



Why Grow Lettuce?

Agricultural Production Policies Being Implemented
In Koinadugu District, West Africa

FIORENCE CONTEH

Uppsala 2010
EX0681 Master Thesis 30 hp
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Why Grow Lettuce?

Agriculture Production Policies Being Implemented in Koinadugu District

Florence Conteh

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Rural Development and Natural Resource Management

Keywords: Food Security, Policy to Practice

Thesis No xx

EX0681 Master Thesis in Rural Development and Natural Resource Management, 30 hp, Master E, Uppsala, 2010

© Florence Conteh

Source of pictures on the front cover: IFAD

Supervisor: Adam Pain, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish Agriculture University, Sweden

Examiner: Staffan Lofving, the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University, Sweden

florence.conteh@gmail.com.

45A Hillstation, Wilbourforce

Freetown, Sierra Leone

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the four people who have come to define me. My grandmother, Haja Adama Kanu, my mother Florence Oya Conteh, my father Philip Mamodu Conteh and my dear Auntie Esiatu Sessay. All that I am is because of you. Thank you for your foundation of strength, truth and hope. It is in your steps that I walk and I promise to walk further than you ever dreamed. Your sacrifices and dedication to my dreams are immeasurable and I promise to hold this dear with the greatest of gratitude.

To all my dear friends both in Sweden and abroad, I have come to count on you to provide me with laughter, inspiration and to wipe my tears and to replenish me emotionally during this journey, always reminding me that this is only the beginning.

A final and special thanks to Adam Pain, my supervisor for reawaking me to my intellectual potential. I remain always grateful.

Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Methodology	7
Background.....	9
Problem Analysis and Justification of thesis statement.....	10
The Government Response(OFTN).....	12
Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture Project	13
How project is being implemented	14
Discourse	14
Narratives	17
Discussion	40
Concluding Comments	42
Bibliography.....	43

ACRONYMS

DDA	District Director of Agriculture
LC	District Council
FAO of the UN	Food and Agricultural Organizations of the United Nations
FBOs	Farmer Based Organizations
FSCA	Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
LGA	Local Government Act
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security.
DDP	District Development Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
WFP	World Food Program of the United Nations
CA	Chief Administrator- Local Council
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LDO	Lead District Officer
NAFSL	National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone
TOR	Terms of Reference
NPC	National Project Coordinator

With the current food national and global food crisis it is important that government, council and other partners involve in agriculture to focus their attention to support of farmers for high yield production since the district is agriculturally viable. This will support the food security drive of His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma to achieving food self sufficiency by 2009 and also inline with the PRSP and the MDGs.(Koinadugu District Local Council Development Plan,38)

1.0 Introduction

”Continued failure to effectively implement policy wastes increasingly scares resources and undermines the prospects of sustainable development” (Brinkerhoff,1395)

After a decade long civil war ravaged the country, Sierra Leone faced the challenge of rebuilding its broken infrastructure, social disconnect and food and health inadequacies. With approximately two thirds of the population residing in rural areas and engaged in subsistence level agricultural activity it is estimated that 70% of the total population lives below the poverty line.¹ Food insecurity continues to plague the nation as 26% of the populace are deemed as food poor.² In accordance with the president’s declaration of eliminating hunger and alleviating poverty, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), with the support of various UN agencies, is implementing the national food security policy initiate; Operation Feed the Nation (OFTN). Supporting Pillar II of Sierra Leone’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (SLPRS), *promoting pro-poor growth for food security and job creation (in a healthy macro-economic environment)* and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 and 8 *eradicating poverty and hunger and developing a global partnership for development*, OFTN looked to stimulate agricultural sector reform. OFTN seeks to generate economic empowerment through ‘building farmer capacity to produce, process and market more crops, livestock and fisheries while developing community capacity to form organizations which will facilitate small enterprise development and marketing efforts.’³ This thesis argues thus

¹ GoSL. (2005). *Government of Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Report 2005 to 2007*. Government of Sierra Leone. Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone.

² GoSL. (2005). *Government of Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Report 2005 to 2007*. Government of Sierra Leone. Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone.

that GoSL, in implementing initiatives such as OFTN, will risk failure if it does not look at *the process by which OFTN is being implemented. Furthermore the argument will propagate that all too often there is more of a focus on the stating and proclamation of the policy rather than the process of how it is being implemented.* This process in policy implementation acknowledges that to implement is just as political as it is technical, it is fused with complex relationships between agents meant to enforce them and agents meant to benefit from them. Through the narrative policy analysis, this paper will explore how the formulated agricultural production policies through OFTN are being implemented at the grassroots level of a chosen rural District located North East of the country in Koinadugu. The narrative accounts of all the agents involved in a specific OFTN response project will be presented; the Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA). In addition, existing discourse on the policy to practice/implementation process will be presented.

