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Send for the Cavalry: Political Incentives in the Provision of Agricultural Advisory Services

Anne Mette Kjaer¹ and James Joughin²

Abstract

This article examines how political incentives shape the implementation of agricultural advisory service reforms. Using the Uganda experience as a typical case we find that elections incentivised the government to add a subsidised input component to the existing service. Growing pressures from local politicians, the Ministry of Agriculture, and, increasingly, disgruntled army factions then constituted a strong, interlocking set of further incentives to revert to a recentralised, top-down model dominated by the new, subsidised input, component. Our findings point to how well designed implementation processes can be disrupted by the changing incentive structure, an insight which calls for more patient and much more pragmatic approaches to adopting ‘trial and error’ models rather than more ambitious but perhaps unrealistic ones.

Keywords: Africa, agricultural advisory services, elections, implementation, political incentives, Uganda.

1. Introduction

Successful agricultural advisory services, also called extension, should transfer appropriate research-based knowledge about agricultural production to farmers and ideally help them to use this knowledge to augment their productivity and raise their incomes (Davis, 2008: 16; World Bank, 2007: 173).

Prevailing models of agricultural extension in sub-Saharan Africa have changed over time, from traditional top-down delivery models to more demand-based approaches but advisory services have remained wanting on the continent (Davis, 2008; Sumberg, Thompson and Woodhouse, 2013). The average number of farmers per extension worker remains very low³ and as a result, agricultural production remains characterized by low-input, low modern technology-use activities, with consequent low productivity across most sub-sectors (Badiane, 2011). The authors of the 2008 World Development Report on agriculture conclude that in spite of on-going extension reforms, ‘public financing and provision face profound problems of incentives of civil servants for accountability to their clients, weak

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³ Data on extension impacts are often difficult to find, and comparing figures can be complicated due to the variety of ways in which data is gathered and because extension seldom stands alone (GFRAS, 2012).

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political commitments to extension and to agriculture more generally, ... a severe lack of fiscal sustainability in most developing countries, and weak evidence of impact' (World Bank, 2007: 173). The challenge of implementation is clearly recognised but at the same time, what lies behind the label of 'weak political commitments' is less well understood (Hoeffler, 2011; Booth & Therkildsen, 2012; Poulton, 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to better understand the political incentives involved with adopting and implementing agricultural advisory services in Africa. Incentives derive from the perceived political costs and benefits of implementing a certain policy (North, 1990; Khan, 2009). We argue that because investments in extension provision may take years to have something to show for them, they are politically risky. When politicians want to win elections they tend to focus on the provision of goods and services that have an immediate and tangible impact (Geddes, 1994; Nelson, 2007). In a low income country where budgets are limited, ruling elites must consider ways to maintain the support of powerful groups and individuals, and one way to do this is through public programmes (Khan, 2010). Extension Services are especially effective in this regard as they can be used as patronage not least because tangible inputs to agricultural production, such as fertilizer or seeds, can be attached to the advisory services (Easterly, 2008; Anderson & Feder, 2007). Rather than waiting for the impact of advice to materialise in the form of long term growth in agricultural productivity, ruling elites have an incentive to adopt a model under which material deliverables are clearly attributable to the ruling party. As democratisation and use of patronage can easily co-exist, or even reinforce one another, competitive elections may actually exacerbate such an incentive structure (Lindberg, 2003; Poulton, 2014).

The structure of political incentives is fluid and changes over time as various experiences are learned from earlier implementation and as the nature of the ruling coalition changes. The changing incentive structure will affect the choices made by political actors with regard to the subsequent design and implementation of agricultural extension reform.

We substantiate these arguments by focusing on Uganda as representing a low income economy with a large proportion of the population still engaged in low productivity agriculture and where the provision of effective agricultural advisory services has long been problematic. As with many aid-receiving countries, Uganda has been agreeable to adopting the prevailing agricultural extension model at the time. However, just as with most other low income Sub-Saharan African countries, Uganda has had little success with implementation or in achieving sustainable impact. In 2014, there were some 1,500 extension workers in the entire country (Swanson & Davis, 2014) with, according to the latest

agriculture census for Uganda, only one fifth of 3.6 million households, being visited by an extension worker within the previous twelve months (Republic of Uganda, 2010).

We start by addressing the literature on the politics of agricultural policy and of extension services in particular. Then, we move on to outline the background of the political economy of extension in Uganda before analysing the political incentives underlying the adoption and implementation of three extension models over the thirty years since the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), took power in 1986.

2. The Politics of African agricultural policy and agricultural extension services

Competitive elections would be expected to offer incentives to the authorities to provide rural services such as extension and infrastructure, since the majority of voters in sub-Saharan Africa are still engaged in small scale farming and live in rural areas (Bates & Block, 2009; Poulton, 2014). At the same time, donors tend to like supporting extension programmes because they are widely accepted as a prerequisite to increased agricultural productivity and hence a key to pro-poor growth (Badiane, 2011, Jones and Garforth, 1997). Perhaps, as Anderson and Feder (2004: 55-56) argue, donors also like extension programmes because it is difficult to attribute any failure to increase agricultural productivity to the programme itself. The combination of the popularity of the service with donor funding should therefore provide incentives for the ruling elite to invest in extension. Bates and Block (2009) thus find a positive correlation between competitive elections, pro-agriculture trade policies and productivity increases in African countries.

