWODE, 2004)



if poverty reduction is to be realized through the NAADS formula. In addition, the physical infrastructure (feeder roads) was still a big hurdle; this was to save the rural roads' activities and outputs of 663 kilometers of feeder roads maintained in the district (Kassami, 2004).

First, most farmers registered with NAADS program were females who had to attend trainings and workshops. Many of them were housewives who (given the African patrilineal) setting (Kabwegyere, 2000), had to attend to several domestic chores alongside their enterprises. In the end, a lot of time was spent on “capacity building” than implementation of what would have been done. As regards farmer group development in Kibingo parish the number of FGs was 12, the women in FGs was 92% and the average cost per FG was 1,645,710 and the total cost for the parish was 19,748,520. In Kasingo parish, the number of FGs was 17, women accounted for 94%, average cost for the FG was 1,645,710 while the total cost for the entire parish was 27,977,070 (Busiisi Sub County, 2007).

#### ***Farmer Group Development in Busiisi Sub County***

Commitment for both SPs and the SNC was lower than expected in spite of the "heavy" investments on them. In Kasingo parish, farmers were bitter about the insufficient trainings than those planned for, with no substantive reasons. Most of the relevant documents were in some instances different and lacking seriousness, an issue that was seen to be perpetuating gross poverty among rural population like that of Busiisi Sub County.

#### **The Scale of NAADS Comprehension among Farmers**

Respondents (76%) were still confused with extension and privatization concepts to the effect that, the least called for a connotation of 'waiting to receive' and therefore, did not call on farmers' immediate participation. Some farmers were still reluctant to join Farmer Groups and others had not yet acknowledged the paradigm shift to private led extension services (Namara and Mugenyi, 2005). The fact that, a meager number had registered for NAADS program in the sub county bore testimony to this contention. And therefore, the question on poverty reduction through NAADS programme could remain rhetoric. That was probably why only 42 Groups (556 members) had registered in Busiisi Sub-county (under NAADS programme) out of the vast 13,789, representing a mere 4.0%. This malaise inhibited a contradiction with the hitherto anticipated transformation of the rural areas for overall national development as noted by the (UNDP, 1998). The manner in which citizens participated in decision-making and implementation and the results that could be generated with respect to poverty reduction very much depend on the system and structures that are put in place in the design of the entire framework. NAADS program design had the ability to offer a high level of citizen participation if only it could be implemented in accordance with the policy statement.

### **Inter-relationships among Sectors**

NAADS fraternity was composed of many sectors and stakeholders each playing significant roles. These are the central government, ministries of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries plus that of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Local Government, the private sector, NGOs/CBOs and the Local Community. There were different players in the Agricultural Extension and other related services which are not fully recognized and co-ordinated, a condition that had grossly perpetuated duplication of services, over concentration on few agricultural items and limited partnerships. The principle of harmonization needed to be taken to 'greater heights' (Namara and Mugenyi, 2005). More so, the skills of different players and their relevant technologies needed to be tapped under the NAADS program.

### **Capacity of Local Governments and other Agencies**

Different Agencies were engaged in capacity building among farmers to enable them successfully operate NAADS at different levels. This was done through mobilization, training meetings and farmer associations. The DNC noted that a one-day workshop had been organized at district level. This was meant to educate politicians on NAADS programme and their roles in all Sub Counties. She also noted that follow up sensitization workshops on Integrated Support to Farmer Groups (ISFGs) had continued to be carried out in all the 9 Sub Counties, Busiisi inclusive. In none of the discussion and interviews did the Agencies make mention of any sensitization they got pertaining NAADS operations. Moreso, the staff which should monitor and evaluate the Agencies' operations were never empowered enough (if at all) to do so. Observations revealed that there was no systematic farmer mobilization with the guiding principles.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

Monitoring and reviews of plans and budgets of Local Governments were done both at the technical and political levels. In the former, the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) was supposed to monitor and review the progress of the implementation of Local Government Plans and notify the executive committee. The least level, ought to monitor the implementation of plans and budgets to ensure that they conform to what have been approved. Decentralization of government spending was closely related with lower level corruption among bureaucrats and reduced rent seeking by private parties (UNDP, 2003). Uganda fortunately had a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for fighting corruption at the district level (The Local Governments Act, 1997). Similar Provisions were enshrined in the Local Governments Financial and Accounting Regulations (1998) aimed at combating corruption at Local Governments level. Seventy-two million Shillings which had been given to Busiisi Sub County in the 2006/2007 and the accountability to the same was not a perfect one either.