2.0 Methodology

It must be noted that the methodology section of this study has been conducted retroactively. Field work was completed a year before any formal courses or experience in research methods was applied. The qualitative technique was the means by which information was presented and formulated. The qualitative approach held critical relevance given the limited knowledge of the pre-existing conditions of food insecurity in Sierra Leone. Information had to be extracted from external sources through contacts with all the relevant agents involved in food security issues. As supported by theorists Alvesson and Skoldberg, “a distinguishing feature of qualitative methods is that they start from the perspective and actions of the subjects studied” (Alvesson&Skoldberg, 4). This field study emphasised reflective empirical position given the eventual placement in the Koinadugu District Agriculture office. Exposure to critical agents allowed for direct contact with those involved with implementing the GoSL policies as well as those agents who are supposed to benefit from these policies. A top-down approach was used to acquire all information and material towards a final paper. This approach allowed for a precise and linear understanding of the policy to implementation process being conducted by the GoSL. Initially it involved about four weeks within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and a placement within the Director General’s office. This provided an opportunity to observe how the national policies were being enacted at central level.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary PRA method; keeping in mind the very busy schedules of the different agents, a time parameter of 15 to 25 minutes for each interview was established. There were also opportunities to sit in on several discussions and

to have more of an observational role. However it must be noted that because my role was undefined during these discussions, there is a likelihood that the agents tailored the discussion to what they thought I wanted hear. There were certainly some interviewing challenges and in fact the overall method by which they carried was rather weak. In listening to the tapes I concluded that the interviews were too wordy and sometimes leading. I noted that I may have given the interviewee the answer or planted my opinions about the subject. Not allowing for answers by interviewee is another weakness, it seemed at times that I was answering my own questions .

2.1 My own learning process

My own learning process has been a journey in its self, perhaps reflective of what I have come to learn about the policy to implementation process; it is not automatic and it takes time. My state of mind in the beginning of this journey has certainly grown and continues to do so, I am in the hopes that I can affectively demonstrate this in the revisions to come. Certainly there was an initial focus on the topic, the content or context of food insecurity in Sierra Leone and the policy to practice process the government has under taken. But then I realized that this entire thesis exercise was more about my learning process than the content or context. There was a realization that I am by no means an expert and do not have the years of experience to back up my claims. It should never have been on a quest to solve or provide expertise on the topic, which for some reason was my initial frame of thought. I also believe that the topic of discussion is linked to agriculture which in turn is a time bound activity. I was only in Sierra Leone for four months, without being there for the entire cropping cycle. I would have ideally liked to have been there for at least a year in order to experience all the seasons and to see how the different agents varied in their opinions. Whilst reflecting on this , I certainly wondered whether some of their opinions or issues would be different depending on the time of year.

Another point to add was that the narratives used in this paper allowed for a further learning experience. It was a chance to tell a story not only about my experiences but the thoughts that the various agents had about the issue. The challenge to these narratives however was the way in which I would be viewed by the agents. There were times when I believe they tailored their stories to what they thought I wanted to hear. In addition to this, I experienced difficulty with defining my role; student, consultant or observer. I believe that in the end my role was indefinable and took on a chameleon effect which depended on the situation and the environment at the time.



Source : FAO

3.0 Background

3.1 TOPIC Background: What is food security?

“To nourish is to sustain with food; food is a necessity of life, and all creatures must eat to live.”⁴

Food Security has been on the global agenda since the 1974 World Food Conference. At the time there was a global food crises and large scale food shortages .The initial response was the creation of institutions such as the World Food Council and the FAO Committee on World Food Security. These institutions focused on initiatives that would increase domestic agricultural production and the creation of international grain reserves. Food Security was then defined through a focus on

⁴ FAO.1992 Agriculture, food and Nutrition for Africa, A resource book for teachers of Agriculture, pg 11

commercial food prices and physical food availability instead of the demand by poor and vulnerable people⁵.(FAO) This definition then evolved after increased food production did not resolve the issue, there was a recognition that improved distribution to those in need had to be addressed. Today food security can be seen as the state in which to ensure that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need, this would encompass access, sufficient supply and stability in supplies⁶. In Sierra Leone this most recent definition is applicable within the following contexts;

