Involving Communities in Identifying Policy Issues

Nanfuka Proscovia

Caritas Kiyinda-Mityana

2021

HORIZONT 3000

AUSTRIAN ORGANISATION
FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Table of Contents

Table of Charts

List of Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
CWD	Children with Disabilities
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PWD	People with Disabilities

1. General Information

Name, address and geographical region of the organisation or institution

Caritas Kiyinda-Mityana, P.O. Box 175, Mityana. Central Region, Uganda

Purpose of the institution and area of work

Creating a self-reliant community engaging in sustainable and holistic development: The organization is working in the whole diocese of KiyindaMityana through the different programs of the different thematic areas.

Name of the experience

Involving community in identification of policy issues

When was this experience made?

This experience was made in 2019.

Geographical range where the experience has been made/ the practice is applied

Uganda, Central region, Kassanda District in the two sub-counties (Kalwana and Kassanda sub-counties)

Why is this experience relevant?

It helps in identifying the problem (policy issue) and understanding the right office to address it to.It also helps in identifying everyone's (stakeholders') responsibility on a policy issue before casting blame to the duty bearers.The use of informal spaces to reach the duty bearers becomes easy since different people in the community know different duty bearers and relate with them differently.Research becomes easy since some stakeholders arerequired with ready information about an issue.The community develops attachment on an issue, come up with the way forward and follow up since they feel involved. They would keep on giving you calls on how far the issue has moved.

2. Context of the Experience

Reason for the experience/ practice to emerge; context (initial situation) and challenge(s)

Initially, the whole organization never had policy dialogue activities but rather lobby and advocacy. However, in April 2018, Caritas

Mityana was one of the organizations brought on board by Horizont3000 through empowering two of its staff members in policy dialogue, who later in 2019 even facilitated the whole Caritas staff in policy dialogue training.

This emerged from the capacity building workshops and from the very first policy dialogue activity with the beneficiaries, where we invited the TA from Horizont3000 to guide us through. During the problem identification, participants were grouped on village basis and drew maps showing public facilities (schools, health centres, water source, roads, electricity, police station, public market, among others) in their communities including their distances. These maps made it obvious that there were some public facilities missing and others were very far for them to reach. You could find a whole parish without a health centre or a government aided school or even a well built water source. People had to collect water from ponds where animals also go. The community was opened up, became participative and more involved in policy dialogue activities.

Were gender and/or HIV/Aids aspects part of the initial challenge? If yes, explain how they affected the situation.

Gender issues were stressed during the discussion mainly with expecting mothers who find it difficult to access medical services due to the long distances to reach a health facility and for those who can access it, there are no drugs and materials to assist them. So they end up giving birth with the village birth attendant, which is associated with probability of life or death of either the mother or the child. For the case of PWDs, both men and women suffer in silence.

Girl children often times have to commute long distances to access schools and when it comes to People with disability then things grow worse. Some decided completely to let it go and they do not attend school at all.

With HIV/AIDs, patients have to move long distances to get drugs on a monthly basis, which is expensive and the situation for a PWD who is HIV positive is unimaginable. They are under a mercy of relatives or concerned citizen, who may assist them to pick up their drugs on a monthly basis - that is if they have the transport to do so. They sometimes miss it. A case in point is a woman from Kalwana, who has a disability and

is positive. She is helped by the relative who comes in the village once in a while. Her condition is worsening because of missing her dose. She cannot reach the health facility and the nearest is 15km from her home.

3. Main Characteristics of the Experience

Where does the practice/ experience come from? How was it developed and by whom?

Policy dialogue being a new method used by Caritas Mityana to identify a policy issue, digging deeper into it and negotiating with relevant actors to reach a win-win situation is not a man's effort. We found out that the best way to generate real pressing issues is by contacting beneficiaries from the community. This practice started in 2019 in our very first meeting with the program beneficiaries, where they were made to draw a map of their villages/parishes indicating different public facilities within them plus their distances. We were able to identify together what was missing, in which distance, who is affected, who is responsible and what is required in order see that the service/facility is in place. When this worked in the first sub-county, we employed the same practice in Kalwana and it was successful.

How did this experience evolve (the process/ history)? Describe the main steps and turning points! In which way was it a participatory process?