Poulton (2014), however, argues that democratic pressures for pro-poor agricultural policy remain weak. On the basis of several case-studies, Poulton (2014: 118) finds the delivery of agricultural public goods do not necessarily follow from elections, but rather there is likely to be a renewed focus on subsidies and other transfers that can be used as patronage. This is because local strong men, or intermediaries, who are able to mobilise political support, are as important in influencing policy implementation as the general electorate (Kasara, 2007). In a clientelist setting, policies which can help maintain the support of important factions will tend to be favoured because of their political returns (Khan, 2010; Whitfield, Therkildsen, Buur & Kjær, 2015). The nature of agricultural extension as a mixed public and private good would reinforce such a trend. General advice, for example on crops, is largely non-exclusive and hence has a public good nature (Anderson & Feder, 2004; Easterly, 2008). The political benefits of advice are uncertain, because farmers may not find the given advice useful; the potential productivity increases from the advice may take a long time to show, and if they do, they may

not even be clearly attributable to the advice (Anderson & Feder, 2004; Easterly, 2008). Inputs such as fertilizer or seeds, on the contrary, can be distributed in a discretionary manner, and are rather characterised as club or private goods. Inputs are popular and are received immediately hence they can better be used to buy political support (Poulton, 2014).

There is little focus in the literature on agricultural services on how incentives might change throughout the implementation of a programme. Ruling elites in low-income countries must build a durable coalition of the most powerful factions in society, because if excluded, these factions could threaten the elite's hold on power (North, Wallis and Weingast, 2009; Khan, 2010). Selected factions are thus given access to public resources, and because the public budget is limited, such access is given usually off-budget, through means such as patronage. In competitive clientelist settings, characterized, by their very nature, by factions competing for access, a high level of competition tends to reinforce incentives to use public programmes for political support (Khan, 2010; Booth & Therkildsen, 2015, Whitfield et al., 2015). If fragmentation (i.e. break away of, or intensified competition between, factions) increases over time, so too will the likelihood of failed policy implementation, especially if implementation involves removing privileges from important factions. In order to hold a fragmented ruling coalition together, the ruling elite may then allow 'decentralized rent management', that is allowing public office to be used for clientelist purposes to maintain support (Kelsall, 2013: 18-19; Whitfield et al., 2015). This may involve letting factions benefit from donor-projects or paying them off with access to benefits from public programmes.

In agricultural extension, such decentralised rent management could emerge relatively easily, essentially because there are many actors involved at different administrative levels. Ministries of Agriculture are usually in charge of extension departments who, in turn, oversee and monitor decentralised programs through local government offices that, again, have extension offices at sub-local government level. Implementing an extension programme efficiently thus involves many veto-points and opportunities for patronage.

Finally, the process of implementing a public programme over time may in itself serve to change the incentive structures (Thomas & Grindle, 1990). With most policies, 'not even the bill's author may know all the consequences; much less the constituents' (North, 1990: 357). The awards from the policy may be uncertain but as various stakeholders realise potential benefits, they may gain an interest in a programme they were not particularly involved with at the beginning (van de Walle, 2001; Haggard & Kaufman, 1995). Because of their long timeframes, extension programmes are thus prone to politicisation.

In sum, as agricultural extension has a strong public goods nature, we would ideally expect elections to be an incentive for the ruling elite to provide extension. This expectation is reinforced by the availability of donor-resources to fund extension programs. On the other hand, the higher the extent of fragmentation of the ruling coalition, the more likely that the extension programme will be politicised and input components added. The next section outlines the political economy of agricultural extension during the pre-1986 years in Uganda, providing the background for analysing extension reforms under the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

3. Political economy of extension in post-independence Uganda

The first post-Independence government, based on an alliance between Milton Obote's Uganda People Congress (UPC) and the Kabaka Yekka, a movement around the Buganda king, followed the trend in Africa at the time and adopted a state-led model for agricultural development. Agriculture had high political priority and state-owned marketing boards were in force for cash crops, as were price controls, government farms and state-controlled promotion of livestock. Continuing from the colonial period, extension services were driven from the top by a department within the Ministry of Agriculture, its focus being the education of, and transfer of technology to, selected, so-called progressive farmers, who were also given farm inputs (Musemakweri, 2007; Semana, 2003).

