

Full Length Research Paper

Analyzing the roles and challenges of epicenter managers as rural transformation specialists: The case of greater Kibaale, Uganda

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Rural development approaches have been hinged on infusion of resources and expecting change to occur. This has not worked in most cases as expected. Recent innovations are using the visionary approach where local communities in rural areas are in charge of their own development. This paper introduces a new method called the Epicenter Strategy in integrated rural development using the visionary approach. The Epicenter Strategy is being implemented at sub-county level by Epicenter Managers. The study examined their roles and challenges while implementing this Strategy. This took place in greater Kibaale in mid-Western Uganda. Despite challenges common to new innovations, there is a change from problem solving orientation to visionary approach among these communities. It further showed that 62% of the strategy implementers were youth and this agreed with Uganda's national data consequently increasing the potential for sustainability. The number of villages implementing this strategy was between 48 and 80, hence reliability of results in drawing relevant recommendations. 78% of the strategy implementers indicated lack of logistical support as their major challenge. All respondents reported that the Epicenter Managers have the relevant skills, knowledge and capacity to facilitate rural transformation. Data was used to develop recommendations enhancing integrated rural transformation.

Key words: Rural Development, Epicenter Strategy, Epicenter Managers, Integrated Rural Transformation, Visionary approach.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Epicenter Managers as Rural Transformation Specialists organically cascade from the conception of the African Rural University (ARU) to transform the lives of the rural people. The need for rural communities to create for themselves Sustainable peace, prosperity, health, freedom and happiness in the districts of Kagadi, Kakumiro and Kibaale, and subsequently Africa and the world at large (URDT 2011, ARU 2014).

To implement the above, Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme (URDT) a local non Government organization established the Epicenter

Strategy. The Epicenter terminology is derived from the analogy of earthquake '**Epicenter**' where the tremor begins and spreads out. Without focusing on the negative impacts of earthquakes, the Epicenter concept in development is used positively. Development of villages takes that shape (positive impact) and the individual or household can be an Epicenter (URDT 2011). This strategy is hinged on training, taping and nurturing unique qualities of young women as mothers and leaders in order to bring them to a level of demonstrating the much needed leadership in rural development. Through the training, education and interactions in communities as Social change incubators, the young women demonstrate potential for this leadership through the Epicenter Strategy (Juma C,

2011).

The Epicenter Managers are deployed at the sub county level, which is the first tier of the lower local government in Uganda. Their major responsibilities include building capacities of the sub county technical and political leaders for quality service delivery. This is hinged on the results based planning (visionary leadership) to impact the lives of the people in the sub county in line with Uganda's Vision 2014 (Uganda Government 2010). This is expected to become a center of excellence for epicenter strategy replication in other communities of the country. At the individual and village level, these managers enhance the capacities of the rural people to create for themselves what truly matters to them {using Community Action planning (CAP) and the principles of the learning community. These include personal mastery, systems thinking, shared vision, mental models, and team learning} in respect to rural transformation (ARU, 2015).

Since 2009, the Epicenter Strategy implementation has been taking place in the three districts named above (Figure 1) (ARU 2014, ARU 2014 a). The major activity has been spearheading the transformation of rural communities using the holistic systems thinking visionary approach. However, the practical roles and challenges of the Epicenter Managers had never been documented nor analyzed in relationship to implementing the Epicenter Strategy. This research therefore identified and analyzed the roles of these cadres and the challenges they face as they transform rural communities. The information was used to develop practical recommendations on how to enhance and effectively spread the integrated rural transformation process.

Houngbo (2014) argues that economic growth remains robust in African countries, but the region has seen a steady rise in the number of extremely poor people, and their concentration in rural areas. He further argues that two thirds of Africa's population live and work in rural areas, which offer huge land surfaces, and agriculture represents 65 per cent of jobs in Sub-Saharan. However, these rural areas have been undervalued by governments, international development lenders and policy advisers.

The various alternatives that have been advanced include rural transformation which has been defined in many ways. Isolina *et al.* 2012 states that rural transformation agenda is about improving the overall quality of life in rural areas. This entails among others promoting investments in health, education, and rural infrastructure and having in place efficient rural financial markets.

Mbokoko (1996) argued that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have, since the 1980s, forced liberal macroeconomic policies upon African states. However, these policies are not adapted to the conditions in the rural areas of Africa and are even in contrast with the economic approach of the peasants and those structural factors that keep the

peasants from increasing their supply for the market. The policies also do not take into consideration lack of transport, uneven weather conditions, lack of land resources, shortage of specialized labor and equipment, too expensive input supplies, lack of credit, weak demand, difficulties of peasants to deal with suppliers of production factors and middlemen.

