

Mindset change: a precursor for the success of the parish development model



Jonas Mbabazi
Musinga

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Research Fellow,
Project Manager, Local
Government Councils
Scorecard Initiative
(LGCSCI)

In FY 2021/2022, the Government of Uganda started the implementation of an agri-business model, dubbed the Parish Development Model (PDM) for the transformation of 39% of Ugandans who are trapped in a subsistence economy.ⁱ One of the Pillars of the PDM is Mind-set Change, Community Mobilisation and Organisation; – a responsibility that has been bestowed to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This is part of the interventions to implement the Community Mobilization and Mind-set Change Programme (CMMC) under NDP III whose goal is to empower citizens, families and communities for increased responsibility and effective participation in sustainable national development.ⁱⁱ

Uganda is not short of examples of poverty alleviation programmes that have been implemented before from which to pick lessons to inform such an intervention. Some of these programmes include: At the regional level – Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP), Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), Karamoja Integrated Development Programme (KIDDP), and Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) among others and, at the national level – Entandikwa, Youth Venture Capital Fund (YVCF), Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), Uganda Women

Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), Presidential Initiative for Luwero-Rwenzori, Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) and more recently the Emyooga.ⁱⁱⁱ However, while the objectives of some of these have been met, others have performed moderately. Based on the experiences of the previous poverty eradication programmes, there is progress but it has been slackening. There are several readiness issues for the implementation of the PDM that are hinged around Mind-set Change, Community Mobilisation and Organisation that relate to the growing dissatisfaction with the quality of public service; disempowerment of the target community; weak self-centred public service leadership. This article explores several issues on the readiness of the central government, local governments and target beneficiaries for the implementation of the PDM.

The Public Service Mind-set: A growing dissatisfaction.

There is an increasingly broadly-held conviction that efforts to make public service effective and efficient cannot succeed unless they are equipped with public administrations that are geared to meet the new challenges of economic and social development.^{iv} Poor work ethics— the habit of not thinking ahead and making necessary preparations, not being focused and devoted to one's work,

failing to complete tasks, keep deadlines and promises among other things puts public service in disrepute. There are other ethical issues like limited regard for the rules and basic principles of the right action and rules of conduct that have continued to undermine public trust and confidence in governments as well as unethical individuals whose operational mechanics are unethical.

In Uganda, there are common undesirable cultures and behaviours in many public service institutions, particularly in local governments that seem to project that the implementation of the PDM will be an uphill task if not addressed. These include; the traditional views of the '8-5 public servant'; preference for a compliance-based approach; more emphasis on rules than solutions; performance managed through presenteeism rather than results; and risk-averse culture that stifles creativity and new ways of working, laissez-faire culture and mind-set that focuses less on results and more on ticking boxes for a day completed among others.

Park (2019) argues that many facilities built to serve the public, like health centres, schools, value addition infrastructure, and markets become useless shortly after they are opened and handed over due to a lack of care and ownership and corruption. Regardless of other intervening factors, the real issue is not the lack of resources or means, but the mind-set of the people who are involved and responsible for undertaking these works.

These negative cultures, mind-sets and perceptions within the public service ecosystem depressingly impact the timeliness and quality of public goods and services. This further aggravates the levels of trust and public belief in the quality, responsiveness and authenticity of government services at both the local and national levels. The public servants would not be ready to implement the PDM while their mind-sets are not attuned to ensuring ethical, business-like (without bureaucracy and red tape), effective and efficient public services.

