



When the Solution Became a Problem: Strategies in the Reform of Agricultural Extension in Uganda

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What is this presentation about?

- **Agricultural extension**
 - Key role for the adoption of agronomic practices
 - “Good intentions and hard realities” (Anderson & Feder, 2004)
- **Reform of agricultural extension services in Uganda**
 - **National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)**
 - Extension reform program promoted in Uganda starting in 2001, funded by multiple donors, led by World Bank
 - Internationally – the most widely celebrated agricultural extension reform model in Africa
 - portrayed as a solution to the typical challenges of public sector agricultural extension
 - Ultimately unsuccessful – and completely disbanded

Key questions for this presentation?

- **What was contested about NAADS?**
 - **By whom?**
- **How did the controversy about NAADS change over time?**
- **Was the contested nature of the program the main reason of its failure?**
- **What can we learn from this case?**

What was NAADS about?

Main elements of the reform program

- **Outsourcing of extension services from public sector staff to private service providers**
 - Contracting private or NGO service providers on an annual basis
- **Farmer empowerment and demand-driven approach**
 - Farmers' organizations decide on the agenda of the extension service – and on the hiring / firing of service providers
- **Gender-sensitivity**
 - Rules about participation of females
- **Decentralization**
 - NAADS was managed at the sub-county level
- **Semi-autonomous agency**
 - NAADS Secretariat – outside the agricultural ministry

How did NAADS come about?

- **International context**

- Since the 1990s, rising criticism of the Training and Visit (T&V) system of agricultural extension as “top-down”
 - Neuchâtel Initiative – advocating demand-driven approaches (Neuchâtel Group 1999, 2002)
 - Reform-minded group within the World Bank (Thematic Group on “Sustainable Agriculture Systems, Knowledge and Institutions” - SASKI)

- **National context in Uganda**

- World Bank-funded extension project – following the T&V model came to an end – negative evaluation
- Decentralization policy
 - Downsizing of staff in the agricultural ministry
 - Closing of the Directorate of Agricultural Extension

How did NAADS proceed?

A Chronology of events

- 2001: National elections – agriculture high on the agenda
NAADS World Bank Project approved
NAADS Act passed in Parliament
Implementation starts in “trailblazing” districts
- 2004: Positive mid-term evaluation
Accelerated expansion of the program
- 2005: Input subsidy program is linked to NAADS
- 2006: National elections
Government launches “Prosperity for All” Program
- 2007: President suspends NAADS
“Model farmer” approach adopted; donors stop funding
- 2008: NAADS implemented in all districts
Increasing criticism about misuse of funds
World Bank NAADS Project came to an end

How did NAADS proceed?

A Chronology of events (continued)

- 2008: Preparations for new World Bank Project (ATAAS: “Agricultural Technology and Agribusiness Advisory Services”)
 - Had the provision to lay off all public sector extension staff
 - Successfully opposed by agricultural ministry
- 2010: President stops NAADS again
- 2011: ATAAS starts
- 2012: NAADS leadership exchanged
- **Present situation**
 - NAADS model completely disbanded
 - Switch back from contracted service providers to public sector staff
 - Directorate of Extension re-established in the Ministry
 - Limited funding for extension – major funding goes to input subsidies
 - Controversy with donors continues