3.2 District Background

The focus of this paper is on one specific district, Koinadugu District. Koinadugu District is located in the north-east of the country and borders the Republic of Guinea in the north-east, Bombali District in the west, Tonkolili District in the south-west and Kono District in the south. The district comprises 11 chiefdoms, 21 wards and 89 sections. According to FAO accounts it is by far the largest and least developed of all districts in Sierra Leone. The main crops cultivated include rice, cassava, vegetables, millet, sweet potatoes, citrus and coffee. Livestock also plays an important economic role in northern Chiefdoms.

4.0 Problem Analysis and Justification of thesis statement

There was a time when in an act of charity Singapore received food aid from Sierra Leone, but now it us who seek food aid from them (J.Pessima, NAFSL May 2009).

The initial interest in pursuing this thesis topic is based on a visit to a rural Koinadugu farm. This visit exposed how agricultural production policies were being implemented at grassroots level. It was found that farmers were engaged in growing crops such as lettuce, which is not only easily perishable but not part of the local diet. The farmers used large amounts of resources and yet had little to no returns. They also lacked access to transportation going to the nearest market. As it is relevant to the chosen topic, the farmers were seemingly oblivious to the GoSL policies which were meant to assist them against these challenges.

Being based within the District proved helpful given the direct exposure to the challenges farmers faced, this provided the lens by which to view the thesis problem. At the time, the Koinadugu Local Council contended that the following were the main problems plaguing agricultural production and thus food security.

⁵ FAO 1996b.Food,agriculture and food security: developments since the World Food Conference and prospects. World Food Summit technical background documents, Vol 1 Rome

⁶ FAO 1996b.Food,agriculture and food security: developments since the World Food Conference and prospects. World Food Summit technical background documents, Vol 1 Rome

Food Production: Even though the main staple crop, rice had shown a production increase since 2001, only 50 percent of the production requirements have been reached⁷ Given the inability to reach required food production levels, the district is now heavily dependent on food aid and the interventions of organizations such as the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Farmer Constraints: this applies to the ability of farmers to produce. Difficult physical access, low purchasing power, and poor overall microeconomic conditions in the country are key factors. In addition, there is physical isolation of rural communities, inadequate markets and the physical access to existing markets.

Seasonal Hunger: between July and September, many households in the most rural inaccessible part of the district run low on food supplies between successive seasons (transition from dry to wet season and vice versa). There is insufficient production to meet year round needs and concept of storage systems in nonexistent.⁸

Weak Policy Linkages: There are continued weak linkages between policy makers at central level, the Local Council and farmers at the grassroots level. Primarily this result to weak project designs and implementation

In order to address the problem stated above, the following points will act as a guide;

1. What the agents who are involved with implementation (both national and district levels are saying in addition to the agents who are meant to benefit from these policies(farmers). This was present through narrative accounts.
2. What and how the polices are being implemented from the day to day management perspective(communication and the abilities of the district level staff
3. The source of funds, the donors have structured and managed a key project linked to the overall national agenda to reach food security.

⁷ Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, MAFFS 2007

⁸ Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, MAFFS 2007

4.1 The Governments Response: OFTN

Operation Feed The Nation is the overarching policy programme enacted by the Government of Sierra Leone within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security. It results from the high priority placed on agriculture and social development with the Poverty Reduction Strategy II, *Agenda for Change*.⁹ OFTN seeks to support small-holders in attaining food and nutrition security through linking them closer to market opportunities creating a commercial basis for improved livelihoods. OFTN builds capacity through the extension services training men, women and youth in their production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce, forestry, livestock and fisheries sector. OFTN also assists through cost-sharing to increase physical assets of farmer based organizations with the establishment of Agriculture Business Centres (ABCs).

The ABCs are managed and owned by farmers and build on earlier support to Agriculture Business Units (ABUs) and Farmer Field Schools. The ABCs are physical centers which will have an inputs shop, labor saving equipment and joint marketing storage areas. Over 1000 ABCs are foreseen nation-wide under the OFTN within the next five years.