However, within only a few years, the main factions of the ruling coalition came into conflict with one another, the main issues of dispute being land and constitutional provisions around federalism. This resulted in a break of the alliance between the Kabaka and the UPC government (Goodfellow & Lindemann, 2012). Obote gradually lost his options to build coalitions through negotiation and this made him resort to other means to stay in power, not least drawing on military factions and state resources for patronage (Hansen, 1977; Whitfield, et al., 2015; Kjær, 2015). The institutions of the state, including agricultural bodies like the marketing boards, then suffered as a consequence. By the late 1960s, 'the criteria used for selection of progressive farmers were questionable and produced mixed results. Other farmers looked at progressive farmers as a privileged group thus nullifying the intended purpose of being examples to be emulated' (Semana, 2003; The New Vision, 2013).

Once Idi Amin took power, in 1970, extension services continued to be based, at least nominally, on a Ministry-driven, top-down service model although research stations, extension staff and agricultural training centres all suffered significant neglect, resulting in this period being called the 'dormant phase' of extension in Uganda (Semana, 2003). In 1980, after Amin's reign was over, the UPC, campaigning on a programme of reconstruction, won contested elections by a big majority. This second Obote

government then attempted to revive extension services under a model that was still basically a top-down delivery model but, rather than operating it through one department of extension, services were to be provided by several line ministries (World Bank, 1992).

However, the UPC hold on power was contested, and Yoweri Museveni's army of young soldiers took to the bush. Predictably, in an era where powerful factions were challenging the government and the country was literally in civil war, this fragmentation of extension services had adverse effects on the effectiveness of delivery and was deemed by observers at the time to result in low contact with farmers, inefficiency, and ultimately minimal impact on production and productivity (World Bank, 1992). In sum, in immediate post-independence Uganda, attempts to establish an effective and productivity-enhancing advisory service system were impeded by the need to cater to immediate political requirements of holding the fragile coalitions together. This included relying on special army factions.

We now address the three broad periods of extension reform under the NRM. In doing so, we have scrutinised policy documents and evaluations for the three major initiatives of this period: AEP, NAADS and ATAAS. We carried out interviews with key stakeholders such as former Ministers, a former director of extension services and MPs who were on Parliament's Agriculture Committee, as well as domestic and international agricultural consultants. We also carried out interviews with local NAADS extension officers in various parts of Uganda through the years 2008-2011, including some farmers who received advice through the programme. When analysing political costs and benefits, we draw on those sources as well as a thorough reading of Uganda's political history. We have also read relevant minutes of Parliamentary debates and followed media coverage throughout the period studied. Carrying out political economy analysis often requires iterative inquiry over a number of years of policy implementation, and we followed implementation closely: one author through repeated bi-annual research stays in Uganda from 2007 until the present; and the other author's experience first as policy advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) in Entebbe from 2007-2010 and then as frequent consultant in the agriculture sector in Uganda. This enabled us to interview respondents more than once and to present them with our analysis of political costs and benefits.

In the following, in each of the sub-periods of reform under the National Resistance Movement era, we first outline the political environment of the time during which the model was adopted. Then we address the design of the extension model itself and examine how this reflected the prevailing recommendations of the time. We then address the model's implementation and its political costs and benefits.

4. 1986-2001: Agricultural Extension Project (AEP)

The political environment of the early NRM years was one in which the regime enjoyed widespread legitimacy after having established a relatively stable situation. Donors were interested in supporting the reconstruction effort, but the early period of reform in the late 1980s was still characterised by, on the one hand, a focus on constructing a durable ruling coalition out of the many political factions, and on the other hand, negotiating with the multilateral institutions (Botchwey et al., 1998; Mutebile, 2010). The NRM's original political agenda was based on African socialist ideas and it took a number of years to find a common platform with donors. However, in the early 1990s, the NRM government and IMF/World Bank agreed on a comprehensive reform package involving economic and civil service reforms (Hansen & Twaddle, 1991; Museveni, 1997; Botchwey et al., 1998; Mutebile, 2010). The reforms that fared well were arguably the ones where donor and recipient government agendas coincided. For example, and importantly for agricultural extension services, donor-promoted decentralisation reforms helped the political project of consolidating the NRM's hold on power by giving it control of local governments throughout the country (Villadsen, 1999). In fact, by the late 1990s, Uganda was hailed as a model case of democratic decentralisation (Ndegwa, 2002).

In June 1993, government and the World Bank then designed the Agricultural Extension Project (AEP) whose *modus operandi* was a Unified Agricultural Extension Service. It was scheduled to last five years and then to have a follow-on.⁴ AEP was based on the prevailing international paradigm of the time, the World Bank supported Training and Visit (T&V) approach. This rested on the notion that a single national extension service with one chain of command could teach farmers about new technologies and provide them with information on which they would then act (Mangheni, 2007; Dethier & Effenberger, 2011; Schwartz & Kampen, 1982).⁵

In Uganda, at the national level, AEP was fully integrated into the regular organisational framework of MAAIF. At the local government level, extension officers were to provide the contact to farmers and cover between 1,000 and 3,000 farm families (World Bank, 1992). A front-line extension worker was responsible for the transfer of technology to groups of farmers on the basis of a farming systems approach – essentially a group approach based on demonstrations, group meetings, and on-farm trials, with field days to show the achievements of farmers to the community (World Bank, 1992). 'Bottom-up

⁴ It built on the IFAD-supported Agricultural Development Project that ran in the northeast, implementing pilot T&V-based activities from May 1986 to the end of 1993. This project was said to 'suffer from problems with salaries, unclear allocation of responsibilities and a lack of confirmed technologies' (IFAD, 1994).

