BEYOND MONITORING AND EVALUATION: INCORPORATING THE EFFECTIVENESS AGENDA WITHIN LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The question of programme impact is one that has been debated extensively by different development studies scholars. Of particular significance in this regard has been those programmes in developing countries like Kenya which are supported by bilateral and multilateral agencies. One of the big concerns, for African countries in particular is that despite years of huge sums of development funding, (both in form of grants and loans), such efforts have failed to achieve the anticipated economic progress in many places. The need to overcome this problem has necessitated growth in Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks which aim at helping programmes achieve their objectives.

This paper looks beyond M&E, exploring themes in the growing development effectiveness literature and attempts to bring out their relevance to livestock development programmes in Kenya. These themes include organizational values and principles, organizational learning, relationships, participation, harmonisation, fungibility and accountability. At conclusion, the paper argues that there is need for programmes to go beyond traditional monitoring and evaluation/efficiency measures and consider the issues raised by development effectiveness literature.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Livestock Development presently has a number of donor sponsored development projects running in disparate parts of the country. The department of livestock production alone for example is involved in about ten projects, prominent among them being Asal-Based Livestock and Rural Livelihood Support Project (ALLPRO) and Small-Holder Dairy Commercialization Project. These two are coordinated within the Ministry/department while others (including South Nyanza Community Development Project, Central Kenya Dry Areas and Small-Holder Community Development Programme, Mt Kenya East Pilot Project for Natural Research Management (MKEP), National Agricultural and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP) and East African Agricultural Productivity Project (EAAPP) are coordinated by other ministries but with significant participation of the Ministry of Livestock Development.

In most of these projects, development partners often responsible in funding higher proportion of the project budget, while the government and in some cases beneficiary communities contribute the rest. Unfortunately, a larger portion of the contribution of the development partners is in a form of loans, the lesser portion being offered as grants. ALLPRO for example has been funded by an African Development Bank loan of KES 1.9B, who also offered a grant of KES 329M. The rest, to make a total of 2.8B is contributed by the government of Kenya and the beneficiaries of the project (ALLPRO, 2004). Similarly, a bigger percentage of Small Holder Dairy Commercialization project funding is a loan, this time from IFAD. This means that interest will be charged and that the repayment of the loan becomes part of the burdens that the country will have to bear in future. This realization ought to spur a deeper analysis of the benefits of a given project, in which case its benefits should supersede the costs associated with it. Similarly, in cases where the donor funding is purely a grant then opportunity costs of such a grant should also be looked into to eliminate chances that the grant may dis-empower rather than empower the intended beneficiaries through for example entrenching dependence syndrome.

Development effectiveness literature appear to focus on such issues, more specifically the impact of donor funded programmes. For example, foreign aid from official sources to developing countries in the past 50 years has been estimated to have reached $2.3 trillion (Easterly & Pfutze, 2008, p. 1). A valid question that has followed this observation is 'what change has been achieved through this? Is there any change at all? If there is change, is it worth what has been invested in, in terms of resources and time so far? People like Moyo (2009) have raised such questions and have validly challenged the efficacy of aid in Africa. She is also outright that Africans should look for workable ways of bringing development.

One of the milestones in demands for greater effectiveness in development aid is the Paris declaration of 2005 which identified important issues towards aid effectiveness to include harmonization of aid programmes among multiple aid actors, improving predictability of aid and support for country systems (Rogerson, 2005, p. 533). Even before this declaration, there had been concerns of too many fragmented players in international aid practice who lacked coordination and competed against each other causing confusion. Also noted was the poor communication between donors and recipients and lack of empowerment for local capacity.

This paper attempts to discuss some of the development effectiveness issues, drawing their relevance to livestock development projects in Kenya. As there is great consciousness on performance, with programs investing human and financial resources in monitoring and evaluation procedures the paper explores the need to go beyond M&E audits so as to ensure that programmes deliver not only their short term objectives but also long term change.

Monitoring and Evaluation and the effectiveness agenda

Monitoring and evaluation, which is ideally a management tool, is utilised by organizations to check their performance against their set objectives. Monitoring being collection and analysis of information as the project progresses while evaluation is the comparison of the actual impacts of the project and the desired strategic objectives (Shapiro, 2010). Often, instead of M&E being internal management tools as it should, they have become more important for a different reason – that of responding to pressure from donors who make great demands that their money is spend properly.