During situation analysis, we worked with community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and sponsored children to mobilize the care takers and people with disabilities benefiting from the program. In this first meeting, participants were grouped according to parishes and they were instructed to draw maps of their villages/parishes indicating different public facilities and the distances between them. As a team, we wereable to identify a gap in resource allocation in these areas and to establish the distances in which the facilities are, who is affected, who is responsible and what is required in order for the facility to bein place. Through discussions, we were able to brain storm using the maps and prioritizing the problems identified. Within a short period of time, we were able to do a situational analysis for the whole sub-county on different issues.

Purpose/ Objective: Describe the purpose of your experience in a few sentences

To Involve the community in problem identification, who is affect by the problem, what is its cause, what are the effects of the problem if not dealt with and who is responsible.

Methodology: Which tools, instruments/ methods and/or methodology are used in order to implement the experience and address the challenges?

1. Planning a community meeting targeting certain groups of people in line with what you want to discuss get out of them. 2. Set a convenient venue for the meeting. 3. Have stationery for the participants 4. Facilitation of the whole process 5. Introduce yourself and the reason for the meeting.

4. Stakeholders and Partners – Roles and Responsibilities

Beneficiaries: Who are the main beneficiaries of the experience/ practice?

Community: The community benefits through understanding their roles and responsibility in the processes of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.
It also helps them to stand up and demand for their entitlement as a group.

Political leaders: The practice helps them to understand the gravity and perimeter of the problem and the possible solutions as suggested by the community members themselves.

CSOs/Implementing agency: Getting the required information with evidence becomes easy; follow up on issues due to people involvement also becomes simple for the agency. Finding possible solutions and the right office to address the issue at hand becomes simpler.

Other stakeholders: Understanding where there is a problem in the community and joining to help solve the problem. It can be through advocating for the community or empowering the community to demand for their fundamental rights upon an identified issue.

Which parties/ institutions and groups of people are mainly involved in the implementation of the experience?

Motivation:
Implementing agency/Organization:
Transport in terms of fuel and lunch

Local leaders:
Transport and lunch allowance.

Other community members:
Transport and lunch

Tasks and responsibilities:
Implementing agency:
- Guiding the meeting/workshop participants on what is required of them.
- Taking the lead in documentation and follow up on identified issues.

Other community members:
- These are the sources of information on different issues within the community. They act as key informers.
- Their responsibility is to demand for their fundamental rights with guidance from the implementing agency.
- They form committees which make things move through contacting the relevant offices and through use of informal spaces since some people among the community relate to government officials differently.

5. Resources

What kind of resources are needed to carry out/ implement the experience? How much of every resource is needed?

Human: It depends on the coverage –area of operation but usually it requires human resource with social working knowledge as well as knowledge about policy dialogue.

Finance is required in terms of facilitation and transport refund for participants such that when they are called again, they do not hesitate to come.
Time is also required since at the beginning people may be hesitant in providing information, particularly on issues concerning politics, if they are not very familiar with you. So, building rapport takes time as well as trust.

Materials: Usually newsprints, masking tape, makers as well as pens and notebooks were used. For the areas where electricity is not a problem, a computer and a projector can be used in some instances if there is something one wished to show to the participants.

6. Impact of the Experience/ Practice

What has been the impact of this experience on the beneficiaries' (both men and women) livelihoods? What has improved through the presented experience on the level of individuals, and on the organizational level?

Parents have been assisted to understand their roles and responsibilities instead of blaming the authorities all the time. They were encouraged to bring children to school first and then embark on blaming the government for not sending teachers in those schools. We have seen school enrolment increasing mainly in Kyetume and Lwangiri Primary schools.

Early child marriages have been a rampant issue in Kalwana sub-county and happened publicly. However, after empowering the parents and local leaders, the practice has reduced and when it happens it is done in hiding for fear of the consequences.

Teacher –parent relationship improved in all schools, where the program was established, since parents were encouraged to make follow up on their children to get involved in their education. Previously, parents could just send children to school and they would never follow up during the seven years of primary or four years of ordinary secondary level. They would never know when their children ever reached schools but blamed their poor performance on the teachers.

From the improvement in the relationship between teachers and parents, priests in-charge of schools are inviting Caritas Mityana to carry on the same gospel in other areas through zone meetings. However, these have not been conducted due to the outbreak of the Pandemic. Even the head teachers and teachers from the different schools who participated in the community meetings are calling for the same meeting in their schools.

