

Mindset Change; Unlocking The Potential For Community-Based Rural Development In Uganda

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Abstract— The paper explores the extent to which mindset change has been critical in the community rural development in Uganda. It is descriptive research with The Parish Development Model as a case study. The results show that rural community development is possible and its success largely depends on harnessing local resources and knowledge; leveraging education, empowerment and awareness; creating sustainable livelihoods and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation; access to financial resources; and building collaborative networks and partnerships. In all these, the role of mindset change is critical. By instilling a positive, collaborative and innovative mindset, rural communities can overcome challenges and chart a path towards sustainable development.

Keywords—Community, Development, Mindset, Change.

I. INTRODUCTION

More than ever, but especially during the Covid, 19 pandemic, the world came to realise the importance of communities and recognition that communities are the first responders in any crisis. It also brought home the point that for change to be sustainable, it has to be led by communities themselves. Practitioners, funders and governments are now looking for ways to translate this realization and intention into practice, at the global, national and local levels to bring about lasting and sustainable changes within communities.

Community-Based Rural Development (CBRD) has the potential to contribute significantly to the overall development of a country. CBRD is an inclusive and participatory approach that recognizes the significance of local communities in the development process. It involves engaging rural residents, local authorities, and various stakeholders to collaboratively identify, plan, and implement development strategies tailored to their specific needs. This approach encompasses various sectors, including agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and social welfare. By focusing on rural areas, which often lag behind in terms of infrastructure, education, and healthcare, CBRD addresses regional disparities and promotes inclusive development.

The approach focuses on empowering rural communities and involving them actively in decision-making processes. By harnessing local resources, knowledge, and skills, CBRD aims to address the specific challenges faced by rural areas and pave the way for sustainable development.

Rural communities in Uganda, as in other developing countries, often face various challenges such as limited access to resources, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate educational opportunities. These factors contribute to a cycle of poverty and

underdevelopment. To break this cycle, a change in mindset is crucial. By fostering a positive mindset, individuals in rural communities can approach challenges with resilience and determination. They can harness their creativity and resourcefulness to find innovative solutions to local issues. With the right mindset, community members can become active participants in their own development.

It is a well-known fact that local ownership comes from genuine and collective participation as well as new kinds of organizational partnerships at the “everyday” level – where the people to be affected actually live, work, go to school, farm, socialize, celebrate, worship, and participate politically. Evidence from the fields of Social and Behavior Change and Collective Impact (among others) (UNICEF, 2023) (USAID, 2020), (Mercy Corps, 2020), shows that people and conditions meaningfully change – and the change sticks – when programs are designed and implemented from a “local systems” perspective. Social and behaviour change (SBC) is, at its very essence, about understanding the needs of communities and individuals to develop context-specific people-centered solutions aiming to overcome existing challenges that hamper the adoption of desired behaviors.

This article explores the current issues in rural community development, and the potential of Mindset Change as a tool for the multifaceted CBRD, a pragmatic way to enable the “ground up” approach in fostering the development of a country and the key factors that have contributed to its success with a specific reference to Uganda.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

A. Objectives

The objectives of the research paper are to determine;

- i. Whether a country can develop through Community Based, Rural Development (CBRD)
- ii. The extent mindset change contributes to CBRD
- iii. Whether the Uganda Parish Development Model (PDM) is a suitable approach for CBRD
- iv. Provide policy recommendations on pathways to CBRD by harnessing the power of mindset change.

B. Methodology

The research mainly employed a desk review research methodology, and descriptive in nature, to attain the research objectives. The research involved reviewing topic-related documents, including the PDM manual, and other relevant documentation. The research examined the PDM in detail, as well as examining micro development research that has been

undertaken in the past, their findings, and recommendations, and to what extent these have had an effect on community based rural development. Information was sourced from reports, websites and public libraries and analysed according to emerging themes.

III. KEY RURAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

In today's modern world, rural communities face a myriad of challenges that can hinder their development. These challenges, ranging from limited access to basic amenities to economic disparities, are often complex and deeply entrenched. Understanding the key development challenges that rural communities face is crucial in devising effective strategies to address these issues and create sustainable solutions for the future. Below are some of the key challenges that rural communities face on a recurring basis.