Monitoring and Evaluation has become an integral part of modern programs and a precondition for projects to be cleared for commencement. In this regard the Ministry of Livestock Development like other organizations has established Project Monitoring and Evaluation under stewardship of M&E officers. The result of this is that M&E is thereby utilised in reviewing progress from as early as the planning phase of the program, through implementation and conclusion. Thus, M&E should enable programs to identify problems and make the necessary adjustments so as to enable programs achieve their objectives and bring change. According to M&E experts such as Janet Shapiro (2010), organizations must create room for radical changes in almost everything as a response to M&E process and that the only things that should be allowed to remain constant are the organizational values, the vision and problem analysis. The question therefore should be how much lee-way does M&E processes have within the MoLD to propose radical changes in design and implementation of programmes and perhaps more poignant – what if the problem touches on the strategic framework pillars of the Ministry such as the vision and the values of the organization for which it has been said that they should remain constant?

The definition for development effectiveness by interpretation appears to include the concerns of M&E but also goes beyond. One such definition is that of Stern *et al.* (2008) which separates the concept of effectiveness into two: aid effectiveness and development effectiveness. Aid effectiveness is subsequently defined as planning, management and deployment of aid in a manner that is efficient, minimizes transaction costs and aimed at achieving development outcomes. Development effectiveness on the other hand is said to be the capability of states and other development practitioners to bring sustainable development outcomes (Stern *et al.* 2008: vii). By this definition the effectiveness agenda transcends the limits of M&E and has deeper concerns of ensuring that programme bring the desired change.

The concept of development effectiveness thus seeks to transform outputs of a given project into sustainable outcomes through synthetic interpretation of its total and final significance. While M&E can be equated to a science which tries to resolve the whole into parts, the obscure into the known and is content to show the present actuality of the impact of a certain project, development effectiveness takes the shape of philosophy – inquiring into the values and ideal possibilities of things and treads into hazardous areas not yet opened to the methods of science.

Themes in development effectiveness with relevance to Livestock Development programmes in Kenya

Governance

Governance is a reflection of prudence in planning, allocating and managing resources (Goldsmith, 2001). Weak rule of law, absence of accountability, tight control over information and high level of corruption have been advanced as some of the characteristics of poor governance (Bräutigam & Knack, 2004).

The overwhelming thinking that good governance is a precondition for a sound economic environment that favours effective utilisation of development funds is in many ways responsible for the fact that donor community led by multilateral agencies have applied conditions to flow of funds so that it can only go to places that have good policy environment or should be used to encourage emergence of this good policy environment through a 'carrot and stick policy' (Kanbur, 2000 p. 2).

In the case of livestock departmental projects, governance issues may not arise as competent systems are in place to oversee development fund utilisation. The main problem would be whether these systems are responsive to the aspirations of the specific beneficiaries. For example how much input does a typical rural individual beneficiary contribute towards a livestock development programme? In cases where loans are used to finance the programme, is such an individual aware of repayment obligation and the implications of these on their future? Will such an individual be interested in the project if the whole picture is made known to them?

Fungibility

Fungibility is perhaps an area that has more relevance to livestock development projects in Kenya. Being the ability to indirectly transfer donor resources onto expenditures that the donor money did not target (Jones 2005), fungibility often plays out because what donor funds do could also be what the departments have budgeted for and have committed resources to undertake using own funds. With the donor money being available, these departmental committed resources can then be diverted into other expenditures. Fungibility is said to become an issue if the priorities of the donor and the recipient countries differ (Jones, 2005).

What makes fungibility something to watch for in the Ministry of Livestock for example is the low GoK funding. The situation is so debilitating so that the field officers are unable to undertake any meaningful field activities and thereby long for donor-funded projects which, if they were in place would provide opportunities for officers to carry out their designated roles. Unfortunately, this mentality provides room for fungibility as the overwhelming expectation of projects is to provide chances for work for idle staff irrespective of whether the said activities contribute to the overall objective of the project.

Accountability of donors and donor influences

The power wielded by donors in livestock projects is another aspect that can influence their effectiveness. As observed by Wenar (2006), their willingness to help is an entirely voluntary action for which they are not accountable to the recipients. Killick (1991) is particularly concerned that donor countries' policies and practices may ignore the needs of recipients and instead use aid to promote own foreign policy or commercial objectives such as procurement tying which substantially reduces the quality and the real value of the aid offered.