⁵ T&V became controversial in the extension community largely because of a perceived rigidity of structure and a focus on procedure at the expense of increasing the relevance of technological messages and improving the methods of transferring these messages to farmers (Chapman, 1988).

planning' and extensive training were also emphasized in a mix of a traditional top-down T&V approach with a more bottom-up participatory one.

In spite of its funding of US\$16.9 million (of which the Government of Uganda contributed US\$1.8 million), the implementation of this programme encountered problems which can best be understood in the light of the political incentive structure at the time. The political benefits from implementing decentralisation certainly legitimised the NRM at the local level and also helped consolidate the power of the ruling elite but, at the same time, lower level government capacity to deliver agricultural services was not yet in place. The reality was that although establishing well-functioning local extension offices would seem to be a public good that might be expected to enhance political support for the government in the long term, there were more pressing issues for all parties.

Extension workers were placed directly under the direction of local district governments. They were supposed to be paid from unconditional grants, and operational costs were supposed to be financed by local governments' own-generated revenues: in reality, and probably inevitably, this meant that the extension services were never fully financed (World Bank, 1992; Bashaasha et al., 2011). Employment as an extension officer lost much of the attraction it had had in the immediate post-independence era,⁶ and the basis for the politicisation of programmes at the local level was laid (Bashaasha et al., 2011). In a time when donor financing was concentrated on the social sectors and political attention was shifting to the provision of Universal Primary Education, a tangible political good perceived to help win the 1996 elections (Stasavage, 2004; Kjær & Therkildsen, 2013), there turned out to be little or no political incentive to invest in the long and expensive process of building capacity to deliver extension services at the lower local government level.

At the central government level, the implementation of the AEP combined with the cross-sectoral decentralisation programme meant that MAAIF's role, post-reform, was reduced to that of policy formulation and regulatory monitoring. The Directorate of Extension was formally abolished and MAAIF's central staffing was reduced by 80 per cent. Partly for this reason, and partly because donors and the Ugandan government in the late 1990s had other priorities, MAAIF was left unprotected against 'decentralised rent management' which was the cause of the severe under-performance of several donor projects under its management. In the so-called 'Valley Dam Scandal', for example, it transpired that only a few of some hundred planned small valley 'tanks' for livestock disease control were constructed, and at costs many times what was intended (Hansard, 1999: 19). The affair implicated a

⁶ Former Minister of Agriculture, personal communication, August 2013

former Minister for Agriculture and Vice President and was so serious that the African Development Bank as funder decided to channel funds for its next project through the Ministry of Local Government rather than MAAIF.⁷

With this background, the Ministry of Finance (MoFPED) grew ever more doubtful of MAAIF's ability to make and implement a budget and more and more hesitant about allocating funds to MAAIF.⁸ But ordinary Members of Parliament also grew suspicious of the ministry, as the complaints of one MP in a Parliamentary debate about budget allocations to MAAIF in 1999 illustrate: 'Mr Speaker, will the people of Kashari County miss anything if the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is scrapped? They will not, since they have never seen it in Kashari anyway' (Hansard, March 1999).

In sum, by this time, the political incentives were such that investing in extension and capacity building in local production offices would have had too few political benefits compared to the returns of channelling resources into other decentralised services, such as universal primary education (which was a focus of the 1996 elections). Then, with this decentralisation process, the ground was laid for the further politicisation of the extension programme at the local level and the further weakening of MAAIF.

5. 2000-2010: The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)

The political environment in 2000 was characterised by the lead up to the 2001 elections, in which president Museveni was seriously challenged by his former friend, Kizza Besigye. The NRM had consolidated itself but legitimacy was waning. The coalition had become narrower and there were doubts as to whether the President would follow the constitution and retire in 2006, after his second constitutional period in power (Rubongoya, 2007; Tripp, 2010). In the run-up to the 2001 elections, the NRM campaigned on a manifesto promising increased service delivery in rural areas and increased support for agricultural productivity as a means to eradicate poverty. This was the background to the comprehensive and inter-sectoral Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) which was launched by the President in 2000 during election campaigns. The PMA fitted into the overall poverty reduction strategy which the donors were supporting as well as the by now dominant market-driven approach to private and agricultural sector growth (RoU, 2000).

The new National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) was one of seven components of the PMA along with for example physical infrastructure, financial services, agricultural education and research

⁷ AfDB officer, personal communication, March 2010.