The Community Mind-set: A weak link

As part of mobilisation, the politicians and government are now encouraging the community to form enterprise-based SACCOs so that they can receive resources for economic empowerment. This is very constraining given the nature of the community that is being targeted to benefit from the PDM. This is mainly due to many traits that include: an overdependence on external support; tokenism from politicians; high levels of apathy; perception of the unresponsiveness of government to citizen needs and a lack of resources to guarantee enterprise and development. Thus, the current group of people targeted by the PDM lack a development mind-

set or an agri-business mind-set for "knowing, practising, owning, and passion." This community is further excluded from participating in development processes due to the necessary 'political tools' such as information, literacy, power and money.^v Their major concern is production for subsistence or survival. This mind-set is disempowering the people. Thus Korea's Saemaul Undong, the New Village Movement, which was launched aggressively with success during its period of rapid economic growth, offers a meaningful 'action model' for Uganda's PDM in light of its value and uniqueness as a community-driven self-help movement.^{vi}

The undesirable mind-set of leaders: A concerning trajectory

Culture is heavily influenced by leaders. All the 'talk' about mind-set change in the implementation of the PDM will be ineffective if leaders do not adopt the new thinking and lead by example. Jong-Dae Park contends that traits commonly exist among leaders that may constrain effective implementation of the PDM: the dependency syndrome; the what is-in-it-for-me syndrome; the backtracking syndrome; expediency or short-sightedness; a lack of action and implementation; a weak sense of responsibility or ownership; a weak sense of nation or patriotism and a commission culture. These traits result in total negligence and irresponsibility with multiple, cumulative and regressive effects on development programmes both at the national and local levels. Thus, without a fundamental change in the mind-set of the leaders, both political and technical, there cannot be real progress in the implementation of the PDM.

Recommendations

The 'mind-set change approach' brings with it great benefits, in that it is conducive to the 'internalization' of development, enhancing awareness for ownership, and is action-oriented. Bringing the 'mind-set' to the fore in discussion propels the search for answers 'from within', which is what development ought to be about in the first place.

Recommendations to reimage the Public Service

To re-image the public service and create the necessary mind-set change, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) working with the Ministry of Public Service should:

- a) **Emphasise the strong role of the Local Governments in the shift from "delivery to "enablement** : The local governments are expected to play a critical role and have a mind-set shift to development-mindedness. There is a need for local governments

to be more committed to addressing inefficiencies, and demonstrate more commitment to rural transformation beyond doing the basics. This can be bolstered by enforcing the performance reward and sanction regimes (incentives and disincentives) in LGs, minimising wastage of public resources, empowering the public, and strong accountability to the public. This will create an enabling environment for the various actors to deliver on their mandates under the PDM.

- b) **A mind set change campaign is crucial for all:** This requires a strong mechanism to supervise and enforce civil servants' compliance and delivery. We can start with the introduction of a regular 'mind set change' training of public officials and a tight regime of monitoring their performance.
- c) **People-centred service:** There is a need to re-image public service as a mission to people and country rather than self. This will be instrumental in addressing self-serving traits like the what's-in-it-for-me syndrome; the backtracking syndrome; expediency or short-sightedness; a lack of action and implementation; a weak sense of responsibility or ownership; a weak sense of nation or patriotism; and a commission culture among others. The Public Service College and National Leadership Institute should be capacitated to build this culture both at the National and Local Levels through a decentralised mechanism using the existing regional public institutions like schools and universities. Also, the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and the Uganda Local Government Associations can consider creating e-learning platforms for both technical and political leaders to enhance public servants' skills, attitudes, and knowledge of people-centred public services.

Recommendations for addressing the Mind-set issues in the community

To re-engineer the mind-set of the community the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) working with the Ministry of Local Government should:

- a) **Empower the community with information:** Efforts to empower and build capacities of the community should precede governments' decisions to start implementation of the Parish Development Model.
- b) **Enhance Community Enterprise:** There is a need to educate communities to understand that development evolves from within so that they make optimal use of the available resources to uplift or improve their livelihoods through the generation of income. This will change the mind-set that

development will be delivered by the government. Communities must be made to understand that the government only plays an enabling role. Among the community there are plenty –but scattered resources, which need to be rediscovered and used optimally so that people's interest is raised to improve their lives, knowledge, and technology. For sustainable development to take place people must be able to survive without excessive dependence on external support. Although grants and loans can be given to the Communities, they should be able to pay back and continue productive activities. Communities should be encouraged to build self-reliance by setting aside resources for development. This will be possible if the community is facilitated to undergo critical self-awareness to understand the causes of their poverty and understand the value of saving.

