

## CHAPTER 12

# Role of Donor Agencies in Promoting Participation in CBR

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### SUMMARY

*This chapter examines the need for donors to support CBR programmes in such a way so as to maximise the participation of all stakeholders. It argues that increased participation creates a positive impact on such programmes and is an essential ingredient, if they are to be sustainable after the donor has withdrawn support. The chapter outlines numerous strategies that donors might like to consider, if they wish to improve the efficacy of their funding processes. The points raised, relate to lessons learnt in the Ugandan context, and they include a helpful summary of points for consideration.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Need for Donors**

It is generally agreed, that there are not enough resources to address all the needs of society. Yet, there are pressures on all governments by their citizens, to provide quality goods and services. Many governments,

especially those in the developing world, do not have access to enough resources to enable them to do what is expected and required of them, by their citizens. Governments have therefore to find ways of getting additional resources, and one such way is to turn to donors.

However, the presence of many donors over many years, can serve to hinder as well as help, the development of the country concerned. In fact, some countries are sinking deeper and deeper into a 'dependency upon donors', and this dependency is difficult to break. The resources provided to programmes may not be adequate, and/or some of the resources may be misused. For example, in CBR programmes, they can be used for activities that do not bring about the empowerment and participation of disabled people in the communities, or for activities that lead to dependency. There is need to examine carefully, how donors can promote more participation in CBR activities, to ensure the development of ownership and sustainability.

**Donors are in a position to support and promote participation in CBR when they extend resources and technical assistance to programmes in developing countries**

For governments to provide adequate CBR services, the challenge lies in the provision of adequate funds for the relevant sectors involved. Uganda, like many developing countries, faces a major challenge of resource mobilisation. Nevertheless, it has made tremendous progress in its approach to persons with disabilities (PWDs) and is one of the few countries, if not the only one, where PWDs have a right to be represented at all political levels, right from the village to parliament. At each and every political assembly, there must be at least two representatives (one for women and another for men) for the PWDs. There is even a Minister for Disability and Elderly Affairs. PWDs have also benefited quite a lot from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in Uganda, and many have attained higher qualifications and are becoming competitive in the labour market. Nevertheless, many PWDs still live in villages with nothing to do. PWDs are often the poorest

of the poor, and have no systems to fall back on. Since most of the PWDs, like the rest of the Ugandans, (about 80%) live in rural areas, the only logical framework for ensuring their greater participation in socio-cultural, political and economic activities, has to be based in the places where the majority of them are located. Hence, the need for increased community based activities. Therefore, any donor who supports such activities should definitely promote increased participation of PWDs. Despite some critics of the CBR philosophy, in many developing countries, the activities that normally succeed and have greater impact are those that are community based.

### **Need for budget support rather than project support**

Uganda, like many other countries has had its share of projects and programmes in CBR and other activities. The single factor that cuts across many of the projects, is that they are usually limited to a small group of people, or a given region, or a few selected districts. By doing so, the donors ensure participation of a small group of the community.

**Although there are donor agencies supporting CBR activities in Uganda, they are not evenly distributed. Some are operating in a small section of a given district and although some may claim to be in several districts, they are either covering a few sub counties in those districts, or reaching out to a few people. One of the factors is that there seems to be no systematic approach and policy regarding the way donations are distributed. The Ministry of Gender will need to have donor conferences that will direct interested donors to areas that have no support and have the greatest need. For those areas with no donor support, the government should come in with equalisation grants so that support is evenly distributed. This is the only way that full participation and involvement by all communities can be assured. However little there is, it should be evenly distributed.**

Yet, if one takes stock of the different donors, they would have had better impact and involved more people if they had joined hands and

pooled resources. Through the 'Poverty Alleviation Fund', Uganda is now negotiating with donors to pool their funds together 'in one basket', so that it can be shared equally among all Ugandans. In reality, when the funds are pooled together, it is possible to generate savings, for example, on management costs, which allows for more of the funds to be spent on actual CBR activities. It is in this light, that donors are being urged to pool their resources together and become partners in development.