A. Limited Access to Quality Education and Healthcare

One of the primary development challenges faced by rural communities is the limited access to quality education and healthcare, leading to disparities in access to essential services. This can have far-reaching consequences, impacting the overall well-being and economic opportunities available to residents.

Rural communities often face limited access to healthcare services, making it difficult for residents to receive proper medical care. The scarcity of healthcare facilities, healthcare professionals, and transportation infrastructure can lead to delayed or inadequate treatment. This issue significantly impacts the well-being of rural residents, requiring focused efforts to improve access to quality healthcare services.

In rural areas, there is a persistent lack of educational opportunities, which hinders the development of skills and knowledge among residents. Limited access to schools, qualified teachers, and technology can leave rural students at a disadvantage. To address this issue, it is crucial to enhance educational infrastructure, provide training for educators, and integrate technology into rural classrooms.

B. Limited Infrastructure Development

Another significant challenge for rural communities is the lack of modern infrastructure and connectivity. Poor road networks, limited access to clean water, and unreliable internet connectivity hinder economic growth and quality of life. Limited access to reliable transportation, basic utilities, and communication networks can impede economic growth and restrict opportunities for social and cultural development. In today's digital age, the absence of reliable internet connectivity further exacerbates the isolation of rural communities.

Investing in infrastructure improvements, such as upgrading transportation networks and expanding broadband access, is essential for fostering rural development and bridging the urban-rural divide.

C. Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resource Management

Rural communities often grapple with environmental sustainability and natural resource management, including soil

erosion, water pollution, and habitat loss. Agriculture-dependent regions face the dual challenges of adapting to climate change and ensuring sustainable farming practices. Additionally, the exploitation of natural resources without proper regulation can lead to environmental degradation, further jeopardizing the long-term viability of rural livelihoods. Balancing economic development with environmental preservation is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of rural communities. Promoting sustainable agricultural practices, conservation efforts, and renewable energy initiatives can help mitigate these environmental issues and safeguard rural resources.

D. Economic Decline and Unemployment

Rural communities often struggle with economic decline and high unemployment rates. Industries that were once thriving, such as agriculture and manufacturing, may have diminished, leaving residents without viable job prospects. In addition, many rural areas experience an aging population and outmigration of younger residents seeking better opportunities elsewhere. This demographic shift can result in a shrinking workforce, reduced economic activity, and a diminishing sense of community. To combat this issue, rural community development must focus on attracting and retaining younger generations by providing job opportunities, affordable housing, and a vibrant social and cultural environment.

Revitalizing rural economies requires strategic planning, investment in diversified industries, and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities that align with the community's strengths.

IV. CURRENT TOPICAL ISSUES ON RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In the development space, of recent, we hear of the term 'shift the power' that currently seems to be taking centre stage. The narrative is shifting from "top-down" to "inside-out" which means reconsidering the pre-designed, sector-specific, time-limited project model that has been dominating global development, to allowing more local participation in decision making and development issues.

Despite mounting evidence that locally-led development produces desired outcomes, fundamental requisite changes in the way development is "done" have not yet been figured out.

Thus a pressing – already overdue – development challenge has been to figure out how national and international efforts can design, manage, monitor and evaluate interventions to enable local actors to participate authentically, building collective local capacities to produce and maintain embedded change. Answering this challenge calls for dynamic responses that go much further than simply allocating more direct funding for rural development. Without shifts toward authentic local participation, extra or increased funding may not yield the desired results. Most of the mainstream efforts billed as participatory, inclusive, systemic, or locally-owned are often times seen as shallow in nature. Given the increasing momentum of the mandate for true community-led development (CLD), and the paucity of creative responses

within mainstream development to date, new evidence and innovative tools are needed.

On the other side of the coin, are communities that have overtime been excluded in the development spectrum, despite the fact that they are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the development intentions. The increasing acceptance of “systems thinking” that relies on discovering a sense of communitywide perspective and innovation; asking the right questions, considering many possible outcomes, and working collaboratively to create practical solutions and initiatives; and, developing creative thinking to match creative situations. This has set the stage for ensuring CLD efforts foster systemic change which is necessary for sustainability. For starters, the application. One of the key aspects that need to be addressed is the mindset change. What is needed is the orientation and inclusion of communities in decision making.