Knowing that bureaucratic politics may constrain or drive policies to allocate donor resources (Lancaster 1999, p. 493) and the fact that profit is a major motivation for international financial institutions, it becomes important that the Ministry and its local partners have a bigger influence in project design and implementation because they are ultimately the ones accountable. Donors rarely accept responsibility for failed projects yet they are often intimately involved in project design having developed their own checklists of what they consider ideal project proposals that can be cleared for funding.

Project Coordinating units should be capable of standing to their donors, holding them accountable for ineffective aid. They should be able to question late disbursement of funds and reject inadequate funds on the basis of their insufficiency to complete what is proposed. Donors should also be held accountable when they play out their rivalries among each other and end up duplicating funding for the same project or frustrating genuine development efforts through issuing handouts.

Programme Accountability

The widespread feeling that organizations can only be held accountable by those stakeholders that have a direct influence on the achievement of the objectives of the organization (O'Dwyer, 2008) intensifies the need for programmes to be clearly understood "accountability-wise". Most programmes have established boards of management to bring in some aspects of membership-control and to have a specific accountability path to their constituencies i.e. the communities they work with (Kilby, 2005). Though this becomes an important entity for accountability purposes, programmes ideally should be subjected to other competing demands for accountability from stakeholders including donors, clients and ultimately accountability to own mission and staff. In order to be accountable to this multiplicity of stakeholders five categories of accountability mechanisms have been identified and include reports and disclosure statements, performance assessments and evaluations, participation, self regulation and social audits (Ebrahim, 2003:815).

Accordingly, reports and disclosure statements provide basic data about programme operations and most importantly financial data, which in essence reinforces upward accountability without necessarily improving programmes quality of work as they are created to suit the interests of donors or regulators (Jordan, 2005). Performance assessments and evaluations that choose to assess readily measurable indicators such as outputs and activities as opposed to long term impacts are considered to be no better than reports and disclosure statements and become additional tools of 'audit culture' (Townsend & Townsend, 2004). It is this audit culture that leads to overemphasis of short term quantitative targets (Edwards & Hulme, 1996), distorts staff motivation and behaviour towards a focus on efficiency rather than actual change (Townsend & Townsend, 2004) and forces organizations to spend enormous time in complying with onerous auditing requirements of different donors (Ebrahim, 2003). Lisa Jordan observes that programmes that apply these tools meticulously, grow in strength and influence because they are seen to 'have nothing to hide' and yet may not be more effective (Jordan, 2005, p. 8).

Impact evaluations that assess processes such as participation and empowerment are thus more favourable than procedural efficiency audits that are more concerned with service provision and products (Ebrahim, 2003; Townsend & Townsend, 2004). It is also important that evaluations are utilised more for purposes of facilitating organizational change and learning rather than being a yardstick for further funding (Ebrahim, 2003).

Livestock programmes have a lot to learn from this. It is not uncommon to find implementing officers spending a lot of resources in ensuring that audit reports are favourable so that they can have 'nothing to hide'. Since the 'audit culture emphasises short term quantitative targets, it becomes difficult to focus on processes that will lead to long term change. Another possible problem is the powerlessness of management boards, rarely consulted for important decisions and may even be misused as rubber stamps for decisions they have not made (MoLD 2010). Some members of such boards may not have a real stake in the project but are willing to play ball for the sake of the allowances they draw.

Participation

Participation is a concept that seeks to closely involve local people in development processes planned for them. The concept of participation which is given prominence by Armatya Sen's Capability approach (UNDP's Human Development Report 1997) stresses the need to invest in people's capabilities in order to achieve development.

Termed participatory governance by Jean Claude Saha (2008), participation is said to take place when poor people are involved in definition and evaluation of poverty policies. Saha (2008) points out that without participatory governance public expenditure aimed at combating poverty can easily end up in the hands of corrupt officials. Without participatory governance also, it should be noted that people will always see donor funded projects as unmerited gifts for which they do not have a legitimate voice to determine how they should be run

Participation has been made more popular by participatory research that utilises tools such as Participatory Rural appraisal (PRA) considered as an empowering process where local communities take over their own development (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). ALLPRO for example, did capacity building of 78 departmental officials on participatory integrated community development (PICD) a version of PRA at TOT level and continued this process by training a further 10-12 officers from each District who eventually worked with communities in developing work plans and priorities for funding (Njoroge pers. Comm. 2011).