Did the experience contribute to an innovation in the livelihoods of men and women? If yes, describe in which way!

Sure. In one of the meeting when we were collecting research information about one of the identified issues concerning children with disability, "Inclusion for all" as one of government policies, a teacher from Ddalamba Primary school took initiative on his own to carry out a simple eye test for his pupils in class. To his surprise, he found three pupils (2 boys and 1 girl) with sight problems. Theyhad been sitting at the back of a class of 102 pupils. That is when he realized that maybe their poor performance in class was due to that. He put them in proper position for them to see well on the black board. He testified an improvement in their performance.

7. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

What are the key messages and lessons learned from the experience?

What went well:
- Community involvement and participation was good
- People with disability were well represented and participated
- The selected committees to spear head research did their work and received feedback through a meeting.

What we could do differently

Grouping community people according to category since different categories understand issues differently for example parents and teachers, People with disabilities and OVC caregivers, political and religious leaders. They perceive ideas in different perspectives. When together in a group, some feel misplaced and inferior and fail to express themselves even though they have good ideas.

What would you suggest to someone in a similar situation?

- Know the basics of policy dialogue: Before you use the practice, you should have policy dialogue knowledge.
- Leave the community to identify their own problems but take on the leading position.
- Let the community come up with possible solutions.
- Know your community and the community should know and trust you.

8. Challenges

What are the main challenges encountered by men and women in applying the experience?

Time required: Policy dialogue is not done in one meeting or event. It requires time if you are to get the real gist of the matter. Time and patience since the right people with the right information may not be easy to find in the time frame you had set to an issue.

Transport refund: This is required in terms of transport refund for participants and lunch. Again, there is a need of facilitating the research process in order to have ideas barked up with evidence from the community which is expensive.

Community trust to open up: Many times, if you enter a community, which is not well familiar with your organization, it may take time to get what you want from them. With issues regarding politics, people do not feel related – they think those are issues for the generals. They even fear for their lives thinking that you have come to spy on them. They will be hesitant to speak out what they know on any issue.

Knowing the right people to invite from the community: Not whoever comes for the meeting will be beneficial on the issue at hand. Some people in the community are good at discouraging others because they are vocal. After the formal meeting they conduct other informal meetings on the way to their homes and try to discourage others who have picked interest with statements like "if the government failed to do it, do you think this organization can make it? Remember the area Member of parliament who visited us: we told him all our problems but nothing happened. Don't you think this is waste of our time?" Next time you invite them, the turn up is low due to such people.

Increasing demand from the community: There are many demands from the community addressed to Caritas Mityana in anticipation of solving them all for example construction of borehole, renovation of village shallow wells which are outside the program interventions.

How have these challenges been addressed so far?

- Use of Disclaimers: Assuring participants that there will be no disclosure of anyone's name in the report.
- Facilitating participants in terms of transport and lunch whenever they are called for the meeting. This motivates them such that when they are called again, the turn up in a big number.
- Selection of key informants among the community to avoid those who may end up failing others
- Create time and be patient.
- Prioritize together the policy issue an organization will be able to follow up not to let them think that you will work upon all their problems.

9. Sustainability

What are the elements that need to be put into place for the practice to be institutionally, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable?

- Working with other stakeholders such that even without you, they can still carryon.
- Select committees from the community including key informants to follow up on an issue.
- Involving Local council and religious leaders in the process such that they carry on the message even in the absence of the leading/implementing organization.

10. Experience Sharing/ Up-scaling

What are the conditions (institutional, economic, social and environmental) that need to be in place for the practice to be replicated?

- Let the community be in the lead position and you are just guiding them. Do not think for them.
- Do not try to show that you are partisan; be neutral in the whole process.
- Know your audience and act friendly.
- Treat them with integrity and show interest in their contributions.

Did you already share your experience with other organisations or institutions?

Not yet.

Do you know any other institutions which have similar experiences or which have implemented similar practices?

There are many institutions implementing Policy dialogue activities but we are not yet sure of the practices they employ.

Which other group(s), institution(s) or organisation(s) could be interested in this experience/ practice? For whom do you think this experience could serve as a reference?

All CSOs with Policy dialogue activities due to advantages of the practice.