Elaborate technical mechanisms may not guarantee an effective control of government nor its programmes such as NAADS but from vigilant citizen monitoring

of government action (Report of the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Development, 1997). Those citizens should be able to hold officials to account for their performance or non-performance in the most transparent manner. There remained a vacuum on the vigilance of farmers in Busiisi when it comes to holding DNCs and SNCs or even the service providers accountable. These occurrences seem to confirm the fact that poverty reduction would still remain a dream for the most part of the rural polity.

### **Relationship between NAADS Programme and Poverty Reduction**

***Popular Participation and Poverty Reduction:*** Poverty reduction had emerged as the main target of the policies of many developing countries in the recent past, with decentralized governance being the preferred instrument for bringing about the desired results (Republic of Uganda, 1994). The success of this development intervention is highly contingent on effective citizen participation in the process of development (The United Nations, 1979; Stiefel, 1981; Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Kassujja, 1997). The two major democratic principles enshrined in the Uganda Constitution (GOU, 1995) are those of active participation of all citizens and decentralization along with devolution of governmental functions and powers to the people.

Success lies in constant and participatory review of the development implementation process of every stage -NAADS fortunately develops through a series of inter-connected stages, from FGs to the Secretariat. Such structures ought to determine what adjustments may be required and to make the necessary (but relevant) adjustment in good time. Participatory planning, implementation and evaluation of NAADS activities based on the general framework of the five components, can translate into Poverty Reduction. Nonetheless, this realization requires vigilance among NAADS beneficiaries and a strong desire that is not just present - minded but future - focused.

Uganda's ambitions but poorly financed and centrally directed decentralization program has run aground because of its overly centralized technocratic approach and system of local patronage (UNDP, 2003). The Local Populace needed to be empowered if they are to participate effectively in the NAADS structures. Imparting knowledge and advice in addition to the provision of modern foundation technologies to farmers to enable them move from subsistence to market oriented farming (Kazungu, 2004) would be a good plan. Facilitating farmers to plan and select priority enterprises (NAADS, 2003) may not be achieved without an effective Farmer Participation. Unfortunately the anticipated vision of reducing the country's poverty levels to less than 10% by 2017 through the NAADS formula, seem to hit a dead end as Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) and "Entandikwa" Schemes respectively. If NAADS program could borrow a leaf from this approach, poverty reduction would greatly be realized. At Busiisi sub county level, participation and ownership in the three parishes were no good either, a sign that poverty reduction through NAADS may remain a hoax.

The survey reflected a shocking scenario where all indicators fell below 50%. Not only was the challenge in the NAADS bracket but agricultural sector generally. Monetary agriculture had fallen from 49% of the total agricultural sector contribution to 41%. This decline was a cumulative agreement that NAADS Program Participation had not yet translated into Poverty Reduction (Nahdy, 2005). On the contrary, the nature, vitality and density of associational life in developed countries seemed to be responsible for high participation in local governance (Stein, 2001). Associations would help to create the social conditions to develop and maintain participants through networks and creation of trust, which are part of the wheels of poverty reduction (Clark, 1991).

***Decentralization Strategy and Poverty Reduction:*** Uganda's decentralization approach was based on devolution of powers, functions and responsibilities to popularly elected local governments (Second Schedule of the Local Governments Act, 1997). Devolution of functions and services to lower local government is an objective enshrined in the NAADS programme (MAAIF, 2000). More so, the decentralization policy was seen to inter-relate with NAADS in achieving overall development (Namara and Mugenyi, 2005). Busiisi Local Government had co-operated with the NAADS structures and agricultural service providers under the NAADS programme. The year 2006/2007 had witnessed the signing of 4 contracts with private providers to offer advisory services for enterprises amounting to Shs. 27,869,000 ostensibly planned to benefit a total of 430 households (Hoima District, 2007). Similarly, Busiisi conducted 3-technology promotions through demonstrations and multiplication. These were contracted out for selected enterprises at Shs. 11,635,350 planned to benefit directly 555 farmers. Busiisi had met her annual contribution of 5% amounting to Shs3,600,000 in time. The Sub-county had regularly followed the Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulations (1998).