The active involvement of the local community in addressing their own needs has proven to be highly effective. By actively participating in the planning and implementation of development projects, the community gains a sense of ownership and responsibility, which in turn leads to the sustainable success of these initiatives. By embracing a positive and proactive mindset, rural areas can experience sustainable development and improved quality of life for all residents.

V. THE UGANDA COMMUNITY-BASED RURAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

A. Figures and Tables

Community-based rural development initiatives in Uganda refer to the localized efforts aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of rural areas through the participation and collaboration of the local community members. These initiatives are designed to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities, such as limited access to healthcare, education, infrastructure, and economic opportunities.

The Uganda’s National Development Plan III recognises that Community mobilization for mind-set change for development can have far-reaching repercussions on the lives of the people and society (The Republic of Uganda, June 2020).

The Plan has its vision as a “Transformed Ugandan Society from a Peasant to a Modern and prosperous Country within 30 years”, whereas its goal is “Increased Household Incomes and Improved Quality of Life of Ugandans”, under the theme “Sustainable Industrialization for inclusive growth, employment and wealth creation”. The programme is premised on the realization that a country will actively engage its citizens to provide more public awareness, sensitization for positive change. Mindset change is imperative for Uganda’s Development as people’s minds have to be transformed to enable them to participate in programs meant for them.

Of the 18 programs to achieve the NDP II is community mobilisation and mindset change, whose objectives are to: 1)

Enhance effective mobilization of families, communities and citizens for national development; 2) Strengthen institutional capacity of central and local government and non-state actors for effective mobilization of communities; 3) Promote and inculcate the National Vision and value system; and 4) Reduce negative cultural practices and attitudes.

Government went ahead to foster mindset change. For example, under the Department of National Guidance, the Ministry organised a national guidance public lecture to create awareness on mindset change, in which the need for and impact of mindset change in a society as highlighted to the effect that (i) Mindset change enables citizens to make informed decisions; (ii) It leads to a better connection and healthy society; (iii) Formation of a strong heart; (iv) Having the right mindset among the youth can lead to growth and development because they provide a strong labour force to increase production (Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, 2022)

This view is supported by Mugisha (2023) when she asserts that “It all begins with you; the role you play in various positions, placements in different societies and communities makes us enablers of societal development and social transformation”. The NGO Forum (2022) also emphasises this view that mindset change is a password for sustainable development. In the same vein, in March 2021, Cabinet approved the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM) as a multi-sectoral strategy to create socio-economic transformation by moving households out of the subsistence economy into the money economy. The PDM has been designed around the following 7 Pillars including Community mobilization and mindset change (The Republic of Uganda, 2021)

One of the major tenets of the NDP III is the Parish Development Model (PDM). The PDM is a result of several government initiatives that were intended to stimulate and sustain development at the grassroots level. The PDM is seen as the pathway to lift the country’s GDP growth rate to 7% per annum; bringing the poverty level down to the third national development plan’s target of 18.5%, and income inequality to 0.37.

The NDP III, identifies the PDM as a socio- economic development strategy for Community mobilisation and mind set change for service delivery with both technical and political grassroot structures. The PDM is seen as a means to deepen decentralization and citizen participation in local economic development, and a vehicle through which household incomes and the quality of life of Ugandans will be improved.

From the above, it is seen that the PDM, it expected to cure all ills within the Uganda economy, as it is expected to be more comprehensive than her predecessor policies, by comprehensively addressing the different aspects of development—Production, Infrastructure, Social services, Financing, Security, Public administration, Governance and Accountability.

The PDM is part of the restructuring of Government service delivery systems that is intended to cover the last mile of decentralization in terms of deepening decentralisation as by having the parish, the lowest local government unit being responsible for planning, budgeting and delivery of interventions for socio-economic transformation. In addition, Parish development plans, budgets, work plans and reports will be prepared, coordinated and managed at Parish level.

The PDM has seven pillars; Production, storage, processing and marketing, infrastructure, economic services, and financial inclusion.