⁸ Interview with then policy advisor to MOFPED, June 2010.

(RoU, 2000). The NAADS designers critiqued the supply-driven, top-down character of the AEP and developed a bottom-up methodology based on the now prevailing philosophy that involved empowering farmers and creating a sense of ownership among beneficiaries (RoU, 2001; NAADS, 2005; ITAD, 2008). With decentralisation well underway, and with recent scandals in mind, MAAIF⁹'s capacity to provide extension was no longer considered important and so NAADS was placed much more explicitly within the still growing decentralisation paradigm and coordinated through a secretariat set up in Kampala, physically apart from MAAIF.¹⁰

Conceived as a decentralised system with services mainly contracted out and sustainability sought through cost-recovery and cost-sharing, the success of NAADS required privatising the government service while also supporting farmer forums to inspire a demand-led approach to services (ITAD, 2008). NAADS coordinators were posted in what, at first, were pilot districts, to run farmer groups and coordinate extension services. Then, depending on the degree of success, the service was expected to be rolled out to more districts in due course. The drafters of the reform knew it would take patience and time and thus calculated a time horizon of 25 years.¹¹

The first experiences with NAADS in the pilot districts proved positive: farmers were learning new technologies and adopting new crops, and they did well compared to control groups not in touch with the programme (ITAD, 2008; Benin, 2009). The implementation of NAADS changed as new political costs and benefits of implementing the programme emerged. As the 2006 elections (the first under the NRM multiparty system) approached, however, political pressure arose to roll out NAADS faster, and to all districts, so that, in 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively, an estimated 188 and 208 sub counties were added to the total coverage¹². This was part of the campaign pledge of bringing 'Prosperity to All' (NRM, 2006).

⁹ Since the reforms that established NAADS, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has consisted of MAAIF headquarters in Entebbe and seven 'semi-autonomous' agencies. Essentially MAAIF HQ consisted of two commodity-based Directorates (Animal Resources and Crop Resources) and two stand-alone Departments (Planning and Finance and Administration). The seven agencies included the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS).

¹⁰ Former top manager at NAADS secretariat, personal communication, June 2013; former Minister of Agriculture, personal communication, August 2013.

¹¹ <http://www.naads.or.ug/data/sdmenu/21/NAADS%20PHASE%20I%20Funding.html>

¹² ITAD (2008) describes how, over the first phase, on average, some 11 new districts were added per year to achieve a total of 79 Districts covered by FY 2007-8. The number of sub-counties brought into the programme increased from 24 in the first year to 745 by 2007-8. This compares with the projection given in the NAADS Master Document of 538 Sub-Counties being covered by the end of Year 7, indicating that the programme "has more than achieved its original target by almost 200 Sub-counties". Benin et al (2011) observe 'it is not easy to see how any momentum gained in the programme can be sustained, particularly in providing the material inputs to drive the changes in adoption, productivity, incomes, and welfare that are expected of participants'.

The original NAADS was very explicitly *not* a programme to provide state subsidised inputs but, at this time, the NRM pledged an input component for NAADS (NRM, 2006)¹³. In spite of the fact that the constitution and funding of NAADS was laid out in an Act of Parliament, the government now added an Integrated Farmer Support Component to provide state subsidised inputs to NAADS farmers groups (Benin et al., 2011). This input component eventually grew to take up almost 80 per cent of NAADS expenditures, which was a complete reversal of the original vision (World Bank, 2010,¹⁴ and see Table 1 below). With the unplanned expansion and a rewriting of the model and its related budget, the NAADS programme gradually turned into a vote buying mechanism extending throughout the entire country.

Multiparty elections had the effect of making the lower level factions of the NRM more important, because they acted as ‘intermediaries’ to mobilise voters in their communities. After the 2006 elections, realising the potential benefits of acquiring a say in how NAADS resources were distributed, lower level politicians felt that NAADS was by-passing the Local Councils¹⁵, and strived to join in. The identification of farmers groups had originally been done by the local communities in collaboration with the local NAADS officer who was not connected to the local council. The selection process was now adjusted, following the President’s personal intervention. The ‘New NAADS’, as it was called, was proclaimed in early 2008 with changed selection criteria for the beneficiaries, now no longer farmers groups but six so-called ‘model farmers’ per parish (Joughin & Kjær, 2010: 70). In the new set up, a local NAADS committee was to select beneficiaries, and the local council chairman and the local NRM chairman were to be members, so the local politicians subsequently played a much more prominent role in the New NAADS.¹⁶

At the Ministry level, there was increasing dissatisfaction with the NAADS administrative set-up which was based in a Secretariat staffed by capable and relatively well paid officers based in a modern

¹³ Interview, MAAIF official and extension expert, June 2013.

