

Rural Livelihood Development Programme (RLDP) Experience with the DCED Standard for Results Measurement

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Prepared by,

Athumani Zuberi and Vicky-Sidney Msamba¹

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors and by no means represent either the views of the organisation (RLDP) nor its funding agency (SDC)

¹The authors constitute RLDP MRM team

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Country Context

Tanzania is considered to have huge potential in agriculture although the country has not tapped those opportunities. Agriculture remains the mainstay of the country's economy employing more than 80%¹ of the working population. The country's population is estimated to be 45 million people².

The government of Tanzania (GoT) recognizes the importance of agriculture, whereas in its national policies and the Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) 2025 which is implemented through National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty II (NSGRP II) or better known by its Kiswahili acronym "MKUKUTA II", it acknowledges the centrality of agriculture to the economy and as the mainstay of the majority of the population (as source of livelihoods).

These efforts by the government of Tanzania to improve agriculture are also in line with both development partners' agenda including Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)³ as well African countries agreement.

1.2. Rural Livelihood Development Programme (RLDP)

Rural Livelihood Development Programme (RLDP) is an agricultural market development programme in Tanzania supported and funded by the Swiss government through SDC. The programme works to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the central corridor of Tanzania. RLDP operates in seven poverty-stricken semi-arid regions of central Tanzania and aims to reduce rural poverty in these areas by improving the market system to work better for the benefit of rural poor farmers. RLDP's vision is that poor rural households and communities participate in the market economy, improve their material livelihood, and withstand economic shocks by employing their assets and potentials.

RLDP is implemented by Rural Livelihood Development Company (RLDC) and is managed by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and Swisscontact since 2005. While initially applying a sustainable livelihood approach, in 2008 RLDP adopted a making markets work for the poor (M4P) approach to its work. So it is primarily interested in working with motivated and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector market systems that are willing to adopt new innovations, practices and techniques and therefore are

¹<http://www.tanzaniainvest.com/agriculture>, Tanzania Investment Centre

² The 2012 Tanzania Population and Housing Census, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

³ Swiss Cooperation Strategy Tanzania 2011-2014



willing to commit financially and technically to these innovations. RLDP is also mindful of what happens after phasing out its support to partners and strives to design interventions and solutions that are sustainable (i.e. will continue long after RLDP project end).

The major reasons for applying an M4P approach were lack of higher level of genuine private investments in the interventions, lack of clear impacts and sustainability of the interventions, and insufficient focus on the pro-poor growth potentials. The opportunities created through gained knowledge and experience, and recognition of need for change by RLDP, led to facilitation of market development rather than financing market linkage, and a more systemic approach to sector development.⁴

Since 2008, RLDP has impacted the livelihoods of over 100,000 households by intervening in the rice, sunflower, cotton, dairy and poultry sectors. The programme has significantly broadened its outreach by also intervening in the radio sector and encouraging the production and distribution of radio services aimed at rural/agricultural listeners. RLDP also works at policy level to encourage the creation of an enabling local business environment.

In April 2012, RLDP entered its final fourth phase that runs up to March 2016.

The programme adopted the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) Standard for Results Measurement (RM) in 2012.

This aimed at enabling the programme to capture wider-market system change, and therefore allowing capturing more impacts at sector growth level. Additionally, RLDP also adopted the Standard for measuring results in order to improve management decision making and priorities setting through improved logic of interventions in the results chain. Furthermore, RLDP intended to improve interaction with other programmes applying Standard in their RM and finally solidifying its field recognition in terms of producing robust and credible results because of external audit process⁵.

A DCED Standard Pre-Audit Review was conducted at RLDP in September 2013; currently, the team reviews the MRM processes and incorporates comments suggested by the consultant.