### **Who is participating in donor-funded CBR programmes?**

Some donors themselves are the implementers of programmes, doing things directly for the recipients. This sometimes promotes a paternalistic approach, which does not promote the participation of the PWDs and their communities. Alternatively, local implementing agencies like donors, prefer to remain relevant and in control. The best approach is one where the people who are the beneficiaries, are involved in the design, planning, implementing and monitoring of the CBR programmes. It is this kind of involvement that will bind all those involved and accountable to each other and will ensure continuity and sustainability of undertakings. The recipients must be made to feel that the programme is their own and not dictated and controlled from elsewhere.

### **Is there a need for a common understanding of the CBR concept?**

Participation and involvement of all, in CBR activities can only be assured if all stakeholders have the same understanding and commitment to the CBR concept. Yet, as it appears now, several people have different views and understanding of CBR. There is a general feeling that CBR needs to be defined within given boundaries, so that those who come to provide assistance, do so from a point of understanding. The Ministries concerned, should, for purposes of coordinating CBR activities, have a clear definition of CBR and the institutional framework in which it is to be implemented. This publication based on the CBR conference in Uganda, has gone a long way to meeting this need, in establishing the key ingredients of CBR in the African context, which are outlined in the final chapter of this book. Based upon these outlines, programmes can be designed appropriately and the impact will be measurable.

### **CBR in a decentralised framework**

Uganda is at an advanced stage with regard to decentralisation. The underlying assumption behind decentralisation in Uganda, namely taking services and responsibilities for those services nearer to the people, is an important step in the right direction for increasing participation. Decentralisation in Uganda provides a conducive environment for increased participation in CBR, by the communities.

Since the districts and lower local government levels are in charge of their own planning, Uganda is already on the path to full community based implementation and management of programmes. This implies that more and more people will be able to participate in CBR activities. Thus, the operational framework has been well spelt out through the decentralisation act. The only factor that will limit people's participation, and for which more donor support is needed, is the area of capacity at the local levels. Whereas responsibilities have been moved lower down in the communities, the accompanying requirements, like skilled labour, logistics and financial resources, are not readily available in such communities. One strategy to overcome this difficulty would be to provide communities with 'start-up kits', in the form of training in logistics and fund management. To be sustainable, the support should facilitate the community to generate their own financing. Unless this is done, the assistance will come and many persons will participate, but as resources dwindle, the participation will also reduce.

**If a donor provided two hundred thousand United States dollars, to a given community and fifty thousand went into setting up a grinding mill for that community (which may be a maize growing area); the community would be assured of revenue from those who would want their maize ground and at the same time would be able to market this value added maize. This would be an important source of alternative funding. Such projects can also make provision to include disabled people and their families. If such projects were made part of the support structure, then sustainability and economic improvement would be assured.**

To keep involvement and participation as high as possible, the assistance that will have the biggest impact, will be one that has elements of its own income generating activities. Indeed, donors need to consider using part of the funding, to set up alternative community financing projects.

The Ministry that determines what goes to the districts, usually receives donor funds. Usually, the greater part of the funding is reserved at the centre for so called 'management, supervision and monitoring', with little filtering down for actual implementation. No wonder participation is often very limited. The donors would achieve better participation and sustainability if they insisted that a certain larger percentage, permeates down to the communities. Instead, the donors trust that the funds will find their way down to the beneficiaries. The donors would help initiate participation and attainment of better results, if they became more interested in knowing where the funds end up in terms of service delivery and impact. Otherwise, the local communities become passive and only await instructions, rather than being the lead agents in planning and implementation. In Uganda, the Ministries are now responsible for guidance and policy formulation, and the district and lower levels are responsible for their own planning and implementation. Since this is the case, the donors need to re-align their support so that the largest percentage of funding goes to the district and lower level (as part of the condition for the donation and grants). This way, the donors will not only ensure better results, but they will have promoted full participation and involvement of the individuals and their communities, in CBR.

