UNDERSTANDING PROJECT UPTAKE

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION - DEFINING UPTAKE & IMPACT
2. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES
3. INDICATORS OF UPTAKE
4. CHALLENGES
5. CONCLUSION

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INTRODUCTION - PARADIGM SHIFT

- For many years, implementation of Research & Development Projects guided by mainstream M & E processes (Rigid Logframe Approach);
- How many latrines have we constructed?
- How many households have we covered?
- What % of the budgeted funds have we actually used?
- How many workshops are we scheduled to have? Indeed are we on schedule?
- Now R & D agencies ask, in addition to the routine milestones reflected in the Logframe, are we getting *Value for Money*? ;
- How best can impact of projects on the ground be realized/ improved?

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DEFINING UPTAKE

- *Impact* of projects is limited if outputs are not taken up by users e.g. if the project dies down as soon as you pull out

- Therefore, **UPTAKE** is the *Process* of *Actual Adoption & Application* of R & D outputs by targeted beneficiaries (policy-makers, government officials, communities, NGOs, ext. officers, research orgs, etc.);

- **Why would end-users uptake our outputs???**

- Constituted by a *Series of Activities* that build towards adoption & use of project outputs by end-users;

- Pre-supposes *Innovativeness & Appropriateness* of your outputs & recommendations e.g. Pit-Latrines & Ganja in Binga & understanding of local culture;

- *Implication:* We have to come up with *relevant* & *Novel* solutions that address real-felt needs on the ground!

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FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES

- **Relevance** requires us to do our ground-work properly at the beginning – Define the challenge with potential end-users (Participatory Approach);
- Analyse the _socio-economic_ context & map key stakeholders & institutions to determine who to target & what factors may enable or constrain uptake;
- Know your end-users & their needs (listening & Learning - PRA);
- Communities & their leadership structures;
- Policy-makers & govt dept. officers;
- Intermediaries – Ext. officers; local authorities; NGOs; govt depts, devnt agencies (key to immediate & post-project uptake);
- Funding agencies & research institutes.

PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES CONT'

- Inputs from all stakeholders enable you to identify **_relevant_** & **_Novel_** solutions (collective knowledge generation e.g. URAdapt multi-stakeholder platforms);

- Initial & regular consultations & feedback processes - (regular dialogue is the absolutely necessary ingredient) e.g. at the beginning, you gather the views of each stakeholder & thereafter, you regularly discuss progress or update them

- e.g. Govt officials may not have time to be fully involved but you can still regularly update them – summarized progress reports (e.g. 2 pages);

- Communities need regular well-planned feedback sessions or workshops (e.g. distribute fliers in local language);

- Intermediaries & research institutes – require detailed papers & workshops (electronic & hard copy)

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PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES CONT'

- Use of Animators at community level – A core group of community members (during & post-project uptake);
- Provide initial training to ensure basic competencies and knowledge of project objectives;
- Regular 2-way communication to ensure momentum;
- Planning to directly engage key players early on & throughout (Reflected in the project proposal or uptake plan);
- Be clear about why you are engaging with the public & do not raise unrealistic expectations;
- Approaching project design & implementation as a _social learning_ process & not linear top-down technology transfer process (learning together with the potential end-users);

PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES CONT

o If you exclude end-users, you may recommend brilliant options not implementable;

o Our end-users are not obliged to accept what we propose – so work & walk with them right from the beginning & thereafter for better buy-in & adoption;

o Ensuring _relevance_ of projects to livelihoods (communities have no time to waste);

o Developing _strategic partnerships_ e.g. ext. depts., NGOs, other scientists, policy-makers & devt agencies;

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES CONT'

o Using appropriate *dialogue platforms* & *communication methods* for targeted audiences e.g. participatory approaches & platforms for communities; regular interactive workshops for different groups; policy briefs for policy-makers; one-on-one meetings; popular articles; scientific publications; etc.;

o Regularly re-examine impact goals & progress - M & E plan for re-directing impact on the ground;

o Documenting the process as much as possible throughout the duration of project

PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES CONT'

- Allow enough time to plan public engagement thoroughly, whether it is a small, one-off event or a sustained programme;

- When planning for public engagement, consider who you wish to engage and why, their interests and why they might be interested in your project. This will help you choose a suitable approach;

- Consider your own preferred communication styles and skills for public engagement. You activities will be far more successful if you are comfortable delivering them;

- Developing an activity timeline/ Gantt chart helps to identify potential pitfalls.

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INDICATORS OF UPTAKE

- Widespread adoption of technologies & innovative approaches emanating from the project;

- Requests for more copies &/or reprints of published outputs;

- Incorporation of project recommendations in policy documents;

- Invitations to speak &/ advise locally, nationally & beyond;

- Public debate and correspondence stimulated by disseminated outputs from the project.

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CHALLENGES

(i) Policy-makers may emphasize _political expedience_ & disregard scientific evidence (Policy & institutional barriers). Should involve them early on - walk with them!;

(ii) _Short time-frames_ of projects leave ltd room for uptake activities - Include outreach early on, have end-of-project uptake plan; have someone on the team committed to monitoring uptake activities;

(iii) Knowledge limitations – You do not have to do everything. Seek strategic partnerships or use consultants;

(iv) Bringing different stakeholders together in a shared social learning env not easy. Identifying/creating appropriate _dialogue platforms_ remains a viable option;

(v) _Funding:_ - uptake strategies compete with other devt priorities. Budget for uptake either separately or imbed within project budgets.

CONCLUSION

- Uptake strategies stand a better chance of success if they are conceived simultaneously with the projects that they support;

- However, uptake strategies cannot be a substitute for _effective project formulation & implementation;_

  - **Even the most well–designed outreach & uptake strategy will fail if the objectives of the project are poorly determined & do not address _real-felt needs_ on the ground;**

- Therefore, the uptake agenda must be in support of projects that address devt priorities of the day & _livelihoods_;

- Awareness-raising might be a key activity if knowledge is still limited among beneficiaries e.g. climate change is a relatively new area of focus;

- In this way, projects may pass the test for _relevance._

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!