On the other hand, the PDM targets for the 2021/22 – 2025/26

- Increase the number of households in the money economy from 61% to 80%
- Increase average nominal household income to UGX 632,044/Month
- An extra 1 million agricultural households use formal financial services
- 10,594 farmer groups supported under the PDM and profitably participate in at least one of priority value chain.
- At least 40% of loans go to women and youth owned enterprises

The PDM was launched in February 2022. The government has recently set up structures and frameworks for planning, budgeting and delivery of public services. People at the parish level are to decide development priorities under the policies formulated at the national level.

The assumption is that by getting citizens at the lowest administrative levels to identify and assign resources for their own social needs, development can tilt in favour of the poor.

VI. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE SUCCESS OF CBRD

The success of CBRD initiatives depends on various factors that must be carefully considered and addressed. Below are some of the ways in which CBRD can help bring about development.

A. *Harnessing Local Resources and Knowledge*

One of the fundamental principles of CBRD is the utilization of local resources and knowledge. Each rural community possesses unique assets, such as land, water, traditional practices, and indigenous knowledge. Effective local leadership and governance are crucial for the successful implementation of CBRD initiatives. Strong local institutions, transparent decision-making processes, and effective management of resources are essential for ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of CBRD projects. By leveraging these resources and engaging the community, CBRD ensures that development efforts are contextually relevant and sustainable.

B. *Leveraging Education, Empowerment and Awareness*

CBRD requires the capacity-building of both individuals and institutions. By providing training and skill development

opportunities, CBRD equips rural communities with the necessary knowledge and expertise to actively participate in the development process. Through skills training, capacity-building programs, and the establishment of community-led enterprises, individuals are equipped with the tools and knowledge to become self-reliant and contribute to the overall development of their community. This enhances their ability to manage resources, make informed decisions, and adapt to changing circumstances. CBRD places a strong emphasis on empowering rural communities by involving them in decision-making processes. By granting local residents the authority to shape their own development, CBRD promotes ownership, accountability, and a sense of pride within the community. This participatory approach enables the community to take charge of their own destiny and work collectively towards their development goals. A shift in mindset also involves fostering a sense of community and collaboration. When individuals come together with a shared vision for development, they can leverage collective resources and expertise to address common challenges. Education and awareness initiatives are essential in driving mindset change. By providing access to quality education and information, rural residents can expand their horizons and adopt a forward-thinking mindset. This, in turn, equips them with the knowledge and skills needed to drive community-based development initiatives. This collaborative approach strengthens the fabric of rural communities and empowers residents to drive their own development agenda.

C. *Strengthening Social Capital*

Social capital, characterized by trust, cooperation, and shared norms, plays a pivotal role in the success of CBRD. This approach fosters the establishment of local networks, community organizations, and self-help groups. These platforms facilitate information sharing, skill development, collective action, and resource mobilization. By strengthening social capital, CBRD enhances the community's ability to address challenges and seize opportunities. Mindset change can play a pivotal role in empowering marginalized groups such as youth and women in rural Uganda. By promoting a mindset of equality and inclusivity, these individuals can actively participate in decision-making processes and contribute to the development of their communities. This inclusivity fosters a more holistic and sustainable approach to rural development.

D. *Creating Sustainable Livelihoods and Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Innovation*

CBRD promotes sustainable livelihoods by enhancing agricultural productivity, facilitating access to markets, and promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas. In many rural areas of Uganda, agricultural cooperatives have been established to support small-scale farmers. These cooperatives provide access to resources, training, and market linkages, allowing farmers to increase their productivity and income while strengthening the local agricultural economy. By diversifying income sources, creating employment opportunities, and improving living conditions, CBRD contributes to economic growth and poverty

alleviation. This, in turn, reduces migration from rural to urban areas and promotes balanced regional development. Community-based initiatives have significantly improved access to basic services in rural Uganda. By constructing and maintaining health clinics, schools, and clean water facilities, the quality of life for rural residents has been enhanced, ultimately leading to improved health and education outcomes.

A change in mindset can also catalyze entrepreneurial spirit and innovation within rural communities. By instilling a belief in the potential for success, individuals can explore new economic opportunities and ventures. This not only contributes to local economic growth but also fosters a sense of empowerment and self-reliance.