Effective participation of grass root groups in projects meant for them means that these groups are able to influence the direction of projects which in turn leads to their well-being and self-reliance (Paul 1987 in Parfitt, 2004). Trevor Parfitt in his defence of participation blames its lapse into a 'routinised praxis' to the ambiguity that exists between participation as a means and as an end (Parfitt, 2004, p. 537). Therefore, though participation provides an opportunity for programmes to be effective facilitators of social change by empowering communities in their own development agenda, it can also be used as a ritual of mobilising people to support predetermined objectives of development programmes without significant power being transferred (*ibid: p.* 539). From interviews with ALLPRO Community Development Expert a lot can be learned from the project's community development initiatives where communities developed own priorities which the project funded and achieved huge successes. It is therefore clear that livestock development programmes must avoid making participation processes a ritual and ensuring that it is not only a means of enabling efficient conclusion of projects but also an end – leading to empowerment of communities. When this is done, it will enable strengthened downward accountability as it empowers communities to scrutinize program work (Murthy, 2001).

Harmonization

Harmonization of aid programmes remains an important concern in development practice as stipulated by 2005 Paris declaration and reflected in the Accra Agenda for action. Paris Declaration for example seeks to commit donors to common arrangements and simple procedures and complementarity for effective division of labour (Paris Declaration, 2005). At one level, harmonisation involves adoption of similar procedures across the different sections.

Organizations also ought to strengthen harmonization horizontally across their programs so that emphasis is no longer placed on sectoral domains with little linkage but rather the processes that flow across different sectors. For livestock development programmes, harmonization may mean that the programmes themselves become part of bigger programmes such as those addressing food security issues or community livelihoods. It may also mean that the distinctions between different components of the same programme are reduced and program activities and resource utilization is not structured along the components but rather horizontally across the whole programme. Another aspect of this would be to address value chains, making sure that livestock enterprises are given support from production up to the market.

To avoid duplication in programmes, it may be necessary that the Livestock sector sets up a programmes coordinating unit that aims at consolidating funding resources and prioritizes projects to be funded.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning has become one of the key cornerstones of effectiveness in development work with development organizations giving great priority to organizational learning. Large International Organizations such as World Vision and Plan International have clearly sought to learn from own experiences and from one another and are keen on sharing information and applying new principles in their work (Borter, 2009). At World Vision (globally) for example, a new design, monitoring and evaluation framework called 'Learning through Evaluation and Accountability Planning' (LEAP) has been instituted both as a way of harmonizing World Vision activities and laying strong foundation on the learning aspects of program implementation (WVA, 2009). Likewise, at Plan International, a new Monitoring and evaluation framework with a major learning component has recently been rolled out and they call it Planning, Accountability and Learning System (PALS). This is most probably the reason why most organization continue changing their organizational structures – transforming themselves to better articulate what they have learnt.

In order for programmes within the ministry to be more successful, they must display their willingness to learn, be transparent and honest to its stakeholders. The question is, are Project Coordinators happy to publish what they perceive as their programme failures to serve as source of reflection and further learning? Documentation becomes an important part as records

Effective relationships

To bring effective change in poor communities, it is important to establish relationships of trust (Fukuyama, 1995). Because of the ability to control huge budgets that go into projects within given areas, it is almost a reality that project staff have the magic buttons that may mean a lot for beneficiaries and this may contribute a gap in relationship between the project staff and beneficiaries.

The departmental projects have a great advantage because of the grass root network of its officers especially at the District and Division level. Implementation frameworks that takes cognisance of these structures are thus better placed in achieving their objectives than those that re-invent their own ways of reaching farmers.

CONCLUSION

Though M&E remains an important component in livestock development programmes, this paper argues that it is time the Ministry and indeed the government of Kenya considered paying attention to development effectiveness philosophy. While M&E is useful in providing definite answers through analytical description of each of the programme components, development effectiveness seeks to establish the unknowns through synthetic interpretation. Development effectiveness looks at the wisdom in processes rather than celebrating what may appear as successes when a project is dissected into parts/components. Even before signing a new project, the Ministry should be in a position to question its own motivations while making own interpretations in relations to effectiveness themes outlined: governance, fungibility, participation, effective relationships, organizational learning and accountability of donors and their influences. When these issues are not adequately interrogated, projects may end up not delivering their worth. An 'effectiveness' advisory should therefore be in place to complement the activities of PMED and help reduce incidence of ineffective projects that end up causing huge losses.

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