The Sub-county, in close collaboration with the district officers, had offered background advice on monitoring and evaluation. The participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process revealed that there was a wealth of indigenous knowledge with farmers at grass root levels (Namara and Mugenyi, 2005), which could easily be tapped to strengthen the operations of NAADS. Such can be done in a bid to realize the formulation of sustainable market-led production and marketing associations. Busiisi Local Government was trying to maintain and establish credible infrastructures in form of feeder roads to increase market accessibility as well as advisory services. This was a landmark towards the attainment of pillar IV of the PEAP strategies. Local Governments remain key actors in promoting citizen participation for poverty eradication programmes. They promote participatory and inclusive decision making which is more effective to local problems' identification as well as better allocation of resources. The involvement of the people in determining their own destiny under the auspices of decentralization and local governance has the potential to yield a greater pedigree in "disarming" poverty. Unfortunately this remains a monopoly of a few at the expense of many NAADS farmer.

***Decision making and Poverty Reduction:*** NAADS programme is built on the key principles of farmer empowerment (Kazungu, 2004), which sought to enable beneficiaries to have access, demand and control the delivery system. It was discovered through this study that farmer empowerment required the creation of Institutions for collective decision-making (MAAIF, 2000). It was that alignment, which was projected to raise farmers' voices in decision-making, lobbying for their needs, control and access to services. Citizens' participation in decision making remains central in rural development. The need for farmers to have an upper hand in enterprise prioritization and selection, and the district had come up with several enterprises though Busiisi had taken up only three: local poultry (benefiting 11 groups of an estimated 108 households had Shs7,800,000 allocated), piggery (benefiting 15 groups with an estimated 125 households costing Shs5,000,000) and Horticulture (benefiting 16 groups with an estimated 135 households costing Shs7,200,000) (Hoima District Quarterly Progress Report, 2007).

Busiisi Sub-county had been dominated by the Transitory Poor (TP) with women sweeping a bigger percentage. Many of those earned their livelihood on smallholder agriculture (Hoima District, 2002). The fact that, only 14.7% of the sub county population had registered with the NAADS program reflected a minimal trickle down and consequently reversing poverty was a hard nut to crack. Rwakabale (2004) noted that, such a move develops a sense of identity and self-esteem. The fact that the female dominated most FGs was a clear manifestation that sustainable development necessitated maximum and equal participation of both gender in economic, political, civil and social cultural development.

Busiisi Sub County had collaborated with various development partners in its quest to see NAADS success and reduce poverty among the polity contrary to the assertion from the (MFPED, 2006). The indefinite absence of these strategies that were otherwise aimed at enhancing production, competitiveness and incomes (Pillar II of the PEAP) was a signal of a collapsing war against poverty in the sub county. Further, the sub county together with the development partners had not yet solved the problems of high transport costs and small markets, slow diffusion of technology among others; these were great challenges. Secondly, there seemed to be a planned delay to attain an agrarian transformation since “the rural notables monopolized rural resources” including agricultural surpluses which had perpetuated a process of social differentiation and a slow but dangerous effect on the poverty reduction strategies in the sub county.

Further, there was a likelihood that greater participation of women in NAADS management would lead to more work and responsibilities for women and by pass men. This ignores the cardinal principles of participation as an active involvement of all people in decision-making (Kassujja, 1997). A critical glance showed that Uganda's agricultural sector could well gain momentum especially with the projected increase of 26.1% annual budgetary allocation. But NAADS program remains one of the frustrations, government was going through this century. Secondly, the



continued Amendments on the Local Governments Act seemed to signal the re-centralization of power and authority, which had ostensibly been devolved under the same Act.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that there was direct participation among the beneficiaries in the NAADS programme. This was through farmer groups, parish co-ordination committees, sub-county farmer forum, the procurement committee and district farmer forum in Busiisi Sub-county. It was however, revealed that there was still low participation in monitoring and evaluation, enterprise selection and development, market linkages, and finance management in spite of the crucial impact they cause. The study revealed that lower local councils seemed to be related with NAADS structures and had the courage to intervene in respective levels. However, most local leaders at villages and parish levels didn't seem to know their responsibility. Farmers made substantial decisions in that NAADS structures. The higher you go on the hierarchy, the lesser the magnitude of decision making among farmers. It was also revealed that apart from the expected attendance, most decisions pertaining to training were made from the sub-county while the farmers remained passive recipients.