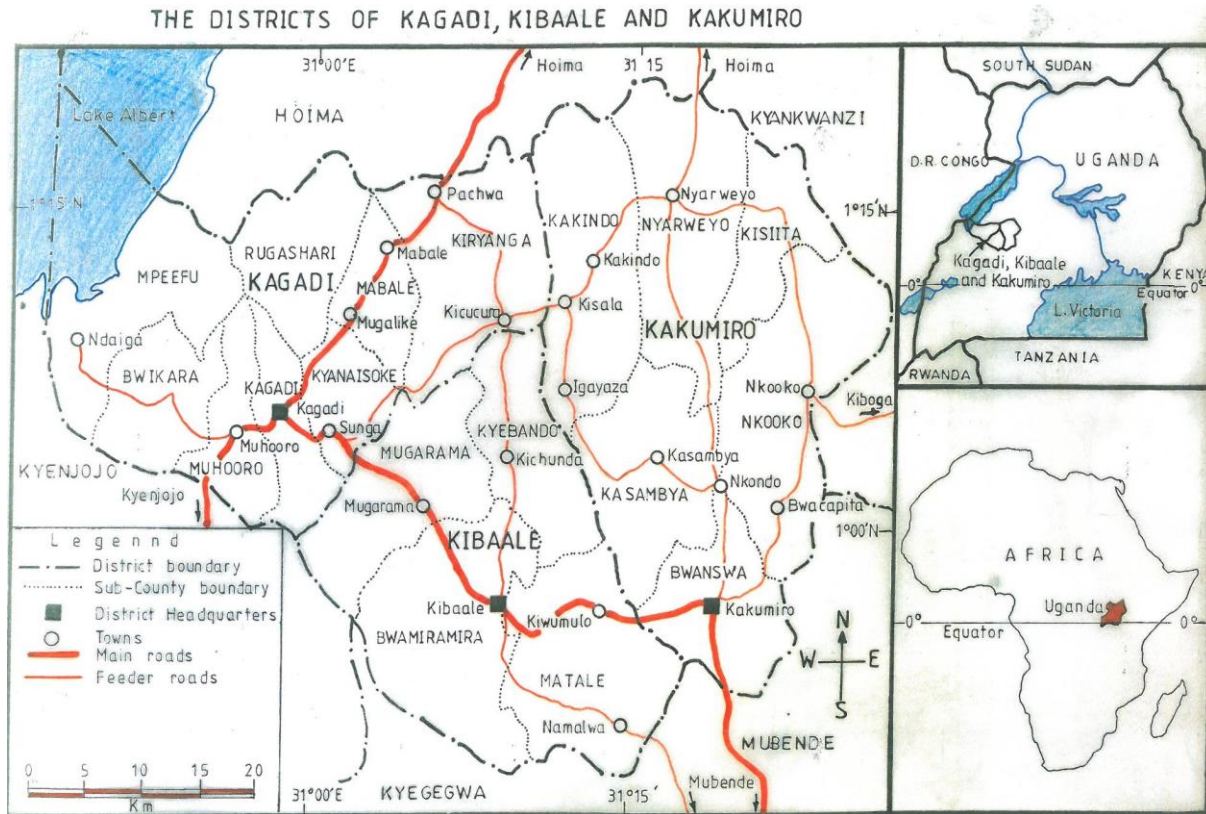
He further emphasizes that the alternative is to break away from the usual methods applied to rural Africa by recognizing the peasants' right to define their own projects. This would also require the creation of a favorable environment to improve working conditions and increase production. It would mean transplanting or decentralizing those industries that support agriculture and would require improved relations between banks and the rural population, as well as non-official financing which is a popular means for saving in Africa. In other words there is need for a new approach to rural development in Africa (Ruerd R 2005).

Rach *et al.* (2016) presented a study on rural transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa as a conceptual contribution to the research project "Towards a Socially Inclusive and Ecologically Sustainable Rural Transformation in Africa". Its purpose is to show rural transformation trends in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), to identify the drivers, to outline current debates on its design and to assess this against the backdrop of empirical findings. Macro-analysis of post-colonial transformation in SSA shows that despite burgeoning urbanization and the tripling of agricultural production since the 1960s – roughly in tune with population growth – only an extremely mild form of transformation has taken place so far when measured against conventional indicators (agricultural productivity growth, shifts between sectors). Almost two-thirds of all households still live foremost from the land. Heightened production was widely based on a growth in the agricultural labor force, which cultivated additional crop land with virtually unaltered methods. Urbanization, on balance, is the result of a shift in sources of income within diversified rural-urban livelihood systems from farm to off-farm income.

The above challenges among others has led to the shift of the integrated rural development from the problem solving mindset to the Visionary and systems thinking approach for rural development (Kuhnen, 2016). The major characteristics of the old integrated rural development has been area specific, top down approach based on what has been used elsewhere. This has changed to the individuals, homes, villages and communities in rural areas focusing on their own vision which takes into consideration all the issues and factors surrounding them (systems thinking).

Since 1987, URDT has worked with people as change agents and change makers, and organizations with a potential to become centers of excellence. There was commitment to start in the villages, work with local leaders and organically roll out the Epicenter Strategy throughout Africa. The nucleus of change starts at the

Figure 1. Map of Kagadi, Kakumiro and Kibaale Districts, Uganda (With Modifications from African Rural University, 2017).



Individual, Household, Village then Sub County level, and radiates outward. That's how the Epicenter phenomenon takes place (URDT, 2011).

The Hunger Project (2017) which is one of the leading international organizations on the Epicenter Strategy implementation defines it as an approach which is:

“Integrated and holistic: It achieves synergy among programs in health (including HIV/AIDS prevention), education, adult literacy, nutrition, improved farming and food security, microfinance, water and sanitation, and building community spirit with a momentum of accomplishment involving the entire population.

Economically sustainable: The primary resources for the strategy come from the local people themselves and by making existing local government resources more effective. Income generation is built into the strategy from the start. Within five to eight years, our epicenters require little or no financial support from The Hunger Project.

Environmentally sustainable: People at our epicenters learn composting and small-scale, environmentally sound irrigation technologies such as drip irrigation”.

With strong collaboration from the Hunger Project, there has been an institutionalization of the Epicenter Strategy using the Visionary Approach.

The Visionary Approach has three elements Vision, Current Reality and Structural Tension. A vision is defined as a clear and a compelling mental picture of what one truly wants (desired future) formulated in the present as if it was already achieved. Current Reality (CR) is a clear and true description of the existing situation in relation to the vision. Structural Tension (ST) is developed when one holds the vision and current reality at the same time. This discrepancy is the power from within which, if well resolved, creates change because the natural tendency is that tension seeks resolution. The power to attain ones aspirations resides in how one works with the Structural Tension (URDT 2011).

This approach is being used to transform rural communities through the Public-Private Partnership with the lower local government in the districts of Kagadi, Kakumiro and Kibaale in Mid-western Uganda (Figure 1) and subsequently other regions and Africa as a whole. The strategy is implemented by the URDT Epicenter Manager Staff deployed at the first tier of the Lower Local Government in the target districts.