### **Donors need to decentralise**

In order to manage their funds at community level, donors also need to decentralise and have many of their programmes based in the areas where they are being implemented, rather than having all their officers and staff stationed in city centres, trying to manage the CBR programmes by 'remote control'. The advantage of locating the project management and implementation in the districts and communities, rather than in capital cities, is that the persons responsible for the programme can be in direct touch with what is happening on the ground, and be able to attend to

issues as they arise. When this is done from a distance, the reaction may be inappropriate and too late. In terms of capacity building, institutional development programme managers based in communities would help to build sustainable systems that encourage participation and also allow for dialogue and consultation. One is provided with the benefit of observing things as they unfold. The presence of such programme managers at community level also serves to limit the abuse of funds, promoting better transparency, financial and activity accountability and therefore, better value for money.

### **Donors and recipients as equal partners**

Donor support needs to move away from an approach whereby the donor seems to be in the driving seat and the target community members are passive recipients. Many of the recipients know exactly what they want to do. In many cases, they have even more technical expertise in some of the areas, than the donors themselves. They also understand the local situations and people better. They are trying to do what they are supposed to do, in spite of many difficulties. With proper funding they would do an excellent job. Therefore, if donors become 'partners in development', then they will come to appreciate that those receiving assistance, are as good, if not better, in managing the programmes. All they need is extra funding to speed up implementation and to spread out to more areas. If there was this mutual trust, then many CBR programmes would succeed, because the stakeholders would put in their best efforts. Such a situation calls for joint planning, joint supervision and monitoring, increased openness, transparency and accountability. Each one should look at the other, as an important player in CBR undertakings.

In some instances, the donors' agenda is hidden. The donor's role should not be about doing things for the recipients, as is sometimes the case, for this kills initiative, innovativeness and lowers participation, but, rather, to support and create an enabling and supportive environment. Indeed, some donors have never informed partners about their budgets and workplans. This makes upward planning very difficult for the recipients. They are not able to mobilise local participation, for they are

unsure whether what is promised will be delivered. They do not want to raise peoples' hopes for nothing because in the end, participation gets thwarted. Donors will promote better participation and involvement of communities if they are upfront on what funds are available when, and for what activities. If this is followed then planning gets based on known criteria and communities will engage in activities up to their maximum affordability. Also, when people know how much has been invested in a given area, they are more likely to value it and jealously guard it. They will always view the project as their own, and be vigilant to ensure that no one messes it up. Similarly, if the communities are made aware about what the donors are providing and what is required of them, they are more likely to value such assistance rather than if things are done for them and they do not know the costs.

There is also a problem of whom to deal with, at each different government level. Many different people claim to be in control of whatever is happening in a given area, when actually they have no mandate to do so. Clarity in roles and responsibilities will go a long way to ensure better implementation and participation in CBR activities. Thus, many donors are often caught between trying to work through official central-local fiscal transfer mechanisms, while also gunning for expeditious execution of projects and programmes. Sometimes, the systems and institutional framework are so complicated, that they bog down implementation and cut back on participation. Donors should insist upon clarity of their relationships with the recipients, the channels of communication and responsibility. The systems and procedures should be less bureaucratic and more project oriented, if one is to see participation of as many people as possible.

#### **IN SUMMARY :**

Donors can increase participation in CBR in recipient countries by:

- Increasing their funding levels;
- Pooling resources together and promoting joint funding of CBR activities, rather than duplicating or competing with each other;
- Seconding staff (technical expertise);

- Attracting other donors to support government initiatives and programmes;
- Sharing information on good practices;
- Joint planning and implementation of activities;
- Increased openness on funds available.