⁴ Review of the Draft Business Plan of RLDC 2008-2011, Tanzania (for SDC), final report August 2007, Springfield Centre

⁵ DCED Standard for Measuring Results in Private Sector Development, 12th September 2012

1.3. Objective and Rationale of the Paper

This paper is prepared in order to share RLDP's experiences with the DCED Standard for RM at the 2014 DCED Global Seminar.

Seeking compliance with the DCED Standard, RLDP wishes to interact with other projects applying the Standard; this includes experience sharing with other implementers from different locations and background such as Asia (where it is believed that the markets are very dynamic compared to Sub Sahara Africa where markets distortions and weak agricultural policies exist) from challenge fund and conflict affected areas to common private sector development in agriculture.

1.4. The DCED Standard for RM at RLDP

In April 2012, RLDP started its phase IV and at the same time the programme officially adopted the DCED Standard for RM. This aimed at number of objectives include i) increasing credibility to the donor (SDC) on the RLDP results because of the results authentication, ii) seeking international recognition by using world-wide accepted standard procedure of measuring results iii) helping to improve internal system of collecting, analyzing and reporting results therefore leading to greater internal capacity to effectively use the data for making informed decision, and iv) contributing to global efforts of standardization aiming at sharing knowledge and improving impact

2.0. RLDP SUCCESSES WITH THE DCED STANDARD FOR RM

Since the programme adopted the DECD Standard in its work, it has experienced significant benefits in terms of designing interventions, collecting information, analyzing, and reporting. On top of that, the programme has benefitted in terms of team coherence towards monitoring activities, clear partners' responsibilities, and management decision making. These points are further elaborated here below;

Designing the Interventions. As guided by the first element of the Standard (Articulating the results chain), RLDP market development team in close collaboration with the MRM team comprehends all the procedures for designing intervention. Each intervention has its sufficiently detailed and logical results chain. Partners cannot draw the results chain for their particular interventions but can confidently share with clarity how their individual interventions contribute to the results of the programme. The MoUs between RLDP and the partner are transformed into sets of activities implemented either by a RLDP or by partners. Through clear results chains, these activities are linked to outputs, then outcomes and ultimately to impact on poor women and men's livelihoods (disaggregated gender data).

The biggest advantages of using results chains for designing interventions are the following;

- There is clarity within the RLDP team as well as between the team and the partners about the logic of each intervention
- Assumptions are explicit
- Guidance is provided for MRM purposes since it becomes clear what has to be captured

Monitoring plans. Before introducing the DCED Standard, RLDP had one monitoring plan for the whole programme. Now every intervention has its unique monitoring plan based on the intervention results chain. The monitoring plan is presented as a sheet within an Intervention Guide ⁶(IGs), an excel-template which RLDP copied from PrOpCom⁷. This monitoring plan helps the specific Business Analyst ⁸(BA) and MRM team to effectively monitor the intervention. It also stipulates the when, how and who will collect particular information, which are influencing factors and attribution methods for the project impact. The plan is as well essential in guiding the market development and MRM team of when to jointly make field monitoring missions for validating some of the information submitted by partners just before impact assessments.

In this fact; RLDP benefits a lot with this individual intervention monitoring plan because each intervention has a unique set of assumptions, prediction and expected results. For example, working at business environment is different from working with players at the supporting function. Having one monitoring plan for the whole programme was not as effective since the market systems of various agricultural products are specific and are changing every now and then and since the roles of different players take different shape in different market systems. With monitoring plan of individual intervention both technical team (market development and MRM) and programme management are clearly seeing if the assumptions and planned activities put forth before the start of the implementation of the project will realise its expected results

Continuous MRM. The adoption of the DCED Standard has benefited the programme in the sense that now monitoring activities and measuring the results happens simultaneously with implementation. This means the team does not wait for post-implementation evaluations, as was the case in the past. This is very important as it

6. Excel file for each intervention that includes the RC, monitoring plan, support calculations, and other aspects of MRM as separate worksheets

⁷ Propcom is a DFID-funded market development programme in Nigeria which also applies the DCED Standard: <http://www.propcommaikarfi.org/>.