Through OFTN and the 2007 Agricultural Sector Review, the Ministry of Agriculture responded with these specific strategies;

1. The first being a call for an increase in agricultural productivity. (SLPRSP 2008-2012, page 66) specifically an increase in rice production (the staple) with the use of high yielding rice varieties such as NERICA and Roks¹⁰. This holds relevance given that in the last five years, there has been an unstable fluctuation in rice production¹¹. Enhanced production also meant the use of agricultural machinery such as tractors, power tillers and harvesters in order to modernize agricultural techniques and to move away from peasant style farming which tends to provide minimal subsistence outputs. Furthermore, there was an intention to attain food self sufficiency for farmers by encouraging an increase in the cultivation of food crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, yam and maize.
2. The second response and strategy involved promoting commercial agriculture through the private sector (PRSP 2008-2012 pg 66) by Improving the capacity of Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs). This would also enable farmers to engage in commercial

⁹ Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy 2008-2012

¹⁰ Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy 2008-2012

¹¹ Interview with PEMSD Agriculture Director Musa Foday Esq. June 10th 2009

agriculture.¹² The strategy encompasses and improvement in post-harvest handling by providing farmers with access to drying floors, rice mills and transportable freezers for the most perishable commodities.¹³ In addition to this, there will be the establishment of community banks and financial services associations in congruence with FBOs for access credit or capital for agricultural activities.

3. Improving research and extension service delivery is the third OFTN strategy. The intention for this strategy is the promotion of the “necessary technologies for packaging, processing, storage quality and capacity even at village level”.¹⁴ Ultimately there has to be a strengthening of links between research and field level implementation through a more visible presence of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) in the district agriculture offices.¹⁵
4. Recognizing the relevance of crosscutting issues and then integrating them through sensitization campaigns by educating farmers about gender disparities, youth employment, farmer health (esp. HIV/AIDS) and environmental sustainability.¹⁶

5.0 The Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture Project(FSCA)

The GoSLs stated strategies above often translate into policy interventions through donor supported projects. One such project and an example focus through the course of paper is the Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA) project. The FSCA project is supported by the Government of Italy through a Global Food Security Trust Fund at FAO. It was established in the second semester of 2008 targeting Koinadugu district. The project is part of the GoSL’s national programme for food insecurity OFTN (Operation Feed the nation).

Project Components

1. Support to Farmer-based Organizations (FBOs): with the intended outcome of creating “self-sustaining FBOs which will achieve improved production and marketing”(FSCA project document, 21) The component is also in line with the Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Pillar number II.¹⁷
2. Support to Value Addition and Marketing: the outcome expected from this component

¹² Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, MAFFS 2007

¹³ Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, MAFFS 2007

¹⁴ SLPRSP 2008-2012 , page 67

¹⁵ Sesay, H. (2009, May 20th). Interview with Koinadugu District Director of Agriculture.

¹⁶ SLPRSP 2008-2012 , page 66

¹⁷ GTFS/SIL/028/ITA FSCA Project Document

is that the established FBOs from above will engage in improved value addition and marketing activities during the post harvesting period. Value added transformation of agricultural commodities through the application of new technologies. This will include post-harvest handling, preservation, processing, packaging and distribution as well as business management and marketing of processed goods.¹⁸ An activity example is honey production in the Moussia ward. A renowned West African Honey Bee specialist was hired to come and train the bee farmers on improved honey production technologies.

5.1 How the project is being implemented

Under the GoSLs overarching OFTN policy, the project is being implemented by FAO and the MAFFS. A National Project Coordinator (NPC) based with MAFFS will be charged with supervision, reporting and coordination within the government. The Budget Holder (BH) will be the FAO country representative and charged with the overall supervision of the project and more specifically the timely disbursement, financial monitoring and reporting to the Donor.

6.0 DISCOURSE

This section of the paper will present the reader with a discourse that addresses the policy to implementation process. The authors perspectives will be seen as a lens by which to understand the underpinnings of the policy to implementation process.