This strategy provides development leveraged interventions or paths to operationalize her vision that states “Every village in these Districts and ultimately Africa has at least one woman leader who is a specialist in catalyzing rural transformation from within the Comm-

unities. She works closely with community based epicenters enabling the people starting from each individual in that community to be in the driver's seat of their own development". The Epicenter strategy encompasses a systems thinking holistic approach to transforming communities. As people work towards their desired aspirations a number of village programs including; health and sanitation, commercial agriculture, appropriate technologies, cooperatives, education, natural resource management, among others come into play. This Strategy is designed to use the Visionary Approach to build centers of Excellence at different levels; Sub County, Villages and Individual (The Hunger Project, 2017a).

JUSTIFICATION

The absence of an effective hard data collection mechanism and a systemic Monitoring and Evaluation program of the activities of the Epicenter Managers (EMs), has contributed to the absence of published data of their work, among other challenges. In relationship to the above, this study was designed to identify and analyze the roles of these managers, the challenges they face and provide evidence based practical recommendations on how they can enhance their activities. This ground breaking work in rural transformation has been mainly recorded by video and film extracts plus narrative reports.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was therefore to determine, evaluate and document the roles of the Epicenter Managers; identify challenges of their work and develop recommendations for enhancing the transformation process.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Identify and analyze the roles of Epicenter Managers in the three target districts, and determine how they relate to the relevant local government technical and administrative officers.
2. Identify challenges being faced by these Managers in terms of knowledge and skills.
3. Develop recommendations for enhancing the transformation process in the target districts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the roles of Epicenter managers in Kibaale area and how do they relate to the relevant technical and administrative officers?
2. What are the challenges being faced by epicenter managers in terms of knowledge and skills?
3. What practical recommendations should be given to enhance the rural transformation process in the Epicenter Strategy?

METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Two types of study methods were used:

1. Questionnaires were developed and directly administered by the researchers. There were two types of questionnaires: the first targeted the Local Government Administrators, Technical Staff and Local Community Members and was open ended; the second targeted Epicenter Managers and was close ended.
2. Secondary data was collected from review of Regular Epicenter Reports, District Reports, Internet and library sources.
3. The information collected was analyzed to evolve practical recommendations to enhance activities and impact of Rural Transformation professionals.

The data and information collected was analyzed for relationships between expected roles and actual roles. It was also used to identify gaps and how these could be resolved using analytical and comparative programs to respond to the specific objectives outlined above and assist in making practical recommendations. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data was analyzed by viewing the responses and the researcher developed themes from the responses.

STUDY AREA

This study took place in the greater Kibaale area which covers the current districts of Kagadi, Kakumiro and Kibaale Districts (Figure 1). 16 sub counties where the Epicenter Strategy is being implemented were visited out of a total of 19 sub counties in these three districts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data

This section has two parts. The first part provides information on the political and technical Staff, and Community Members and the second part provides information on the current and former epicenter managers.

Political, Technical Staff and Community Members

Position of respondents

Respondents had different titles among which included Community Development Officers (CDO), Sub County Chiefs, Chairpersons of village / community groups, group mobilisers, Group Secretaries and external facilitators of village based projects (Table 1).

Number of years in service

Under this category there were three sections 1(1-5 years),

Table 1. Background information on Respondents.

Question	Description	Frequency	Percentage	Comment
Position of the respondent	1. CDO	4	11.8	Highest Lowest
	2. Chairperson of the group	21	61.8	
	3. Sub county chief	8	23.5	
	4. Mobiliser of the group	1	2.9	
Relationship with the Epicenter	1. Field work	51	94.4	
	2. Job location	3	5.6	
Highest level of education	1. Primary	12	21.8	Highest Lowest
	2. Secondary	22	40	
	3. Tertiary	9	16.4	
	4. Degree	12	21.8	
Sex of the respondent	1. Male	38	70.4	
	2. Female	16	29.6	
Age of the respondent	1. 20-30	6	10.9	Lowest Highest
	2. 31-45	34	61.8	
	3. 46-55	9	16.4	
	4. 56 and above	6	10.9	
Number of years of service	1. 1-5 years	39	70.9	Highest Lowest
	2. 6-10 years	8	14.5	
	3. Above 10 years	8	14.5	

2(6-10 years) and 3(above 10 years) (Figure 2).

Majority of the respondents (Figure 2) had served for 1-5 years within the sub county and this contributed 70.9% while those who had served for 6-10 years and above ten years contributed a similar percentage of 14.5% to the total number of respondents. This implies that the respondents had enough information about the epicenter strategy and how it operates.

Age of respondents

As shown in the above Figure 3, the age group 31-45 contributed the highest percentage of 61.8% followed by 46-55% with 16.4%, 20-30 and above 56 years contributed the same percentage of 10.9% to the total population. This implied that majority of the respondents were in their youthful age and energetic to facilitate the transformation process. This is in agreement with the national demographic census data collected by the Government of Ugandas showing a very high (71%) youth percentage in the population (Uganda Government, 2014). The implication of this is that the strategy implementation is potentially sustainable.

Gender

Figure 4 shows that 70.4% of the respondents were male while females contributed 29.6% of the total

population of the respondents. This implied that majority men are in positions of leadership and influence in communities as opposed to women. Hence qualifying the significance of targeting women in leading the transformation process.

Level of Education

Majority of respondents (40%) had completed secondary school level while primary level and degree level contributed 21.8% each and 16.4% of the respondents had gone to tertiary institutions (Figure 5). The implication to rural transformation and the epicenter strategy is that the majority of the members of the community have had some level of education.

Relationship with the epicenter manager

In this section, researchers examined the type of relationship between the respondents and the epicenter managers. It was found that the respondents (Figure 6) interacted more with epicenter managers during field work visits (94.4%), while job location was only 5.6%. This clearly proved that epicenter managers and the community members together with all sub county staff work together in the field. For example in the areas of community mobilization, sensitization and trainings in order to foster rural transformation.