⁸An Officer responsible to oversee a sector within RLDP.



provides a quick check back during implementation of whether the intervention goals will be realized. If not, the team can quickly adjust the activities.

Doing MRM at the same time as implementation also has advantages in terms of reporting. The programme can report results and impacts of the programme to the donor in a timely manner and/or provide convincing justification why results have not been achieved and/or if activities need to be modified.

Team Ownership of MRM activities. An important success of having adopted the DCED Standard is that now the entire RLDP team understands their responsibilities and has ownership with regards to MRM (from market development team to MRM team and up to the management level). As a result of team owning MRM activities, all levels of RLDP work together more closely than before for the benefits of the private sector companies and improving livelihood of smallholder farmers in the CC.

Introduction of the Quarterly Peer Review System. This is a system of holding quarterly meetings with market development team, MRM team and management to get intervention updates on what has been achieved versus what is planned in IGs as well as verifying to what extent which activities, indicators and assumptions are/not feasible. During the quarterly peer review meetings, each BA presents before peers her/his IGs by explaining thoroughly the intervention strategy with focus to the logic of results chain and the results achieved to date. The colleagues critically review it and provide comments which are supposed to be taken up by the responsible BA. After one week, the amended IGs are submitted to MRM team for verifying whether all the inputs from the meeting have been accommodated accordingly to an updated IG. These meetings usually take two days and provide a good opportunity to Programme Coordinator, Project Manager and Technical Advisor to analyse thoroughly the interventions.

Managing the system for RM. RLDP management uses the information from the MRM for its key decision making. The Standard has helped the management to make useful decision regarding programme operations based on what MRM team suggests. The few examples on boxes illustrate this point clearly.

Example 1. Uses of MRM information for decision making: Cotton sub sector decision to move to the Eastern Cotton Growing Zone.

In Tanzania, the governing Tanzania Cotton Board (TCB) has divided the cotton growing areas into two major zones, Western and Eastern zones. Large part of the cotton production in Tanzania happens in western zone, which accounts for about 90%¹ of total country production. However Cotton production is highly politicized and suffers from frequent political interferences. Cotton is one of the most regulated crop in Tanzania. MRM archives country's figures and facts about the crops RLDP engages with from existing secondary information; so as to keep the programme informed of the national data throughout. The programme based on the information from MRM department about cotton production in the country; analysed its strategy and vision and realized that while it can reach its targets in terms of numbers it would probably not be able to reach its sector vision come 2016 if intervene on western cotton growing zone only. Hence during its annual planning in September 2013 (Yearly Plan of Operations 2014), RLDP management decided to shift some of its interventions in the Eastern cotton growing zone.

Example 2: Uses of MRM information for decision making: Collaboration and formation of alliance.

As required to the Standard to attribute its results, RLDP management stepped-up efforts to recognize the contributions of other projects (attribution). In such efforts an MoU was signed between RLDP and USAID Tuboreshe Chakula (The Food Fortification Project) which is one of the USAID Feed the Future Initiative projects. The MoU stipulates close collaboration and information sharing when engaging a partner who works with both projects.

3.0. RLDP CHALLENGES WITH THE DCED STANDARD FOR RM

Despite these many successes and benefits the programme has experienced with the DCED Standard, it also faces some implementation challenges. The challenges are of two forms; 1) understanding some elements of the DCED Standard itself and 2) Practical applicability of the DCED Standard in the field.

This section therefore discusses these two forms of the challenges as per the experience of the programme in its two years of the adoption.

3.1. Challenges from the DCED Standard itself

3.1.1. Challenge Around Systemic Change

As guided by the DCED Standard control points 1.5 and 5.1, all the RCs have boxes that show expected results in terms of wider system change. Also, as guided by control point 2.3, in each of the RC, there are indicators measuring the sustainability of intervention. In fact it is from such indicators that the team draws the assumptions of crowding in and copying to happen.