Results revealed that, the process of decentralization of powers and authority is to the effect that the sub-county is the second level local government in the district with a full council and technical staff. It was also discovered that NAADS Programme is directly linked with the sub-county department of production as well as the community development department. Accordingly, there was cordial relationship between the two levels (sub-county and district). The Sub-county's Local Government ensured that other lower councils are fully acquainted with the proceedings of the NAADS programme. Though, this was affected by insufficient capacity of local leaders at parishes and villages who are still disciples of the orthodox top-bottom paradigm of administration which couldn't coordinate efficiently. In effect, these revelations had not translated into poverty reduction in Busiisi Sub County. The earlier findings by Chandwong (1999) in nine districts of Uganda could not be validated by this study. This could have been responsible for the attempted presidential suspension of NAADS program (The New Vision, Sept. 11, 2007).

Influential levels of decision making seemed to be hijacked by politicians, professions and the elites which open the way for poverty to blossom than being reduced through NAADS intervention. Overwhelming evidence revealed that local actors ought to first change their thoughts, behaviors and the kind of choices they make. Nonetheless, the interests of the locals must inform and be at the center of the decision making process. The Local Government Act (1997) (as amended) affirms that Local Governments have to consult the people and involve them in identifying the needs of the local areas, prioritize the needs and agree on the best solutions as an enzyme for poverty reduction. Finally, analysis of the NAADS records and other policy documents reflected that the programme had one of the best designs. However,

there still exists a wider disparity between what ought to be and what is on the ground as postulated in the Platonic perception of the ideal state. If this trend continues, poverty reduction through the NAADS programme will remain a dream, as observed in 'Entandikwa' scheme and other programs for poverty alleviation. NAADS program has been trying to introduce things which don't quite well respond to the farmers' overall desires or aspirations for the improvement of their lot. The optimism of achieving the MDGs before 2015 at such a magnitude remains in balance. There is a general pessimistic consensus that on the current pace, most of our countries may not achieve the MDGs by 2015.

**NAADS Program and popular participation:** Contrary to the anticipation that, creating institutions (farmer) under the NAADS program would enable them take a lead role in managing their own affairs (MAAIF, 2000), and contrary to the assertions on participation (Kassujja, 1997; Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Stiefel, 1981), the conditions on the ground reflected that, a lot needed to be done.

**NAADS Program and the control of resources:** Contrary to the provisions (Local Government's Act, 1997; Uganda Constitution, 1995) which consecutively stress that the local populace ought to control their resources and contrary to other postulations (PMA Secretariat, 2004; NAADS Secretariat, 2005), the circumstances on the ground revealed a bizarre to the effect that the accusations raised had an upper hand in denying the would be resource controllers under the NAADS program in Busiisi sub county.

**NAADS Program and Decision Making:** In spite of the beautiful NAADS vision and mission (NAADS Secretariat, 2003) and the emphasis put across, (Kazungu, 2004; NAADS Secretariat, 2005), all of which alluding to the notion of farmer empowerment through NAADS structures, results revealed that the structures were still impotent to realize their role of decision making.

**NAADS Programme and Decentralization:** The initial metamorphosis (Local Governments Act, 1997) was a promising policy but has since been encroached upon through amendments aimed at withdrawing the powers, mandates and responsibilities otherwise bestowed on the people. The persistent structural constraints (FOWODE, 2004); attitudes, beliefs and cultural practices (Action Aid Uganda, 2000); the land tenure system (Kasente, 2000) and low budgetary allocation (Nyamugasira, 2004) remain as serious bottlenecks to the success of NAADS programme. However, population growth (UNDP, 2005) was not yet a major constraint.

- i There is need for popular community participation of all stakeholders, such as farmers, local politicians, opinion leaders, professionals, the private sector as well as Non-Governmental Organizations.
- ii Both sexes need to participate equally and the number of farmer groups should quadruple.
- iii There is need to strengthen the sub county local government's capacity to

- handle, monitor and evaluate all the resources for NAADS activities.
- iv A clear line of accountability for NAADS should be established at all levels ranging from farmer groups up to sub county NAADS forum.
  - v Culprits of financial/resource mismanagement should not be handled with 'soft gloves' if poverty is to be suppressed from rural populace.
  - vi The magnitude of decision making at the most critical levels need to be tripped especially the sub-county level sections, if possible the members be increased of course, the gender perspective should be revisited at the higher levels where negligible number of females are present.
  - vii If the policy of decentralization is to gain a meaningful momentum, then, resources need to be equally distributed among the participating parishes.
  - viii The village, parish and sub county councils should be strengthened in order for them to identify their roles and execute them within the NAADS paradigm.

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