E. Environmental Sustainability

Rural communities are often custodians of natural resources and ecosystems. CBRD encourages sustainable practices, such as organic farming, water conservation, and afforestation, to ensure the long-term preservation of these resources. By promoting environmentally friendly approaches, CBRD addresses the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural resource depletion.

F. Social Inclusion and Empowerment

CBRD empowers marginalized groups, including women, indigenous populations, and ethnic minorities, by providing them with equal opportunities and representation. By promoting social inclusion, CBRD fosters a more equitable society and strengthens social cohesion. This inclusive development approach ensures that no one is left behind, enabling the country to tap into its full potential.

G. Access to Financial Resources

Availability of financial resources is vital for the implementation of CBRD projects. Governments, international organizations, and donors play a crucial role in providing funding support. To ensure sustainability, CBRD initiatives also explore innovative financing mechanisms and promote microfinance options for rural entrepreneurs. Community-based initiatives focusing on women's empowerment have had a profound impact on rural communities. By providing women with entrepreneurship training, access to microloans, and support for income-generating activities, these programs have contributed to greater financial independence and improved household welfare.

H. Building Collaborative Networks and Partnerships

CBRD initiatives thrive on collaboration and partnerships between various stakeholders. Governments, civil society organizations, private sector entities, and research institutions must work together towards a common goal. By leveraging diverse expertise and resources, CBRD projects become more holistic, impactful, and sustainable. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies play a crucial role in supporting community-based rural development efforts in Uganda. These entities provide funding, technical expertise,

and policy support to ensure the successful implementation of various projects and programs. Through collaborative partnerships with local communities, NGOs and government agencies work to identify priority areas for development and provide the necessary resources to address these needs. This collaborative approach ensures that initiatives are aligned with the specific requirements of each community. NGOs and government agencies also play a pivotal role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of community-based rural development projects. This ensures accountability and allows for the continuous improvement of strategies and interventions to better meet the evolving needs of rural communities.

Rural community development plays a crucial role in fostering growth and well-being in rural areas. Community-based rural development in Uganda has significantly benefited from a shift in mindset among individuals and communities.

VII. PUBLICATION PRINCIPLES

As Uganda continues to pursue sustainable development; the importance of community-based approaches cannot be overstated. By fostering local ownership, empowering individuals, and building collaborative partnerships, these initiatives are poised to play a central role in driving positive change and improving the lives of rural residents across the country.

Community-Based Rural Development holds immense potential in promoting the overall development of a country. By harnessing local resources, empowering rural communities, and strengthening social capital, CBRD addresses regional disparities and fosters inclusive and sustainable development. However, the success of CBRD initiatives depends on factors such as strong local leadership, capacity building, access to financial resources, and collaboration among stakeholders. By embracing CBRD as a development strategy, countries can unlock the latent potential of their rural areas and pave the way for a more prosperous and equitable future.

Rural community development is an ongoing process that requires attention to the current topical issues affecting these communities. By addressing limited access to healthcare, insufficient educational opportunities, economic decline, aging populations, limited infrastructure, and environmental sustainability, we can pave the way for a brighter future for rural areas. It is imperative that policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders come together to develop innovative strategies and implement effective solutions that empower rural communities to thrive.

The role of mindset change in supporting community-based rural development in Uganda cannot be overstated. By instilling a positive, collaborative, and innovative mindset, rural communities can overcome challenges and chart a path towards sustainable development. It is through this shift in mindset that the true potential of Uganda's rural areas can be unlocked, leading to prosperity and well-being for all residents.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Community-based rural development in Uganda has proven

to be a vital catalyst for positive change. By embracing the principles of community participation, empowerment, and collaboration, these initiatives are making significant strides in addressing the unique challenges faced by rural communities and contributing to the overall advancement of the nation.

APPENDIX

Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The preferred spelling of the word “acknowledgment” in American English is without an “e” after the “g.” Use the singular heading even if you have many acknowledgments. Avoid expressions such as “One of us (S.B.A.) would like to thank” Instead, write “F. A. Author thanks” Sponsor and financial support acknowledgments are placed in the unnumbered footnote on the first page.

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