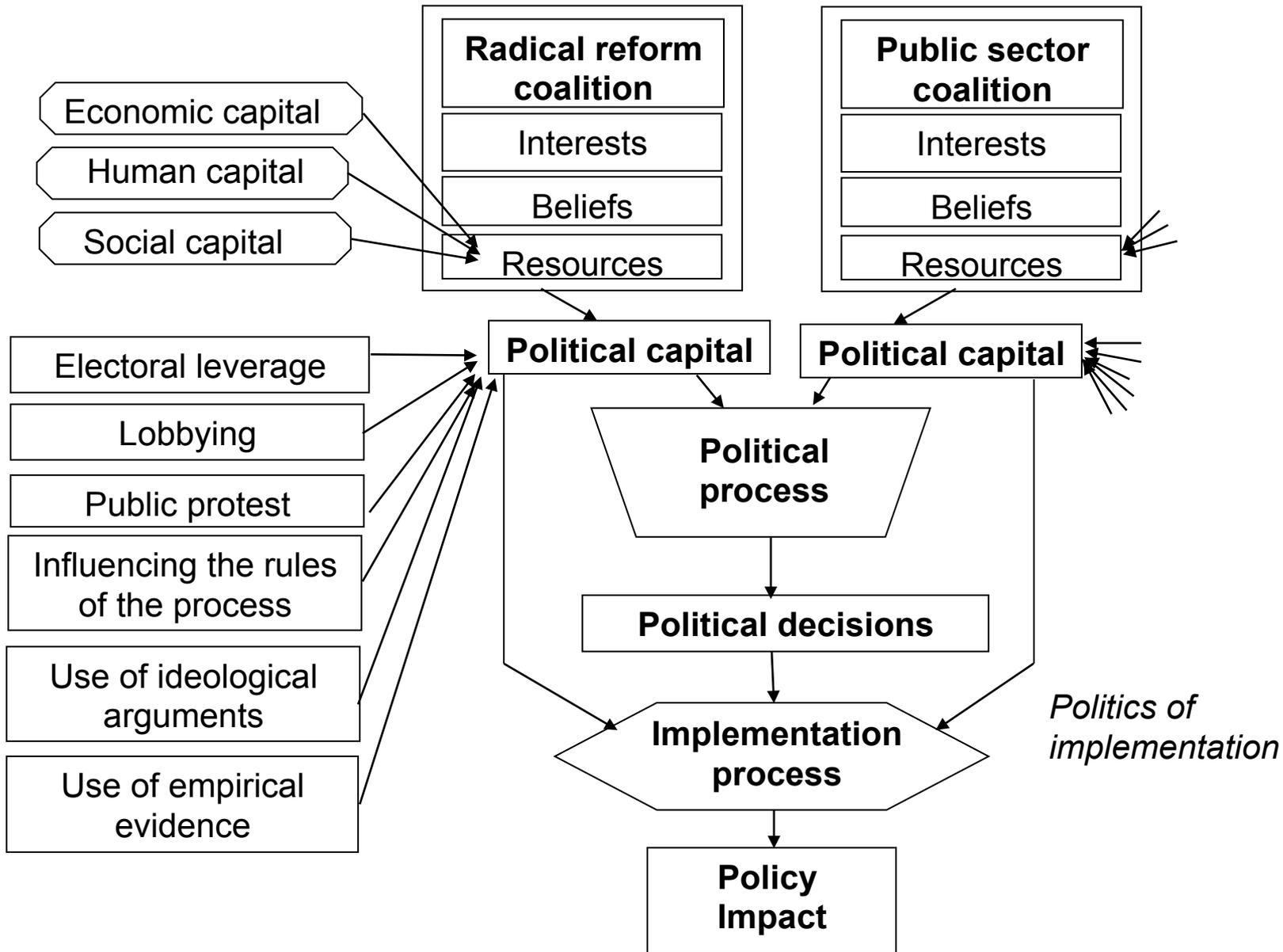
Evaluations and research on NAADS

- **Early evaluations positive**
- **Increasingly critical research studies**
 - e.g., Parkinson (2009)
- **Major impact evaluation by IFPRI**
 - Methodologically rigorous (panel data, matching)
 - Preliminary findings positive (Benin et al., 2007, 2011)
 - Final results could not proof benefits (Benin et al., 2012)
- **Review by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG)**
 - Rated as “moderately unsuccessful” (World Bank, 2011)
 - Problems: increased elite capture, misuse of resources, misdirected inputs, depressed farmer morale, weakening of farmers' groups

Research Approach

- **Conceptual basis**
 - Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993)
 - Discourse analysis (Hajer, 1995, 2006)
 - Gradual versus radical policy reform (Murrell, 1992)
- **Data collection**
 - Use of qualitative methods – starting in 2007
 - Review of documents
 - 56 qualitative interviews with a wide range of stakeholders
 - Participant observation by first author
- **Quality control**
 - Triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing

Conceptual framework for analyzing agricultural policy processes



The radical reform coalition

- **Members**
 - Development partners, Ministry of Finance, National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO); initially: Minister of Agriculture
- **Core belief**
 - Internal reforms of public sector extension services will not be successful – alternative models are needed
- **Strategies to build political capital**
 - Use of financial resources to fund extension and to lobby (especially Ministry of Finance; Minister of Agriculture)
 - Use of media (frequent reports)
 - Creating a semi-autonomous agency outside the Ministry (NAADS Secretariat) run by strategically recruited pro-reform personnel
 - Use of international expertise to support the reform

The public sector coalition

- **Members**
 - Technical staff in the agricultural ministry; academics
- **Core belief**
 - Public sector institutions need to continue to play a key role in extension; reforms need to be gradual
- **Strategies to build political capital**
 - Passive resistance to reform through non-participation
 - E.g., planning meetings for NAADS, mid-term evaluation
 - Lobbying among technical staff, using social networks
 - Exploiting the weaknesses of the NAADS program as implementation unfolded (“We could have told you so.”)
 - Lobbying new decision makers that were appointed after national elections

Was the contested nature of NAADS the main reason for its failure?

- **View of the radical reform coalition**
 - Controversy could not have been avoided
 - Radical reform approach was the only option to overcome bureaucratic resistance
 - Political capture to blame for the failure
- **View of the public sector coalition**
 - Imposition of a reform model by donors and outside experts
 - Lack of inclusion of local experts led to major design flaws that ultimately undermined the program
 - Examples:
 - Decision to limit entire extension activities in each sub-county to only three topics only
 - Failure to address challenges of contracting/procurement at sub-county level
 - Creation of a semi-autonomous agency – making NAADS vulnerable to direct intervention by the President

What can be learnt from the case?

- **Radical reform approaches (suppressing the opponents by using power)**
 - may be successful for reforms that can be implemented “by the stroke of a pen”
 - not promising for institutional reforms that require buy-in from a large number of staff members placed throughout the country
- **Need to build consensus**
 - Methods of “deliberative democracy” involving farmers
 - Insights from the Advocacy Coalition Framework on the role of science useful
 - Need to enable analytical debates



Thank you!

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