Policy to Implementation: Expressing policy at the project level- David Moss

Proposition number three: "Development projects maintain themselves as coherent policy ideas, as systems of representations as well as operational systems" (Mosse, 655)

David Mosse in "Is Good Policy Unimplementable? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice" presents the disconnect between development policy models and the process by which they are implemented. It is also about the efforts to turn policy into a legitimized actions through the lens of a project. He believes that there should never be a focus on why projects fail but rather on how they failed. His argument is grounded in the fact that these policy models are simply un- implementable. Pre-existing institutional structures, ambiguous goals, special interests and incentives by various agents have an indirect influence on outcomes. For example governments sometimes use policies as political mobilization tools which will not always translate into actions, results or events. There is also the question of whether practice actually results into policy or policy into practice or whether practice

¹⁸ GTFS/SIL/028/ITA FSCA Project Document

eventually generates policy. He highlights the involvement of development agencies and what they seem to understand as being an affective policy to practice. This refers to the perspective that a presumed disconnect between policy and practice will create a gap between their theoretical perspectives and actual practice. The usual donor response is formulation of even more policies to better improve practice and implementation. He argues that implementation itself is influenced by institutional relationships or in other words incentives for agents involved during the policy design and model formation. But even within this context there is a high degree of ambiguity particularly with a development policy language which is metaphoric at best. Policies should be seen as an ends not a means of acquiring success during the implementation of development projects. In fact the success of a project is not determined by whether policies are turned into an actual result but rather the ability to identify the disjuncture and contradictions within the project policy model.

Mosse further propagates propositions which he believes illustrate the association between policy models and project implementation. As it applies to this paper, the reader will be presented with proposition number three, which is perhaps most applicable to the chosen subject and the FSCA project. *“Development projects work to maintain themselves as coherent policy ideas, as systems of representation as well as operations systems.”* (Mosse, 654) Projects themselves can be seen as independent entities which promote the policy models even when it is clear that the practices and events that result go against the very policy model it is designed to represent. In order to work, policies maintain themselves as coherent “systems of representation and operation” (Mosse, 655). Policies may also not produce a specific results/events and are designed more to “stabilize” how policy is sometimes understood or even perceived. Sometimes the “logical” means by which a project is being implemented contradicts the standing policy. This is exemplified in Mosses’ example of the Indo-British Rainfed Farming Project, in which the interpretation of how well the projects was executing its activities is based on a participatory method. The point being that actual implementation practices failed to use participation. Despite this the donors hailed it as a success due to substantially good marketing ploys which lorded ambiguities and emphasized the idea that project goals were being implemented based on a participatory method. The execution of these goals were seen merely as a success due to the fact that theories linked to participation or farmer involvement were automatically considered cause of an effective participatory based program. Once again the entire process was laced with ambiguities but considered successful simply because it carried the policy idea of participation despite the fact that it did not exist.

Process Perspectives on Policy Change; Highlighting Change

“Successfully pursuing long-term reforms in democratizing environments involves not just knowing which direction to move in but paying attention to how to get there.....implementation is as much process as it is content” (Brinkerhoff,1395)

In Brinkerhoff’s article, he presents a series of perspectives which address the challenges faced during the policy to implementation process. Policy makers it seems tend to focus primarily on the technical context as opposed to the process by which to engage and execute the policy at hand. He also brings forth that long term policy initiatives do not occur automatically or in a well structured of scheduled manner and that it takes time and a series of processes for the policy to actually“ bear fruit”. Therefore it must be recognized that policy implementation is an ongoing processes that must be managed in order to secure long term goals. During this management stage, Brinkerhoff presents the fact that there needs to be a multidimensional view which allots a certain degree of flexibility of the part of policy initiators with regards to how they see benefiting agents. This flexibility comes in the form of having increased participation by beneficiary agents involved i.e. ensuring that target group of the policy are involved during the procreation stages as well as during the implementation stages. Policy initiators must also be aware of their own learning process and growth during the specific initiative. In this articles Brinkerhoff also addresses management perspectives, participation, organizational arrangements and donor policy reform as a means to understand affective policy implementation.

Management: Brinkerhoff “introduces strategic management as an operating framework” (Brinkerhoff,1396) for effective project implementation. The key fact being that strategic management of projects serve as reinforcement to the technical efforts during implementation. In this sense the strategic management of a projects would mean two primary points ; 1) the lack of incentives for project managers within the “operating environment of developing country organizations” i.e Jalloh in the MAFFS. These managers not only lack incentives they fail to perform in the process ; 2) There is also the management of external relationship in congruence with continues basic operational tasks i.e relationship between the MAFFS and FAO.

Participation: Participation holds a high degree of importance whether one speaks about the process or technical context. Therefore in speaking about participation, it must be noted that it is through the process and technical lens. Generally participation is recognized as a means by which to create development programs with local input being used during project design,

“participation issues emerge as part and parcel of the development of an effective implementation strategy” (Brinkerhoff, 1397). Participation is perhaps the only context by which the technical and the process can be integrated. This specifically occurs when key policy implementers work together with those responsible for the outcome of the policy or those who hold responsibility or position during the implementation process.