**Donors can increase Government's participation in CBR through:**

- Ensuring that the country has a national policy on CBR;
- Setting up institutional arrangements for the management of CBR programmes;
- Setting up a national CBR steering committee;
- Ensuring that each Ministry and District authority has a budget allocated for CBR activities;
- Factoring into their funding a requirement that all programmes and projects supported by their governments should have a component for disabled persons;
- Promoting international laws that promote the well-being of disabled persons.

**Donors can increase participation at district level through:**

- Joint and integrated planning (integrated and bottom-up);
- Joint and integrated implementation, supervision and monitoring;
- Allowing the communities and local governments to take the lead in CBR activities;
- Support to capacity building, systems and institutional development;
- Supporting community based organisations and NGOs that support and complement Government efforts in CBR undertakings.

**Donors can increase individuals' participation in CBR by:**

- Taking services and activities to the grassroots and forming community committees to monitor implementation;
- Ensuring that the CBR activities are community based; led by the community and implemented by the community for the community members;
- Supporting the establishment of alternative financing/income generating activities;
- Assisting to build the necessary capacity among the CBR implementers and the recipients of the goods and services.

**DONORS VERSUS POLITICIANS**

Donors need to be careful when it comes to demands by politicians. Only such requests should be entertained, that have clear workplans and measurable outputs, specifying how communities will be involved and the benefits they will accrue. Sometimes, donors are confronted with unrealistic expectations from the politicians. There seems to be an assumption that donors have infinite resources. The continuous dependence on donors also brings about a dependence syndrome. Some politicians, instead of facing problems, squarely shift the problems on donors. Some politicians are eager to have projects that have physical infrastructure because these make them appear 'good' among the populace. Yet, what is needed are programmes that are concerned with the well-being of PWDs; their income levels; their education etc. But, these may not be seen as the priorities. Therefore, donors will promote better participation in CBR by the communities if they take the time and trouble to undertake feasibility studies and interact with the communities to identify 'real needs'. This way, they will not be presented with a shopping list, but will get to know which activities will be of benefit to the communities. Project proposals are sometimes designed with other motives. The best proposals are those based on the identified felt needs of the people.

Nevertheless, donors need to create partnerships with the local politicians if they are to realise their objectives and assist districts to improve upon their CBR activities. Politicians are very good mobilisers and can be relied upon to promote community participation in CBR, since they were elected by the mandate of those very communities. Also, when it comes to community participation in CBR activities, other crucial community persons are the religious, clan and opinion leaders. They have an important role to play when it comes to shaping community beliefs and methods of work. So, they should also be included in some of the advocacy and mobilisation programmes to ensure better participation and results.

Field evidence shows that even without official encouragement, people tend to have a lot of expectations. Field reports indicate that people at the grassroots, seldom have a realistic understanding of the limitations of what the donors are able to achieve. The local communities have a lot to contribute in terms of local resources and their own labour, but they need to be encouraged. If there is a clear description of what needs to be done and differentiation of roles and responsibilities, then many citizens will acquire an understanding of what is possible. In this regard, donors ought to work with district and community leaders, to understand what the community can do and what support they need. The local communities can easily be mobilised and be relied upon, to participate effectively if they fully grasp what is happening and why.

## **DONORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

There are many other stakeholders who must be brought on board, if the donors' assistance is to realise maximum benefits. These include local small NGOs, community based organisations, religious bodies or groups and so on. These organisations have in many cases won the 'hearts' of the local people by their contributions, however little they may be. In some cases, the only help the communities have received is from such philanthropic organisations. Donors may actually engage or sub-contract some of the work to other organisations, so as to reach the community better. Since these organisations have been accepted in the communities

and have a following, they are more likely to be successful in mobilising people than the external agencies. However, care needs to be taken especially where there are religious organisations, because the communities belong to different organisations and if a donor sides with one religious group, it may lead to loss of participation of other community members.