Figure 1. Number of years in service by the respondents.

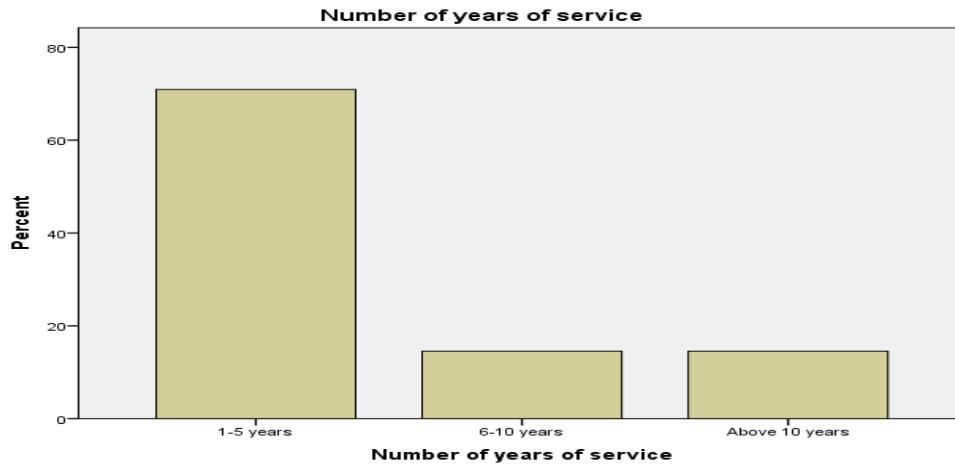


Figure 2. Age of respondents.

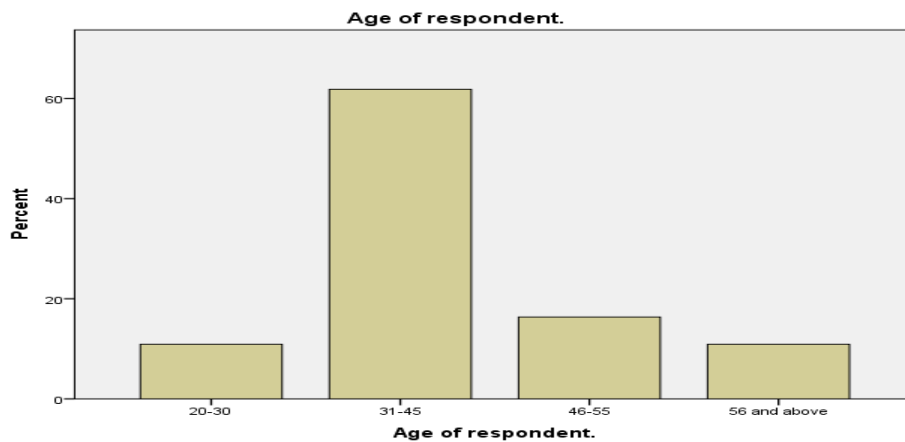
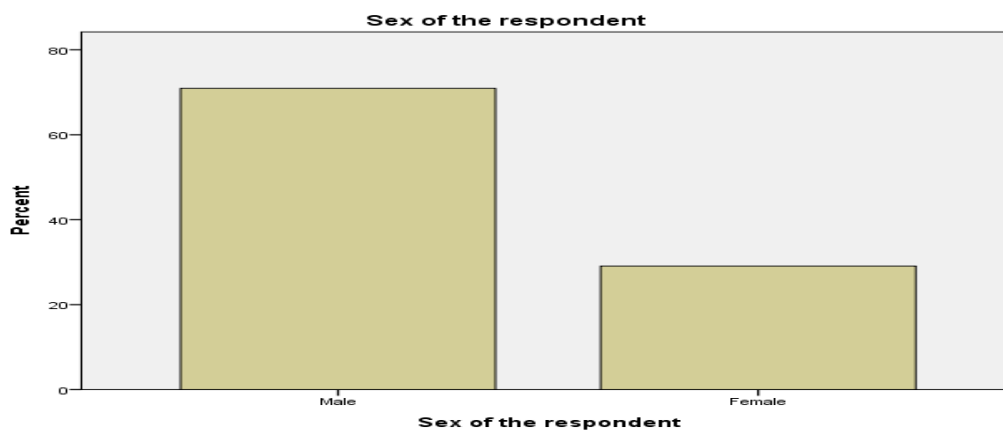