Organizational Arrangements:

Organizational arrangements hold particular importance in the policy to implementation process, keeping in mind the significant role donors play in the formulation and implementation of country policies. Organization arrangements in the context of this paper refer to recognizing the complexity or organization arrangements and how it eventually affects management of policy initiatives ie projects. The organization must not only have the ability to implement but must be familiar with the core technical expertise of the incoming policy.

Donors and Policy

Brinkerhoff in this section parley’s not only the role of the international donors but emphasizes their influence in the formulation and eventual implementation of policies. In the eye of global economic down-turn, donors are not only shortening their purse strings, they are now looking to effectively implement. In the past, donors had a much more hegemonic and macroeconomic way analysis the technical issues. There was also a concentration of economist determining donor policy perspectives. He states “ ..the predominance of economic thinking has created an analytic yardstick against which other disciplinary perspectives”. This perspective he says lead to an “economist paradigm” which fails to deal with management, institutional and incentive questions

7.0 Narratives

This section of the paper presents conversations and interviews around the FSCA project, part of the OFTN, the GoSLs key food security response policy. It is a series of conversations with people talking around this policy and presents the way in which they look and talk about it. Increased agricultural production though the commercialization of agriculture is at the core of the FSCA project, but it is burdened with all sorts of normative expectations as to what it should be doing and what it should achieve. Through interviews with various agents involved and affected by the initiative, the reader will journey toward realizing whether the OFTN initiative is an implementable policy. Amongst others, several themes arise that seem to influence the method by which the policy is being implemented; project management ,

decentralization and politics between the central government and the district Local Council(LC)

National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone - NAFSL (group of farmers)

After being in the Ministry of Agriculture for a month, I became interested in learning more, about how agriculture and food security policies were being implemented. For this I had to speak with farmers. Fortunately, the National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone (NAFSL) representing farmer based organizations around the country had offices in Freetown and within the Ministerial building. NAFSL was established in 1987 and is responsible for providing support for development activities of farmers (including livestock farmers and fishermen) who have limited opportunities to participate in mainstream economic, social and political decisions which affect their lives. The Association claims a membership of 1.5 million members.(IFAD, Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme project document,13)The Association is a not only a network of farmer based organizations but see themselves as an advocacy group for farmers interests. It was thus a matter of setting up an appointment through the Director General's assistant. He informed me that the Association was having a quarterly meeting and that some of their key members, Lead District Officers (LDOs) would be in attendance. The DG's assistant accompanied me to the meeting and offered an introduction before the session started. There were a total of sixteen people in attendance; the DG's assistant and myself, thirteen Lead District Officers (LDOs) and the Chairman. Of the thirteen LDOs, three were female and the rest male. The meeting was being held in the NAFSL Chairman's office, which was quiet well put together compared to conditions of other office space I had seen in the Youyi Ministerial building. Well maintained painted walls, mahogany wooded furniture, carpet to match and air-conditioning. The Chairman, Mr. Pessima, sat behind a large desk which failed to take into consideration his short height and relatively small body frame.

After introductions, Mr. Pessima begin the meeting formally with a declaration of sorts, stating that “unlike the past, the current political establishment (the President's Office) sees agriculture as one of its top priorities, this is indeed good news for us farmers”. He then went into a monologue that focused on the government's new policy to enhance agricultural production (intensification) to achieve food security. “Acquiring food security through the agriculture sector is a goal that is quite possible given Sierra Leone's high potential for agricultural production, but to do this we will need to modernize our farming techniques” As

