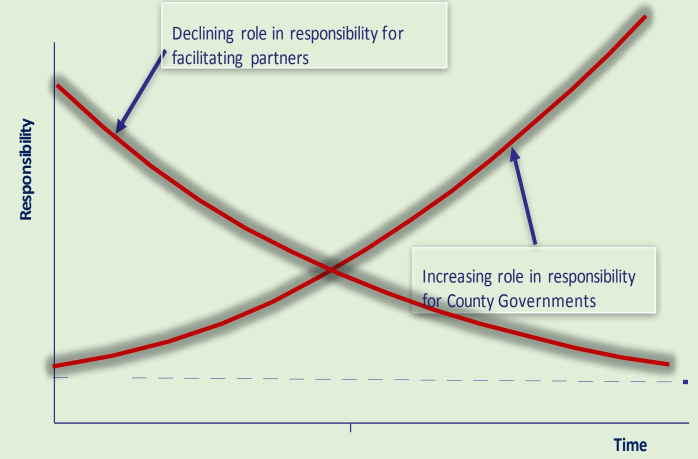
The Kenya RAPID Project Facilitation Approach: Progress, Challenges and Lessons Learnt with County Governments

A Policy Brief

Introduction

There is a growing call within the development community for interventions that promote country-led, context-specific efforts to address development problems. The facilitation approach is one such effort that focuses on creating widespread, systemic change without direct intervention in a system. This it argues, can enable more resilient and sustainable outcomes as local actors are more likely to take ownership of development efforts and maintain long-term changes in behaviors. But, adopting a facilitation approach requires all development stakeholders, including donors, implementers, and local partners, to shift their thinking about programming. At the same time, further inquiry is needed to understand the intricacies of this approach and to develop tools to help practitioners design, implement, and evaluate facilitation activities. *(Source: The Facilitation Approach at USAID: A Discussion Paper)*

Responsibility Curve Between the Facilitating Partners and County Government



The Kenya RAPID program is one such entity designed with the facilitation approach in mind. Kenya RAPID attempts to move beyond the 'business as usual' approach to development and works with the five county governments and every one of the 21 Kenya RAPID partners as a co-investor in human and financial software, equipment, and other organizational resources which are collectively employed to achieve transformative impacts.

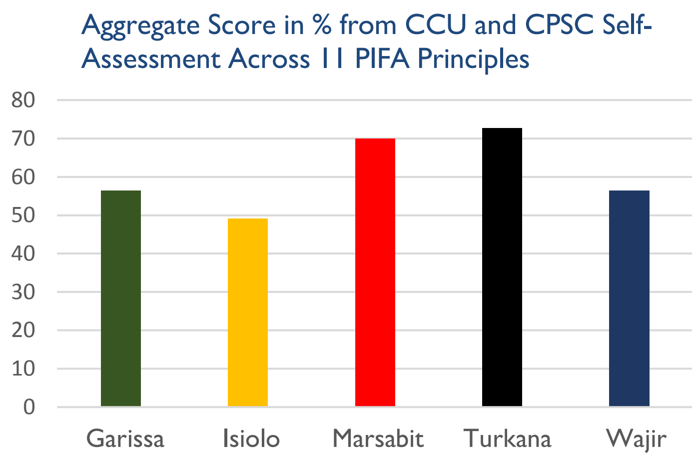
This program also marks a significant shift in role of MWA members, in which as NGOs are often direct program implementers. In Kenya RAPID, NGOs are instead facilitators of a program that is implemented by county governments as the duty bearers for the delivery of water and sanitation services under the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. This shift is reflected in the day-to-day operational 'heart' of the program – a County Coordination Unit (CCU) that is co-located within the counties' administrative headquarters; a program decision-making structure that prioritizes national and county government representation and authority; and the provision for the direct transfer of program funds to county governments to support the implementation of all program objectives.

Assessment of Progress in the Kenya RAPID Facilitation Approach

In November 2015, the Kenya RAPID program team identified a number of benchmarks to guide how to use the Project Implementation using Facilitation Approach (PIFA) during implementation of the project. The benchmarks were organized around five key change areas and 11 guiding principles as follows;