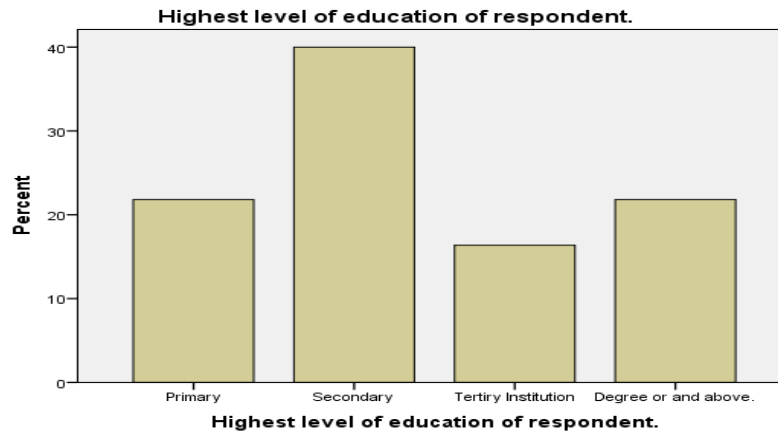
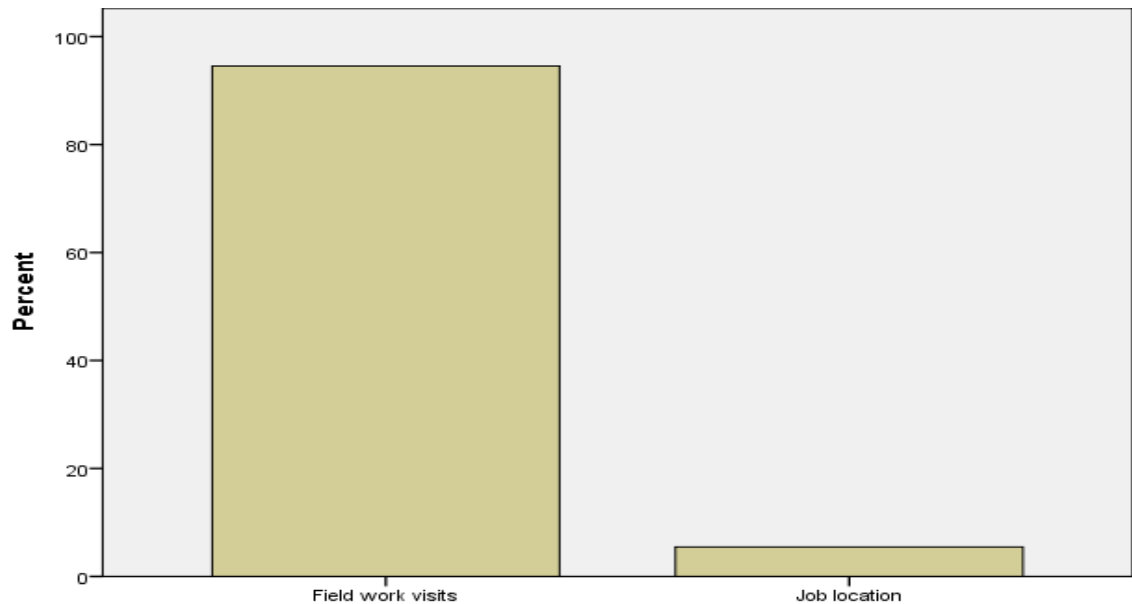
Figure 3. Gender of respondents.



Acquaintance with work of the Epicenter Manager

All respondents agreed (100%) as shown in the Figure 7 above, that they know the work of epicenter

managers. This provided basis for the authenticity of the information they provided as far as epicenter managers and their role in rural transformation is concerned.

Figure 4. Level of Education of the Respondents.**Figure 5.** Type of Relationship with Epicenter Managers.

a. Demographic data for Epicenter managers

Age of respondent

Majority (85%) of the epicenter managers as shown in Figure 8, are between 26-35 years, while 10% are above 36 years of age and 5% are below 25 years. This implies that this transformation officers are youth and since the majority (71%) of Ugandan population are youth (Uganda Government, 2014), these managers are in the best position and have an opportunity to cause positive change and development in rural areas.

Number of villages for intervention

The biggest percentage of Epicenter Managers had

intervention between 3-5 villages (Figure 9) in the sub counties covering 70%, while 20% had intervention with 5 villages and above and 10% work with only 2 villages in the sub county. With an intervention of 3-5 villages in 16 sub-counties is a total of 48 – 80 villages. This certainly offers reliable information which enabled us make relevant recommendations and conclusions. Apart from the Millennium Villages Project (2017) there has not been any integrated rural development programs focusing on homes and villages like this Epicenter Strategy in Uganda.

Analysis of the roles of Epicenter Managers and how they relate to the relevant technical and administrative officers

Table 2 above shows that training, sensitization and capacity building is perceived as the primary role of the

Figure 6. Respondents acquainted with work of Epicenter Managers.

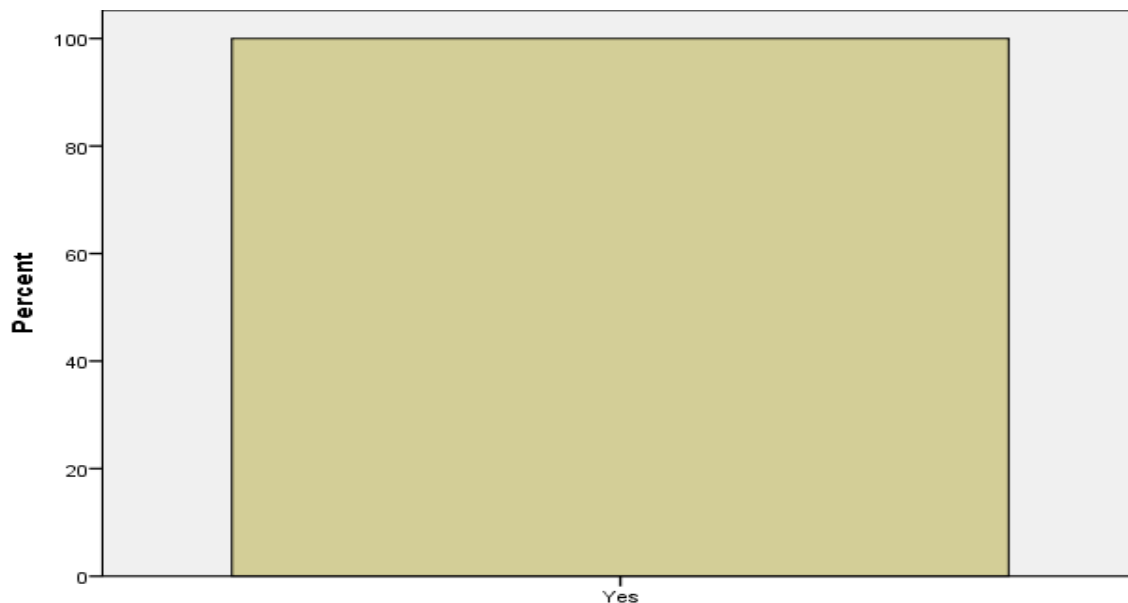


Figure 8. Age of Respondents.