The programme measured the results of wider market system and find out that there is insignificant cases of crowding –in. The crowding-in cases that were established lies under 2 scenarios:

- RLDP partner’s companies replicating the business model facilitated by RLDP to other crops than those supported by RLDP. The case MSK Solutions Ltd, replicated the contract farming model from cotton to sunflower .
- Other non-contracted processors learning business models from RLDP contracted partners in CC and in other part of the country.

The programme is challenged of whether the crowding-in is assumed to happen automatically as a result of improved market system or should there be a specific mechanism /intervention to trigger crowding-in. Currently RLDP addresses this challenge by communicating its results to wider coverage of stakeholders so as to bring about wider market-system changes. The avenues used are its stakeholder’s workshop, National Agricultural Market Development Forum⁹ (NAMDF) and other information Education and Communication¹⁰ (IEC) materials to spread the word.

3.1.2. Challenge Around Documentation

Another area where the programme experiences some challenges is in the issue of documentation for which the DCED Standard has quite comprehensive requirements.

For instance, RLDP often does not document enough how it arrives to the assumptions on which the results chains and the projections are based. Actually most of the information feeding into these assumptions stems from RLDP field results either coming from the Household Survey and/or internally conducted surveys and/or other monitoring activities. However, there is inadequate documentation hence failure to reference them

⁹ This is an initiative of RLDP to expand communication avenue for facilitating wider market change

¹⁰ Various materials such as note books, diaries, TV/Radio programmes, brochures, leaflets and intervention profile; which are used for communicating RLDP approach, progress and results.

on operational documents such as sector strategies and IGs. Therefore the team finds it difficult how it can clearly show the evidence for the assumptions.

On control point 1.2, the Pre-Audit Review Report states that “This is one area where RLDP is particularly weak. Interviews have shown that the staff are clear on which parts of their RC are based on assumptions and which are based on facts. In many cases, they can also say the sources of those facts i.e. they know where the evidence for the facts lies. However, none of the documentation is clear on which are the evidence basis for the RC nor on why certain assumptions are made. As most of the interventions that RLDP is currently focusing on are based on interventions done in previous phases it will be expected that many of the interventions are based on documentary evidence. The *Notes worksheet* in the IG is meant to keep a list of referencing for documentary evidence, this is not being done, but it must be. In cases where there is no documentary evidence and assumptions have to be used that should also be clearly stated along with the reasoning behind that particular assumption.”¹¹

RLDP acknowledged the pre-audit finding on poor documentation and has started working on it. It is currently doing comprehensive surveys to complement its evidence base. After thorough analysis, these surveys are properly documented and referenced. RLDP also puts increased efforts in documenting the discussions at the quarterly peer review meetings. These compiled minutes are shared with all team members to comment before considering it an official document. These minutes can be used as reference for justification on why a particular indicator has been omitted/incorporated and capturing of unintended emerged results. RLDP has also reviewed its electronic filing system to ensure there is proper documentation of other external reports that can be informative on its implementation and staff are reminded to reference them accordingly.

With regards to this section, RLDP would like to learn the experience other programmes and other practitioners how they handle this issue of documentation.

3.1.3. Challenge Around Qualitative Indicators

Control point 2.1 of the DCED Standard states the need for the programme to have adequate indicators both quantitative and/or qualitative that define the changes in the RCs. The programme has included relevant quantitative indicators in all the RCs, however, there are almost no qualitative indicators. Nevertheless, the programme does collect qualitative information in the form of follow up questions in surveys (both in-

¹¹RLDP Mock Audit Report on Compliance with the DCED Standard of Results Measurement; by Sadia Ahmed, October 2013

house as well as outsourced). On this aspect, the *Pre-Audit Review Report* states that: “The qualitative information collected through the questionnaires can provide greater understanding of what changes are happening and why. However, that information does not seem to be reflected in reports or used for enriching interventions much.”¹²

RLDP will therefore need to make an additional effort to include qualitative indicators explicitly in the monitoring plans. At the same time, there is a worry that the list of indicators will get even longer.