¹⁴ Uganda agricultural sector expenditures have long been dominated by nonwage recurrent expenditures, mainly subsidised inputs and other goods. “Between 2005/06 and 2008/09, nonwage recurrent spending, mainly for *farm inputs*, comprised 65 percent of MAAIF’s development budget on average” (World Bank, 2010). “The share of nonwage recurrent spending in MAAIF’s total budget grew from 49 percent in 2005/06 to 80 percent in 2008/09. Inputs are distributed by many development projects and increasingly by NAADS. In 2008/09, NAADS received about US\$ 37 billion ‘for inputs to the small-scale farmers who cannot afford to purchase the necessary inputs.’” It should be noted also that ‘the provision of inputs has become a significantly larger share of the programme costs than was planned. According to the stakeholders consulted, it has resulted in a situation where individuals and groups are interested only in subsidised inputs, very often perceived as “handouts,” which negatively affects the core function of NAADS – advisory services. The scaling up of input provision has also fuelled corruption and misuse of funds....” (World Bank, 2009).

¹⁵ Interview with Local Council Chairman in the southwestern area of Uganda, June 2009; Interview with MAAIF official, June 2013.

¹⁶ Personal interview with LC3 chairman, southwestern area of Uganda, June 2008.

high rise in Kampala, bypassing MAAIF which was still stuck out in its dilapidated old offices in Entebbe. Those officers who remained in the Ministry saw with anguish how the role of running the extension function had been removed from MAAIF (along with the resources to go with it) and also witnessed other MAAIF budget lines being cut back (Rwamigisa, Birner, Mangheni & Semana, 2013).

This can be seen by way of an examination of the budget allocations for the agriculture sector. As far as GoU had agreed agricultural priorities these were as shown in MAAIF's first Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP) prepared in 2003-4 (MAAIF, 2006). Table 1 shows these *planned* allocations and demonstrates how NAADS was favoured with 29 per cent of *planned* expenditure, followed by Research with 19 per cent. The table also shows that NAADS captured much more of the *actual* budget allocation, getting 39 per cent over the years 2005/07 and even 45 per cent in 2006/07.

Table 1: MAAIF Actual Budget Allocations compared to planned allocations (%)

Function	Planned allocation (DSIP)	Actual Budget allocations			Average budget allocation 2005-7
		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	
Research	19	17	19	23	20
NAADS	29	30	45	41	39
Livestock disease	6	9	7	4	7
Plant pests and diseases	5	1	1	0	1
Livestock and fish regulatory services	5	2	2	2	2
Planning and policy	1	2	2	1	2
Institutional development	9	4	1	0	2
Water capacity building	10	3	4	4	4
Seed capacity development	8	9	3	3	5
Processing and marketing	3	7	2	2	3
Physical infrastructure	5	12	14	18	15
Promotion	1	3	1	1	2

Source: World Bank, 2010.

While allocations to Research and Livestock Disease Control were more or less in line with the DSIP plan, the obvious prioritisation of NAADS was seen as a continuous rebuke to MAAIF, its staff and their whole *raison d'être*.¹⁷

In a contested and conflicted environment, other ideas began to emerge, especially within MAAIF, as to how to provide extension services differently. Resistance to NAADS came primarily from a desire within MAAIF, driven partly by a preference for government extension, and partly by a wish to protect turf, to bring programmes back within the Ministry itself rather than having it directed from an agency with semi-autonomous status (that is the NAADS Secretariat) (Rwamigisa et al., 2013; Joughin & Kjær, 2012).

In sum, as the new advisory services programme was rolled out, so various actors began to realise the benefits that might accrue from it. Especially noteworthy was that the bypassing of lower level factions, and of MAAIF proved to be politically unsustainable and created incentives to alter the model to better mobilise support.

6. 2010-2017: The Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Service (ATAAS) and beyond

Over the last decade support for the NRM government has declined and, just as with the UPC elite before them, the NRM ruling elite has relied increasingly on special units in the military. The NRM leadership combines this top-down and increasingly repressive framework with 'the co-optation of elites who can secure support from a wide range of interests and factions ... and the direct mobilisation of a significant network of grassroots support' (Gulooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2013: 16-17). The opposition had gained ground in the two prior elections, which had been won by the NRM with decreasing margins. As the 2011 elections drew closer, public moneys played an increasingly large role, as did the use of public programmes for vote buying (Barkan, 2011; Perrot, Lafarge & Makara, 2014).

Planning for a 'successor project' to NAADS, a widened multi-donor programme supporting national research as well as extension, was launched in 2008, two years before the NAADS project was due to expire, its formulation requiring considerable donor resources and numerous, large, international expert-packed missions. Known as the Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Service (ATAAS), one of the key objectives of the project was to 'enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of

¹⁷ Interview, MAAIF official, June 2013; Interview, NAADS secretariat official, May 2012; personal observations of the author as MAAIF advisor, 2008-2011.

technology development and dissemination by supporting closer linkages between NARO (research), NAADS, and other stakeholders' (World Bank, 2010).