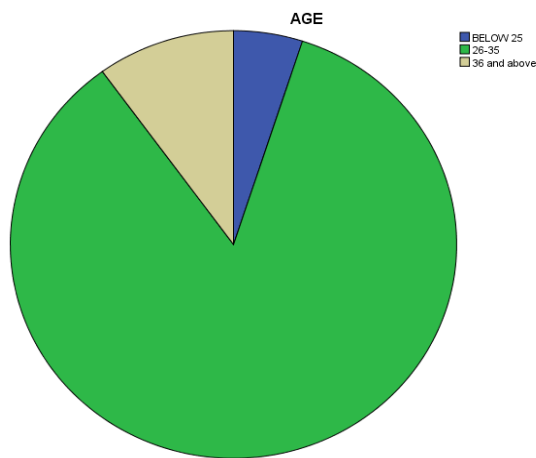
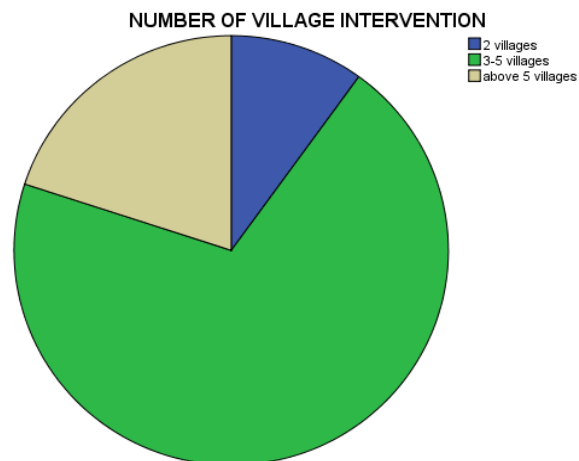


Figure 7. Number of villages of intervention.



epicenter managers contributing an average of 25.6%. This function was reported to be undertaken in the areas of agriculture, nutrition, hygiene, education, groups and group formulation, visioning and mindset change and leadership. Program development came in second position with an average of 21.1%, while program management and the Philosophy and the visionary approach to development followed closely. This is a common trend for work in rural communities where capacity has to be built first followed by identification of relevant programs then implementation and management using the visionary approach.

Resource mobilization contributes only 7.7% this partly explains the reason for limited resources especially in terms of finances both at the community level and sub county level besides the transfers from

central government. Among other duties or roles identified as performed by the epicenter managers are mobilizing communities for meetings, sanitation and any other campaigns, counseling especially domestic violence victims and promoting government programs.

While the above is a summary of the roles of epicenter managers as perceived by the community members, technical staff and political leadership of the sub county, URDT as the employer of the epicenter managers clearly state five categories as the roles of the epicenter managers namely philosophy and the visionary approach as the primary role followed by resource mobilization, program development and management and last but not least training and capacity building of the Para extension volunteers with whom they work closely (URDT 2011).

Table 2. Roles of epicenter managers as perceived by the community, technical and political leaders.

Roles as in the ToRs (Grouped)	Roles as perceived by the Community	Roles as perceived by Technical and Political leaders	Average
A. Philosophy & Visionary Approach	17.9	16.1%	17%
B. Program Development	19.65%	22.5%	21.1%
C. Program Management	19.65%	13.7%	16.7%
D. Training, Sensitization and Capacity Building	26.2	24.9%	25.6%
E. Resources mobilization	0	15.4%	7.7%
F. Any other duties as assigned	53.6	7.4%	30.5

Epicenter managers consider working together with the community for the village they want as their number one role (Table 3). This came out highest with a mean of 4.45 and standard deviation of .686. They do this through trainings (as already testified by the community members, technical staff and political leadership of the sub counties), Sharing ideas / Team learning, community action planning and formulation of Village visions and working towards achieving those visions.

Another role as perceived by epicenter manager is that they offer technical advice to the sub county leadership and community especially in leadership, planning, budgeting and agriculture. This was represented by a mean of 4.05 and 3.95 as indicated in Table 3 above.

With the mean of 4.40 and standard deviation of .821 epicenter managers strongly agree that their work directly feeds into the district effort of transforming communities. This is because they all work towards achieving Uganda's Vision 2040. Some staff like the community development officer (CDO) have responsibilities which directly relate to the work of the epicenter managers. For example, they both work towards increasing people's income and improving service delivery (Uganda Government, 2010).

Given the roles of the epicenter managers as perceived by the community members, technical staff, political leadership and URDT as the employer, they coincide in general, however they do differ in intensity and priority in general but also from one sub county to another.

There are many attempts by non-government organizations to work closely with local governments in rural areas (World Vision Uganda 2016, CARE Uganda 2010). However, very few if any, have set up offices and officers working very closely and collaboratively on a permanent basis with the Sub counties. This is indeed the very first time this has happened in this area.

Challenges faced by Epicenter Managers in terms of knowledge and skills.

The results in Table 4 above show that all (100%) Com-

munity members agree that there are no challenges with epicenter managers in terms of knowledge and skills. This is attributed to their ability to hold and pass on relevant skills, teaching and pedagogical skills for functional adult literacy, work ethics and sense of responsibility. 89.28% of the technical and sub county leadership agree that the epicenter managers were well trained for the work they do while only 10.71% reported that they were lacking in terms of knowledge and skills. This was reported mainly by technical staffs, who are specialists in different subjects as opposed to the Epicenter Managers who are generally all-rounder.

However, the respondents also identified other challenges like poor facilitation of the epicenter managers to do their work. They overwhelmingly pointed out lack of transport to reach the villages and communities, office space and equipment, and other logistics. This came out as the biggest challenge with an average mark of 77.8%. This was followed by mistaken identity and interference by the political leadership who think that epicenter managers intend to take up their positions rated at 17.85%. Material expectation from the community and poor attitude of the people towards epicenter work was low (17.2%) followed by language barrier (7.14%).

