



NURP sub project component

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THE SUB PROJECTS Component was a new pilot component of NURP(Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme) in the office of the Prime Minister under which the districts and communities are the sub-project holders and are wholly responsible for the identification and implementation of sub-projects in the sub-sectors of rural water supply primary education and peri-urban access roads. They in addition co-financed the subprojects through contribution of at least 20 per cent of the total project cost.

Objectives

- To improve the capacity of districts to identify, prepare, appraise and implement development projects.
- To increase the responsiveness of district authorities to community initiatives.
- To contribute towards construction and rehabilitation of additional infrastructure.

Procedure

A manual which provided guidelines on how to operate was prepared by a consultant. This was based on a discussions and consultations with district authorities, staff members of NGOs, staff of line ministries, the NURP Project Steering Committee and World Bank.

Categories

The sub-projects are divided into two categories; District subprojects and Community subprojects. In the former districts, provide the 20 per cent contribution and in the latter, communities provide the 20 per cent contribution.

Eligibility criteria

The eligibility for funding was based on the following criteria.

- Own contribution - 20 per cent or more.
- Scope of work - rural water supply, primary schools or peri urban roads.
- Budget limitation - it had to be less than Ushs.40,000,000 (US\$30,000).
- Maximum unit investments - These should not exceed Ushs.40,000 (US\$30) per beneficiary.
- Maximum over head costs -These should not exceed 15 per cent of total costs for preparation, implementation and supervision.
- Management track record - Do they hold management meetings as evidenced by previous minutes?
- Implementation Capacity - are local contractors or skilled personnel available?

- Quality control, supervision and certification arrangements - These are to be provided by Technical Support Agencies.
- Economic justification - These are social services and the methods of economic justification are not applicable.
- Sustainability - Evidence that personnel and funding for operations and maintenance are in place.

The sub project cycle

There are basically five steps in the sub project cycle. These are:

- i) Identification.
- ii) Preparation and approval.
- iii) Financing arrangements.
- iv) Implementation supervision and certification.
- v) Evaluation and reporting. These are explained in some detail below.

Identification

Eligible communities would identify a project, provided they were within the eligible sectors. Community leaders would complete a simple questionnaire. Among the questions asked was how many beneficiaries? how much will it cost? how much contribution expected? who will implement? and who will be responsible for operations and maintenance? The community, will then submit the questionnaire to the sector department at the district. The next course of action would be to:

- abandon the sub project because it does not fulfil the eligibility criteria.
- identify a Technical Support agency willing to assist with preparation.
- request a Government department to assist with preparation.
- integrate the project with the district subprojects.
- approve and submit the proposal as it is.

After identification and advice by the sector department within the district, the project stands a chance of approval and the next stage is preparation.

Preparation

This was normally undertaken by a Technical Support Agency. A Technical Support Agency may be an individual, private consulting firm, an NGO who have relevant skills in project formulation. The conditions for engagement were such that the TSA must have an agreement with a community or district and that is to be paid by IDA funds, the proposal has to have been approved by the District

NURP Steering Committee (DNSC) and cleared by the Sub Projects Task Force. Here clearly the risk is with both the Sub Project holder and the TSA. The TSA payment will be paid from the sub project budget, and overhead costs. This includes for preparation, implementation and supervision expenses.

Appraisal and approval procedures

The two major organs involved in the approval process of a sub project are: the District NURP Steering Committee and the Sub Project Task Force. The District NURP Steering Committee consists of officials at the District level who review proposals against the eligibility requirements and the Sub Project Task Force consists of members of the Coordinating Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (CMEU) of the office of the Prime Minister and the Liaison officers from the line ministries. The outputs of the meetings are a no objection to the proposals.

Financing arrangements

Once the project is approved by the Task Force, a Grant Agreement is signed with the CMEU of the Office of the Prime minister.

Implementation arrangements

Since these are District Based Projects the role of implementation falls, squarely on the districts. Implementation is carried out usually by contractors and sometimes by direct labour in respect of community projects. The Local Government Tender Board gives authority for all procurements. The contractors are supervised by the Technical Support Agencies, who also certify payments for suppliers. Payments are made by the District Authorities to contractors, suppliers and technical support agencies.

Monitoring and reporting

This was done by the CMEU through reports field visits, supervision missions by IDA (World Bank) and audits.

Observations

As can be seen the procedures are quite elaborate and initially it was very difficult for both the District Officials and the selected Technical Support Agency to fulfil the requirements for approval. This was characterised by many projects being rejected, or requiring additional input into the proposals. Several proposals were rejected more than once. Thus at one point the communities became desperate and lost faith in the authorities. Since this was still a new approach a lot can be attributed to the learning process.

A fundamental question here was about basic needs like water, basic rights like education and the issue of whether we should dwell so much on the detail of the proposal as opposed to whether a basic need or basic right is being addressed?

A significant amount of time and effort went into preparing these proposals and very few were actually implemented especially in the rural water supply sub-sector. Other proposals were said to be late because the loan period had come to an end. This was exacerbated by the fact that many TSA's were not paid for their input in terms of preparation. (One of the conditions was that the risk was to borne by the TSA as well as the sub-project holders). This led to a lot of scepticism about the intentions of the donor or the people managing the funds.

The district staff also lost morale because they did not receive any facilitation for their input into the project. They preferred to spend their time on other projects which had appropriate allowances.

The idea of involving beneficiaries from the design stage is very good and demand driven, the idea of people contributing a share of the capital costs provides further a sense of ownership which contributes towards Sustainability of investments. The question is how much should they contribute? This may appear like double taxation for the communities, especially in view of their level of income. Contribution in kind is therefore preferred. In all these procedures, we should not lose sight of our overall objective to improve health and quality of life for individuals and improve their capacity. This lack of contribution led to significant delays in the approvals of the sub-project.

A sector that was particularly difficult was the peri-urban roads. No project was approved for implementation. It appears the criteria were too stringent and unrealistic. Another problem experienced during implementation was the slow rate of disbursement by the CMEU to the districts and lack of capacity at the districts to provide sufficient scrutiny to the proposals before approvals.

The way forward

- The procedures should be drastically simplified to enable faster a efficient/implementation.
- The TSA's should be provided with appropriate logistics including advance payment; where necessary.
- District staff should be facilitated so that they can participate more wholesomely.
- The district should be more involved in scrutinising the project before submission.
- The amount of contribution in cash should be reviewed.

References

SUB-PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL, May 1996.
AIDE MEMIORE GOU and WORLD BANK SUPERVISION MISSION, May 1996 - December 1997.

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