In light of the politicization of agricultural services, it is not surprising that, during design, there was much argument between the government and the donors (World Bank, Danida, IFAD, EU). The specific points of disagreement were apparent in the contradictions between the Project Appraisal Document (prepared in close consultation with the donors) and the Project Guidelines, prepared later and separately by the government alone. Essentially, the Project Guidelines presented a much more interventionist, top-down approach than did the original ATAAS Project Appraisal Document.

Then, hardly had the new programme started to get underway when, in the middle of 2013, MAAIF called a National Stakeholder Conference on Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services. The forum basically proposed to subsume the technical functions of extension into a new Directorate of Agricultural Extension within MAAIF and to deploy extension staff out in the local government production departments (MAAIF, 2013). These proposals were clearly a result of pressure from MAAIF to regain control over extension. Around the same time, the contracts of the Director of the NAADS Secretariat and his dedicated team were allowed to expire¹⁸. There was now little or nothing left of the original NAADS programme.

In 2011, the national budget had been strained by over-drawing on public resources, with adverse reactions from the IFI's and the influential Bank of Uganda director¹⁹, so for the 2016 election campaign, ways of procuring votes which were not as evident in the public finances would need to be explored. The NAADS/ATAAS budget line was an obvious target and recentralisation of the extension function would make access to the NAADS budget much easier. This development was further consolidated when, in June 2014, the President, during the Heroes Day celebrations in Mityana district, said he was 'going to scrap NAADS Coordinators and deploy soldiers to implement NAADS.' On July 7, Cabinet moved to give its approval to this²⁰ and the Minister of State for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, the President's cousin by marriage, directed the Permanent Secretary and the NAADS Executive to implement the Cabinet decision. Numerous NAADS officers were then dismissed and, as an early activity in the roll-out of the huge and still on-going Operation Wealth Creation (OWC), over 300

¹⁸ "The official account was that Dr Nahdy's contract had ended and it was not renewed. However, in an interview with The Observer on October 30, 2015, Dr Nahdy said he resigned out of frustration" (Oluka, 2016).

¹⁹ Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and Sam Hickey, 'I am a Chameleon: how and why Museveni and the NRM dominate the political landscape in Uganda'. Presentation at the workshop the NRM regime in the Uganda 2016 elections, 22 April 2016, Oxford.

²⁰ Government of Uganda. Cabinet Minute number 186 (CT 2014)

army officers were dispatched to induction training courses in agriculture at Makerere University.²¹ Another first family member, the President's brother, General Salim Saleh 'will be heading the Army Officers ... with a view to helping *wananchi* (citizens) in wealth creation' (Republic Of Uganda Media Centre, 2014²²). Once army training was well underway, the President made clear that the role of the soldiers was one of distribution of inputs; advice was not mentioned (The Monitor, 2014; The Monitor, 2015).

The replacement of agricultural officers by army veterans was a step to move the control of NAADS/ATAAS even closer to the inner circle. After having seen important individuals (not least significant army officers) leave the ruling coalition, the NRM ruling elite was trying to please disgruntled factions of the army, such as war veterans.²³ In the subsequent election campaign, Museveni was then able to use the NAADS budget line as a way to win political support (by sweetening political intermediaries at the local level and promising inputs to local communities) *and* to keep army factions content enough not to support the opposition.²⁴ These developments seem to indicate that events have come full circle. As under Obote, support from the army has been key in a situation of increasing fragmentation. However, in sending for the cavalry, it seems that fifteen years of considerable resources and effort expended on the agricultural extension front has been dissipated and the existing structures significantly weakened²⁵.

7. Concluding Discussion

We set out to examine the political incentives for African governments to implement agricultural advisory programmes and, using Uganda as our case, found that the advent of the 2001 elections did

²¹ <http://caes.mak.ac.ug/news-a-events/latest-news/1520-the-officers-will-work-together-with-naads-technical-teams-to-modernize-agriculture-and-improve-service-delivery.html>

²² See more at: <http://www.mediacentre.go.ug/press-release/%E2%80%9CArmy-came-save-naads-funds-further-misappropriation%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-president#sthash.M9E9HNra.dpuf>

²³ See the East African (2014).

²⁴ See for example Museveni: why I entrusted NAADS programme with army'. Citizens' Coalition for electoral democracy in Uganda <http://ccedu.org.ug/index.php/news/169-the-on-going-mass-enrollment-exercise-the-prospects-for-a-clean-and-credible-voters-register> accessed Sept. 2016.

²⁵ As we go to press NAADS still exists, with one of nine 'Vote Functions' in the MAAIF budget. This allocation accounts for close to 40% of the total budget, all of which is channelled into input distribution. NAADS employs only a handful of officers and they undertake the procurement of inputs. The distribution of the inputs is undertaken by the soldiers of OWC whose budget is taken care of by the military. The technical advice which farmers need to be able to successfully apply the seeds, fertilisers, other chemicals and equipment given out, is supposed to be provided by local government officers under the direction of the new Directorate of Extension in MAAIF. It too has a budget line but this is negligible, enough to pay salaries of HQ staff (some of them re-hired officers from the days before NAADS) but without operating funds to undertake any actual extension work.

seem to make the government want to deliver extension as a public good. The ready availability of donor funding no doubt helped strengthen this incentive.