Epicenter managers agree (Table 5 above) that they have challenges in certain areas of knowledge and skills which stood out with a high mean of 3.65. This is justified by the fact that they have general knowledge of most of the subjects related to transformation. However the lack of internet to do more research and limited reference materials in the resource center cause a major challenge too.

Just like the other category of respondents, epicenter managers also identified other challenges which include the fact that community transformation is costly especially in terms of finances. This was attributed to the fact that they lack facilitation as discussed earlier with a mean of 4.00. It further explains the cause of failure to monitor projects and activities in the villages which has a mean of 3.85. Poor attitude and mistaken identity are also raised as a challenge with means of 3.35 and 3.60 respectively. Epicenter managers further

Table 2. Roles of epicenter managers as perceived by the Epicenter Managers themselves.

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	interpretation
I Find it easy to work with communities	4.10	.852	High
I find it easy to work with local leaders	3.70	.657	High
Sub county leaders accept and appreciate my advice	3.95	.826	High
I find it easy to mobilize people for a meetings, learning etc.	3.90	.852	High
People appreciate and adopt ideas i introduced to them	4.05	.686	High
I see a lot of transformation in my villages of intervention	3.50	.688	High
My work directly feeds into district effort of transforming communities	4.40	.821	Very High
I and the community work together for the village we want	4.45	.686	Very High
I find it easy to bring new members on board at individual, village and sub county level	3.50	.513	High
The roles and responsibilities in my appointment letter match with what i do	3.75	.910	High
Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation	3.93	.749	High
1.00-1.79 (very low) 1.80-2.59 (low) 2.60-3.39 (moderate) 3.40- 4.19 (high) 4.20-5.00 (very high)			

Table 3. Challenges of Epicenter Managers as perceived by the community, Technical and Political Leaders.

Challenges raised by respondents	Political technical staff	& Community representatives	Average
Challenge in terms of knowledge and skills	10.71%	0%	
1.Poor facilitation to do their work (lack of transport, offices – logistics)	62.9%	92.85%	77.8%
2.Language barrier	Not mentioned	7.14%	
3. Material expectations from community and poor attitude of the people	20%	14.3%	17.2%
4.Mistaken Identity and interference	Not mentioned	17.85%	
5.Failure to appreciate the EMs work	17.14%		

confirm results of the community members, technical staff and political leadership that language barrier is not a major challenge (Represented by mean of 2.05).

The above challenges are not entirely unique to this program. Several authors have raised these in their studies on working with local communities and in integrated rural development (Ruerd et al 2005, Kuhnen 2016). However, they are important because they offer more opportunities for this unique approach to achieve greater success.

Recommendations for enhancing the transformation process in the target areas

The respondents gave a number of recommendations (Table 6 above). The majority 37.2% suggested that

there should be training programs for the sub county leadership not only in the Visionary Approach but to bring communities up to speed on the Epicenter Strategy Approach as a whole. This should be done regularly since leaders change over time for example new Political leaders are elected every 5 years, and the formation of new administrative areas like districts and sub counties. They further recommended that Epicenter Managers should hold regular meetings and conduct regular community visits while the University and URDT should enhance supervision of interns. 29.1% also suggested that a detailed all inclusive Monitoring and Evaluation program for the Epicenter Strategy be developed.

7.1% recommended that in case there are changes and or transfers, there should be a replacement done

Table 4. Challenges of Epicenter Managers as perceived by epicenter managers.

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Not all people welcome and accept my intervention	3.60	.754	High
Sub county leaders don't fully understand the approach am using	3.35	1.040	Moderate
It's difficult for me to monitor all the projects and activities in villages	3.85	.933	High
I cannot fully intervene in all issues due to knowledge gaps	3.65	1.268	High
Peoples belief and norms have always gotten in the way of my work	3.35	1.182	Moderate
Community transformation is more costly than anticipated yet funds are limited	4.00	1.214	High
Language barrier has gotten in the way of my work	2.05	1.050	Low
Social economic endeavors to transformation are politicized by local leadership hence complicating my work	2.70	1.218	Moderate
There is a big difference between the theory and the visionary approach	3.05	1.191	Moderate
Community mobilization is limited to social events and the season	3.90	1.334	High
It's not easy to awaken the sleeping genius among community members	2.80	1.436	Moderate
Aggregate Mean and Standard Deviation	3.30	1.147	Moderate
1.00-1.79 (very low) 1.80-2.59 (low) 2.60-3.39 (moderate) 3.40- 4.19 (high) 4.20-5.00 (very high)			

Table 5. Recommendations from Respondents.

Recommendations raised by respondents	Political & technical staff	Community representatives	Average
1.Meetings and Community visits / Monitoring & Evaluation; Supervision of interns done more regularly & refresher courses.	22.5%	35.7%	29.1%
3. Training of sub county staff and local leaders in the visionary approach / Skills development	14.3%	50%	37.2%
4.Need for more EMs and also replacing those transferred or deployed elsewhere	7.1%		
6.Cooperation with other officers in the sub county	10.7%		

immediately and 10.7% recommended increased cooperation with other officers at the sub county while the Epicenter Managers are executing their duties.

Other recommendations made included increasing the number of epicenter managers from one per sub county to one per parish, formally introducing epicenter managers to the community and sub county; the University should do research in cocoa, coffee and bananas (Agriculture and Farming); the need to develop a detailed publicity and sensitization program for the Epicenter Strategy; there should be more radio programs and sensitization of the communities. It was further recommended that Epicenter Managers should scale up from working with a few villages to engaging more villages and schools; University student Practicum

and internship reports should be shared at the sub county; and the epicenter managers should have specific training on a certain aspect than just having general knowledge on a number of subjects.

Finally the respondents noted the non- residential nature of the Epicenter Managers in the sub counties in which they work which makes their presence difficult to monitor and follow up.