- c) **Restoring a sense of responsibility and do-it-yourself mind-set:** There is a need to rebuild a sense of responsibility within the community to emphasise the ethos of self-help and community-led development. A successful drive for mind-set change for the community should focus on creating do-it-yourself attitudes and behaviour. The messaging should be about instilling people's minds with a can-do spirit and positive motivation and encouraging them to work for themselves so that become the spontaneous agents of rural transformation.

Recommendations for addressing leadership challenges.

- a) **Distribute decision-making powers:** The district local governments should cascade decision-making powers to the sub-county to reduce the unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape that is likely to be created by the Technical Planning Committees in the district on major investment decisions
- b) **Enhance the capacity of Leaders:** The Ministry of Public Service should ensure that leaders at various levels had the right skill sets and mind-set to get the right things done appropriately. The leaders must be equipped with an enablement mind-set that requires them to think more systematically and provide timely development-oriented solutions to the citizens in their localities. The leaders should be equipped to think broadly to utilise the available institutions, and human resources and engage other actors, state and non-state in the ecosystem to provide solutions to existing societal challenges rather than the narrow focus on individual institutional mandates.
- c) **Results-focused accountability:** There is a need for the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to look beyond traditional hierarchical

Endnotes

- paper accountability models to broaden our definition of what accountability means. The leaders must enforce accountability that focuses on results. This accountability should focus on what changes are happening in the community as a result of the various interventions in different parishes. Undertaking continuous citizen-led accountability meetings with various duty bears would generate much-needed results.
- d) **Mentorship:** Further, mentorship is one of the other strategies needed to transform the mind-sets of public servants. There is a need for a mentorship platform for professionals and leaders to create a pool of young able people to become better mantle bearers for posterity. This would allow new and young public servants to be skilled and empowered through activities like training, networking, and exposure to best practices, among others. The platform can design specific programmes to change the mind-sets and attitudes of the young professionals in the Country.
- e) **Peer learning:** There is a need for the MoLG and MoGLSD to benchmark the New Village Movement called “Saemaul Undong” in South Korea a model based on community-led development, self-help and cooperation and guiding ethos. The “Saemaul Undong” would provide lessons that can be instrumental for leaders in the implementation of the PDM.

Conclusion

The Implementation of the PDM requires an agile mind-set for systems-thinking and strategic intelligence in support of integration; an innovative and or problem-solving or experimental mind-set for innovation and critical thinking in support of transformation and competence an evidence-based mind-set for sound decision and policymaking; digital, collaborative, result oriented, market-oriented and foresight mind-set for long-term planning and sound policymaking. This should be bolstered by an empowered community with a sense of ownership and responsibility that can utilise the existing support ecosystem to enhance community enterprise through self-help. The different stakeholders, therefore, have to be deliberate to fill the missing parts of the puzzle and strengthen the weak links.

- i MoFPED (2022).
- ii NPA (2020). NDPIII Community Mobilisation and Mindset Change Programme Implementation Action Plan. January 2020.
- iii MoGLSD (2022). Parish Development Model: Mindset Change, Community Mobilisation and Organisation. Trainers Guide. January 2022, MoGLSD, Kampala.
- iv Abdelouahad Ourzik (n.d) Public Service in Africa: New Challenges: African Public Service: New Challenges, Professionalism and Ethics. Moroccan Observatory of Public Administration, Rabat. <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/E-Library%20Archives/2000%20Public%20Service%20in%20Africa%20New%20Challenges.pdf>
- v Bagenda, J. (2007). The Challenges of Community Participation in Decentralization Processes in Uganda: A Case Study of Kibaale District. Research and Perspectives on Development Practice. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/10197/1/justine_bagendasmallpdf.com_%20%282%29.pdf
- vi Park, DJ (2019). Re-Inventing Africa’s Development. Linking Africa to the Korean Development Model. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-03946-2.pdf>