However, incentive structures changed over the implementation period as Uganda's ruling elite became increasingly challenged and as various factions threatened to leave the coalition. Competitive elections in 2006 incentivised the government to add an input component to the advisory service. From 2006 onwards, the politically beneficial input component came to take up nearly all of the advisory service (and most of the the parent ministry) budget. It seems that the experience of implementation revealed a structure of political costs and benefits that were not all anticipated and that could not be ignored. The ruling elite found it simply could not disregard the growing pressure from three directions: local politicians, the Ministry of Agriculture, and, increasingly, disgruntled army factions. In all, these pressures constituted a strong, interlocking set of incentives which pushed government to revert to a top-down extension model with a substantial component of subsidised inputs, useful to placate important factions.

Uganda represents in many ways a typical sub-Saharan Africa country and we would suggest that the incentives to reject the recommended liberal and participatory models in favour of more hierarchical extension models can be found elsewhere too. Swanson and Davis (2014), for example, cover Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia as examples of countries with a preference for government top down extension. In Ethiopia, according to Berhanu and Poulton (2014: 206), the government 'steadfastly resisted donor calls for greater liberalisation of input markets or for more pluralistic extension models' and instead opted for something better fitting its political needs (Berhanu & Poulton, 2014: 206). This preference has prevailed in many low-income countries and may even be reinforced by the advent of elections which makes rural elites need the support of intermediaries who can mobilise votes.

The insight that policy reforms may be subject to clientelist pressures is not new (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; van de Walle, 2001) and it has driven development practitioners to call for an abandonment of 'best practice' models in favour of more context-sensitive 'good fit' models (Booth, 2012). Tim Kelsall (2008: 628), for example, brings attention to the so-called 'grain', i.e. informal rules, power structures, vested interests and incentives, arguing that 'going with the grain' might be a better reform-option than introducing reforms that may have worked elsewhere but do not align well with the local context (Kelsall, 2008; Booth and Therkildsen, 2015). Our findings, i.e. that the structure of political costs and benefits changes in complex ways through a decade long implementation process, inform this debate because they show that 'context' also changes. The findings urge us to understand 'the grain' not as a static structure of incentives but rather as features which are continuously evolving. This would suggest

that reform programmes should be developed that have an inbuilt flexibility mechanism, enabling donors not just to withdraw funding but also perhaps to allow for changes that were not originally thought of when the programme was designed. This could, for example, allow for funds to be reallocated to sub-components of the programme less affected by politics.

Agriculturalists currently agree that a well-functioning extension service needs to be facilitative, decentralised and engaged with key stakeholders (Swanson, 2010; Davis, 2008). They tend to be predominantly preoccupied with finding the 'right' model and are rarely mindful of the political incentives to implement it. They also emphasise the need for institutional changes to support this, and Birner et al (2009) even develop a framework for going from 'best practice' to 'best fit' by focusing on a range of factors such as the policy environment, the capacity of potential service providers, the type of production systems, among others. The framework, however, does not consider the deeper politics of extension reform or indeed how the structures may change. It would appear, we submit, that there is a contradiction between what agriculturalists tend to consider the technical optimum and what politicians consider beneficial and useful.

Our findings here point to ways in which, regardless of the model, the implementation processes can be disrupted by the prevailing incentive structure, an insight which calls for an implementation approach simultaneously more thoughtful and more pragmatic. Donors should not necessarily be deterred from engaging with this agenda but they should allow for much more 'trial and error', at the same time avoiding ambitious but unrealistic blue prints. This would mean focusing less on fixed programme design and more on understanding the political drivers. One practical suggestion might be that donors should consider more explicitly how the reform programme might be seen to help or impede election campaigns which would, in turn, require a better understanding of the extent to which the programme is, or could be, used to satisfy political factions important to the ruling coalition. Such a course of action might imply targeting reform components that are 'under the political radar' but nonetheless help extend advice to farmers, for example by, focusing less on large scale funding allocations and more on technical advice in selected localities.

In Uganda, as of 2017, with the wheel having gone round full circle and the provision of public agricultural advisory services now more or less non-existent, donors are once again acknowledging the critical role that a properly performing agricultural extension service could (and must) play as a driver of the agricultural productivity gains that Uganda urgently needs. Several donors (World Bank, IFAD, FAO, Danida) are currently in very preliminary discussions as to how they might re-engage with GoU in assisting with this essential role. One of the dominant items on the agenda is already the mechanics of

the implementation model. Many of the lessons of the last fifteen years are understood within government even if they are publicly contested. The way in which these lessons are incorporated into future programmes depends on the nature of the occasion, but, in the Ugandan case, opting for a less politically visible programme that genuinely strengthens selected local production departments in need of educated staff could be an option.

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