CONCLUSION

From the results discussed above it is evident the epicenter managers at the level of sub counties have enhanced transformation in the communities using the

Epicenter Strategy approach. This is justified by the skills, knowledge, training and technical advice they have passed on to the communities and the activities and programs which are being implemented by local community groups. However, there is also need to fill the gaps and challenges identified not forgetting taking action on the recommendations forwarded so as to enhance the rural transformation process.

There is need for further research and documentation of the activities and programs being implemented by the Epicenter Managers and the impact of their work.

There is an opportunity for possible replication of this strategy in other developing countries with large rural communities to enhance integrated rural development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNICAL STAFF AND LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Interview Guide for the District Administrators, Technical Staff and Local Community Members

Demographic Data		
N0.	Question	Description
1	Subcounty	.....
2	Position/Tittle of the respondent	.....
3	Number of years of service	1) 1-5 Years 2) 6-10Years 3) Above 10 Years
4	Age of the respondent	1) 20-30 2) 31-45 3) 46-55 4) 56 and above
5	Sex of the respondent	1) Male 2) Female
6	Highest level of education of the respondent	1) Primary 2) Secondary 3) Tertiary Institution 4) Degree or/and above
7	Relationship with the Epicenter	1) Residence 2) Field work visits 3) Job location
5	Are you acquainted with work of the Epicenter Manager?	1. Yes 2. No
Questions and filters		
1	In your opinion, what is the role of the Epicenter Managers?	..... ..... .....
2	How does the EMs work feed into your work?	..... ..... .....
3	Do you think the Ems were well trained for their work? If Yes, why	...............
4	If No in 3 above, why is it so?	..... ..... .....
5	How do the EMs relate with people in the sub county?	..... ..... .....
6	How does the EM relate with the local leaders?	..... ..... .....
7	Are you aware of any advice, step or skills that the EM has passed onto the subcounty leadership? Elaborate	...............
8	Have Epicenters been of value to this sub county? Elaborate	...............
9	Has your EM ever introduced anything new in the subcounty? If yes, what was it and how did it help the people in the subcounty	...............

10	What would you want the Ems to do differently to make their work excellent?
11	What do you think the University should do differently in order to have products fit for the job?.....
12	In your opinion, what are the challenges of Epicenter Managers in working with communities?
13	In your own opinion, is there a future for Epicenters
14	How do you see the Epicenters relating with the local government in future
15	What other relevant information do you wish to share
	END

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EPICENTER MANAGERS

Self-Administered Questionnaire for Epicenter Managers.

SECTION A: Background Information							
Please supply by ticking the option that can best describe you in this section							
N0	Question	Response					
1	Subcounty of attachment	.....				
2	Age	1) Below 25 2) 26-35 3) 36 and above					
3	Number of villages of intervention	1) 2 Villages 2) 3-5 Villages 3) Above 5 Villages					
SECTION B: Roles of Epicenter Managers							
Provide the most appropriate answer in respect to questions in this section where; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Un decided, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree.							
N0.	Questions/Filters	Code					Reason for the rating
B1	I find it easy to work with communities	1	2	3	4	5	
B2	I find it easy to work with local leaders	1	2	3	4	5	
B3	Subcounty leaders accept and appreciate my advice	1	2	3	4	5	
B4	I find it easy to mobilize people for meetings, learning etc.	1	2	3	4	5	
B5	People appreciate and adopt ideas I introduce to them	1	2	3	4	5	
B6	I see a lot of transformation in my villages of intervention	1	2	3	4	5	
B7	My work directly feeds into district effort of transforming communities	1	2	3	4	5	
B8	I and the community work together for the village we want	1	2	3	4	5	
B9	I find it easy to bring new members on board at individual, village and subcounty level	1	2	3	4	5	
B10	The roles and responsibilities in my	1	2	3	4	5	

	appointment letter march with what I do						
SECTION C: Challenges of Epicenter Managers							
Provide the most appropriate answer in respect to questions in this section where; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Un decided, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree.							
C1	Not all people welcome and accept my intervention	1	2	3	4	5	
C2	Subcounty leaders do not fully understand the approach am using	1	2	3	4	5	
C3	It's difficult for me to monitor all projects and activities in villages	1	2	3	4	5	
C4	I cannot fully intervene in all issues due to knowledge gaps	1	2	3	4	5	
C6	Peoples' beliefs and norms have always gotten in the way of my work	1	2	3	4	5	
C6	Community transformation is more costly than anticipated yet funds are limited	1	2	3	4	5	
C7	Language barrier has gotten in the way of my work	1	2	3	4	5	
C7	Social-economic endeavors to transformation are politicized by local leadership hence complicating my work	1	2	3	4	5	
C8	There is a big difference between the theory and the practice of the visionary approach	1	2	3	4	5	
C9	Community mobilization is limited to social events and the season	1	2	3	4	5	
C10	It's not easy to awaken the sleeping igneous among community members	1	2	3	4	5	
SECTION D: Curriculum gaps							
Provide the most appropriate answer in respect to questions in this section where; 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Un decided, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree.							
D1	The training I received from ARU was sufficient for my current role	1	2	3	4	5	
D2	The curriculum should be adjusted to address the challenges we face in the field	1	2	3	4	5	
D3	My skills would be fit for rural transformation outside Kibaale	1	2	3	4	5	
D4	ARU should start short courses for the local leaders in the visionary approach to ease our work	1	2	3	4	5	
D5	Community work has enriched my knowledge base in rural transformation	1	2	3	4	5	
D6	The practicum and internship prepared me well for my role	1	2	3	4	5	
D7	My supervisor mentored me well for my role	1	2	3	4	5	
D8	All course units were relevant for my current role	1	2	3	4	5	
D9	I still need refresher courses order to deliver well in the Epicenter	1	2	3	4	5	
D10	I am proud of the person I have become due to ARU training	1	2	3	4	5	