Donors need to interact with the civil society to conduct monitoring and ensure that programmes are properly executed and that people are benefiting. The civil society can be relied upon to bring about more transparency and accountability. The donors should work with civil society organisations as the monitors. External evaluations are good, but the best mechanism to ensure that things happen, is when the people themselves check on each other. In this vein, there should be a forum that brings together all key stakeholders where experiences are shared and strategies discussed and agreed. The donors and governments can serve the people better, if they bridge the gap between the different partners. This will result in better appreciation of each other's efforts, increased communication and information sharing, and will eliminate duplication and overlap.

There are many NGOs, both local and international, involved in CBR activities. There are also individuals, community initiatives and government programmes. This multiplicity of CBR providers and efforts implies a need for coordination and collaboration to ensure maximum participation, since they all serve the same interests and the same communities. Hence, the strategy of bringing stakeholders at a round table as advocated above, is likely to create a synergy that yields significant benefits to all involved. This also eliminates the temptation by some donors to establish 'spheres of influence', in an effort to justify their existence and a continued receipt of funding by their mother countries. The idea to create 'empires' is fruitless, as it leads to duplication of resources, unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings. The situation is unfortunate, because it does not serve the local populace. The local people are not really concerned about where the funds are

coming from, but about whether those funds bring an improvement towards their well-being.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

One of the major problems that have troubled donors in developing countries is poor transparency and accountability. Some donors have suspended their assistance because of a lack of proper accountability. Indeed, many donors delay funding projects until they are sure that their assistance will be put to proper use and that there are proper accounting procedures, for they have to account for these monies to their populace, the taxpayers. This is a big challenge for the recipients, if they are to continue to receive the greatly needed extra funds. Donors can assist by initiating measures to promote transparency and accountability and encourage involvement of local communities and civil society, as monitors of donors funds.

In Uganda, the districts are facing a lot of capacity shortage, since decentralisation is still at an infancy stage. Many systems and procedures are yet to be instituted and many crucial staff, like accountants, is still hard to come by. Donors can help a great deal, if part of their assistance goes towards building the necessary capacity. Some donors complicate the situation by instituting their own accounting and reporting requirements, making it even more difficult for the already overstretched staff. This leads to a delay in accounting and hence, delays in release of funds etc. If one is talking about improving upon existing systems and procedures, then the donors should not bring in other systems and procedures outside those of the government. They can have their own external audits, but this should be funded by the donors, rather than the recipients. Donors will also promote better participation if they limit the external (expatriate) staff. The aim should be to build local capacity that will ensure continuity and sustainability. If expatriates must come, then it can be for a short spell of time and essentially to train and provide a back up for the local staff and lend their expertise.

Some donors come with a predetermined agenda. They have specific activities they are willing to fund and sometimes these are not necessarily

the priorities of the communities. If the assistance is to be useful and if full participation and involvement is to be attained, then the local communities should be given the upper hand in determining the direction and speed of the implementation programme.

Implementation should start where the community is based and move at a speed relative to the capacity and ability of that community. To do otherwise, is to overstretch and hence kill local participation and initiative.

The local communities should be allowed to form their own management teams in whom they have confidence. Donors need to let the local people appear to be in the lead and in-charge; otherwise, they become passive and do not participate fully. The communities must be made aware that the programme is their own and they are responsible for making it work. The donors should be seen as supporters who will eventually leave. The communities must always be prepared for the departure of the donors, so that efforts are not lost.

Generally, donors are well intended and they really want to help, but often, they undermine their good intentions by introducing new and untested practices instead of building on those of the communities and helping the communities to change from within. If a project or activity is truly 'community based' then it must start at where the community is, in socio-cultural, political and economic terms. Therefore, the donors would serve communities better, if they take the trouble to understand the communities they want to assist. There is also need for more transparency and openness from all sides, so that all the players know what is at stake, and the expectations from one another. There should be a clear definition of roles and responsibilities; an agreed work plan; an indicative budget with sources of funding; expected results and performance indicators. In short, all programmes should have clear work plans and a logical framework including implementation plans. This is the only way that all stakeholders will be kept on track and bring about better results, through increased participation and involvement of all concerned.

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