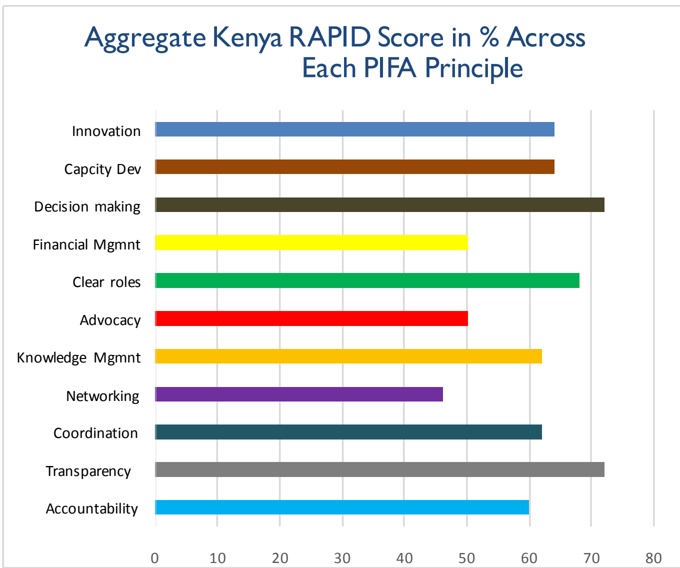
As Facilitators, We Have to Stop	As Facilitators, We Have to Start	Performance Measure of PIFA Guiding Principle to Support CPSC
Thinking on behalf of our partners	Supporting our partners	**Knowledge Management:** Design and frequency with which CPSC(s) implements an intentional learning agenda and facilitates regular knowledge management processes (lessons learnt and best practices activities) **Capacity development:** Level to which county governments prioritizes capacity development and mobilizes resources to address needs. **Innovation:** Level to which CPSC(s) encourage adoption and scaling up of innovations from private sector and other development stakeholders
Talking on behalf of them	Guiding them	**Accountability:** Ease of the county government to share budget information with stakeholders and/or beneficiaries frequently, on time and with the relevant level of details **Advocacy:** Level to which county governments prioritize interests of communities from public feedback processes (measure public consultations, policy and legislative content, budget allocation)
Deciding on behalf of them,	Encouraging them	**Decision making:** Level to which CPSC uses evidence to support prioritization in decision making in the program (quality, evidence, quantity/number, analytical capacity and leadership-seeing decisions through **Transparency:** Frequency and detail with which the county shares information on planned government interventions and progress with all stakeholders simultaneously
Doing on behalf of them	Coaching them	**Coordination:** Level of regularity and ease with which the county government organizes and facilitates CPSC coordination meetings **Clear roles and responsibilities:** Ability of county governments implement/operationalize RACI principles/matrix (develop matrix, articulate clearly roles and responsibilities, measure progress in implementation of the matrix) **Networking:** Presence and functionality of county government database in mobilizing suitable stakeholders from public, civil society and private sector in program implementation
Spending money on behalf of them	Letting them do	**Financial management:** Level to which incremental transfer of program financial management decisions to counties has been undertaken

During the first self-evaluation exercise across all the five counties, both County Coordination Units and Project Steering Committee leaders were asked to independently rank the level of progress made by the CCU in delivering on the facilitation approach across all the eleven principles on a graduated scale between 1-5 and the outcome of these rankings aggregated to define the overall score per county. From the assessment, Turkana (73%) and Marsabit (70%) emerged as having made most progress with Isiolo (49%) and Wajir (56%) showing least progress. Across



different principles however, the county CCUs performed variedly – Wajir had the highest score in facilitating decision making processes (8/10)[1], Marsabit was highest in supporting innovation (9/10)[2] with Garissa and Marsabit CCUs scoring highest in Networking (6/10)[3].

The principles where most progress was recorded was in facilitating CPSCs in decision making[4] and transparency[5] each at 72% while the principles where least progress was made were networking (46%), advocacy (50%) and financial management (50%). The summary of overall progress scores for each county is shown in the graphs alongside. From the findings, interventions to improve financial management capacities will be undertaken to increase the ability of counties to handle project funds while both networking and advocacy capacity measures will be undertaken through mentorship and training.



[1] CPSC has some analytical capacity to use evidence for decision making and the leadership is willing to see decisions through.

[2] At least one success case of adoption and scaling up of innovation has been realized from the linkages and efforts with private sector and other stakeholders

[3] A county government database for mobilizing suitable stakeholders from public, civil society and private sector in program implementation exists but its not comprehensive and is only used sometimes.

[4] CPSCs generally have some analytical capacity to use evidence for decision making and the leadership are willing to see decisions through.

[5] County governments sometimes share information on planned government interventions and progress with all stakeholders without meeting all the necessary parameters of timeliness, adequacy and detail

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

- **Need for more tools and learning:** An obvious lesson learnt from the implementation of PIFA is that further inquiry is still needed to understand the intricacies of this approach and to develop tools to help CCUs and CPSCs to design, implement, and measure progress in facilitation activities.

- **The need for incentives:** The facilitation approach calls on facilitating partners to focus more on interventions at strategic leverage points within the county government system through the CPSC. However, this quite often requires system wide incentives for the county governments to change their behaviors over a fairly long period of time. Currently, there are no program incentives for CPSCs or the county government to make progress on any principle.

- **The balance between the light touch and project pace:** Facilitating partners haven't yet found a balance between using a "light-touch" in activities, minimizing their presence in the system and reducing the direct provision of material goods or services and maintaining the pace of project implementation as a whole.

- **The enabling environment:** There exist enablers within the overall governance arena that can be used to accelerate progress on some of the PIFA principles. For example, the Public Finance and Management Act provides for the need for clear financial regulations, need for financial management capacities, accountability and decision-making processes and financial reporting mechanisms which could enable the incremental transfer of program financial management decisions to counties. However, compliance to these regulations is still weak and additional capacities are necessary to give confidence among development partners to allow for the direct transfer of funds.

- **Working within the existing government systems increases learning:** The emphasis from the beginning of the project should have focused on understanding and working within the existing government processes so that facilitating partners could gain greater clarity about the system. However, within Kenya RAPID, little effort was made to go beyond co-location of the project office within the county government and as such, the ability to influence behavior change remains limited.

- **There is need to address risk by building trust:** A key challenge that facilitating partners encounter is that building trust can be difficult and should be accounted for throughout the project. Strategies to help overcome mistrust include using trusted intermediaries, and increasing transparency, shifting the balance of power, and providing risk-sharing mechanisms. In Kenya RAPID for example, the county capacity building fund will provide an initial pilot initiative and good opportunity to show how much progress has been made in shifting responsibilities especially for decision making and funds management once the fund is finally established and running.

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