RLDP is therefore interested to learn from other programmes how they handle qualitative indicators, methods to measure them and, at the same time, how to keep the number of indicators manageable.

3.2. CHALLENGES FROM THE FIELD AFTER APPLYING THE DCED STANDARD

3.2.1. The DCED Standard vs M4P Approach

MRM activities have led the team to increase its field presence partly because of the triangulation purposes but also to measure real changes happening in the field as results of its projects interventions. Increasing field presence is conflicting with the facilitative role in the M4P approach. A facilitator usually works through market players and not directly with the beneficiaries. So the facilitator stays mostly unknown to the beneficiaries so that they relate directly to the permanent market players. With more MRM activities being carried out in the field, the project becomes much more prominent. This is further aggravated because RLDP – as most projects – has its logo on most working facilities such as cars, T-shirts, etc. (while the Visibility is being reduced over the past year)

3.2.2. Measurement of Job Creation Indicator Vs RLDP Set-Up

Two out of three universal impact indicators are currently measured by the programme. These two universal impact indicators are net income accrued by the targeted enterprises and scale (outreach). The third universal impact indicator, net additional full time equivalent jobs created, is not measured. The major reason is that the targeted enterprises or beneficiaries of RLDP are smallholder farmers who mostly use their family labour and/or increase working hours of existing labor force, and do not fit in the definition of the third universal indicator. In most cases the farming activities from the land preparation to harvesting and storage in the average of 3 acres cannot use/spend 240 days. Therefore this disqualifies farm activity as a job creator as the job definition herein.

¹² RLDP Mock Audit Report on Compliance with the DCED Standard of Results Measurement; by Sadia Ahmed, October 2013

The programme measures job creation at the partner enterprise level and realized that jobs created at this level is insignificant.

However the substantial additional volume of income for the beneficiaries of the project and its impact on the local economy is de facto creating (difficult to measure) job opportunities.

3.2.3. Dealing With Field Outreach Overlap

When it comes to measuring impact, there is quite a lot of potential overlap. The Pre-Audit Review confirmed that the team is quite sure how to handle overlap among direct beneficiaries *between* different sectors. However, there is not so much clarity concerning overlap between direct beneficiaries *within* the same sector. The sunflower sector can serve as an example:

In the sunflower sector, RLDP is having two separate interventions on improving access to quality seeds on the one hand, and strengthening contract farming between farmers and oil processors on the other hand. Formerly, the outreach of these interventions did not overlap: In the first intervention, beneficiaries were the farmers buying quality seeds from local seed multipliers; in the second, those farmers enrolled in contract farming. In the meanwhile, oil processors have started collaborating with local seed multipliers – a great sign for sustainable change in the system. However a tricky situation for RLDP in order to clearly define overlaps in terms of outreach and income increase.

RLDP has the impression that the DCED Standard itself does not say much on how the overlap could be handled. Some basic/generic guideline would be needed on how the overlap could be treated in different scenarios.

4.0. CONCLUSION

Generally, RLDP finds the Standard very practical and specifically helping to collect relevant data that facilitates both reporting to the donor SDC and steering programme interventions. It has made the staff responsible for implementation of interventions to increase ownership over MRM hence improves the modes of interventions implementation over time. The programme is now more certain with its results and makes evidence based decision to impact the poor rural farmers.

RLDP continues to improve the application of the Standard by writing different cases, learning by doing through its system of quarterly peer reviewing and through attending both in-house and outside courses aimed at improving its performance.



The team seeks further to exchange more with the DCED secretariat and other projects applying the Standard. This engagement is expected to increase in 2014 as the programme aims for full audit of its MRM system.