a step towards modernization, he said, the GoSL had taken up an a mechanical cultivation program which involved a launch by the President himself on March 2008 . Eighty six tractors were dispatched to thirteen agricultural districts.¹ As a result, Pessima continued, “the 2008 cropping season had the highest record of acres ploughed in the history of Agriculture in Sierra Leone”. A step towards mechanization is essentially seen as moving farmers away from manual labored farming. At this point DGs assistant left the room and Pessima continued his monologue , now turning to what he felt were the most critical issues facing rural inhabitants; seasonal hunger. Pessima stated that typically between July and September many rural households run low on food supplies between successive seasons (transition from dry to wet season and vice versa)¹⁹, this was especially based on subsistence levels of production. The LDO from Tonkolili District then interjected stating “it is indeed a very good thing that the central government is making feeding the people a priority, I am a third generation farmer from Makeni and so I think it is a very good thing.” There was a general consensus around the room in regards to this statement, with heads nodding in agreement. But then the LDO from Bombali District chimed in , “sure seasonal hunger is a cycle that needs to be broken, but the lone solution should not only be increased agricultural production/intensification , increasing production is basic common knowledge. Their approach needs to be multi-dimensional and more importantly take into consideration long term results and goals” With this there was also general consensus again around the room with the nodding of heads. The Chairman again began another monologue with regards to what he saw as being “long term results ,goals and sustainability. “Sustainability occurs through effectively implemented projects that provide inputs such as the correct variety in seeds which would result into crops that are viable and lucrative for small scale farmers to place on the market, resulting into a savings and capital”. In addition to this, these farmers would also have enough outputs to consume within their respective households. But Pessima then added that recent visits to vegetable farms by LDOs noted that farmers were engaged in producing vegetables that were not viable or based on the farmers meager capacity, like growing lettuce”. Why would rural vegetable growers cultivate lettuce, when it was not the part of the general diet in rural areas? “It is only middle class Sierra Leoneans and Expatriates in Freetown who eat lettuce, we eat cassava leaves!!”With this comment came laughter which I could only assume was being directed towards me. What thus happens to the farmers

¹⁹ Agricultural Sector Review and Agricultural Development Strategy, MAFFS 2007

is that after arduous labor in sowing a weak and inappropriate crop (lettuce), there is often a profit loss since not all the seeds are germinated and post harvest capacity is weak to nonexistent. Pessima also went onto speak about post-harvest processing, farmers in rural areas simply did not have the capacity. The LDO from Koinadugu District then interjected by speaking about what role research had in tackling this very issue, she seem to be providing a solution as opposed to an opinion. “We need stronger presence and links with Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) which provides all extension training and expertise on crop and seed varieties, the fact is that some of these farmers just don’t know better”.

There is a much needed integration between field activities and research. Pessima was quick to point that since most inputs were coming from donors, the Association believed that their members felt excluded in the process of decision making when it came to input selection such as seed types. Feasibility studies conducted before project designs which eventually determine the sorts of inputs to be provided to beneficiaries never included consultations with the farmers. Ultimately farmers were greatly dependent on the government and donors to solve their problems. A few of the LDO expressed the desire to have autonomy from this kind of relationship. The LDO from Koinadugu District also raised the fact that stronger farmer based organizations(FBOs) could increase internal food production for internal markets as well as exports. Once again there was consensus in the room about this, members of the Association seemed quite engage and enthused with the idea. Pessima brought up the example of exporting mangoes, “ you know I have a nephew leaving in Germany and he has told me just how expensive mangoes are in Europe, and yet they are abundant and rotting here in Sierra Leone, we are very interested in exporting some of our produce out of the country”. The conversation went on then continue along these lines of what Sierra Leones potential for agriculture exports where. Some of LDOs even asked me if there could be consumer interest in Sweden for the types of tropical fruits grown in Sierra Leone i.e. banana, pineapples and mangoes. I was quick to respond of course and said that indeed, “mangoes are extremely expensive in Sweden “. One could certainly felt a sense of longing on the part of the LDOs and Pessima to be able to have the capacity to export Sierra Leonean agricultural produce into European markets and to over expand their capacities.

After the meeting, the LDOs from Koinadugu, Mrs Marah, pulled me aside and recommended that I visit a farm in the District, without any ministerial staff chaperon .

Reflection:

In retrospect, this was a meeting being held within the confines of the MAFFS. I was immediately seen as an outsider, showing up with a key MAFFS official- the Director Generals' assistant. There was an initial public performance orchestrated by the Ministry and its policies towards agricultural production and food insecurity. After the DG's assistant left, it became quite clear that the LDOs had other perspectives which differed from the national policies that Pessima had monologued in the first fifteen minutes of the meeting. In fact one can state that the tone of the LDOs and Pessima changed significantly to that of frustration and longing for a better performance by the GoSL. And certainly I noted that when the topic of discussion changed the room saw me as audience and perhaps a sounding board. This is particularly applicable when Pessima and the LDOs spoke of sustainability of agricultural production. Whilst they seemed keen about the government's proactive re-prioritization of agriculture on top of the national agenda, there was skepticism about how long it would last and how sustainable this prioritization would be. There was also the off the record suggestion by the LDO from Koinadugu that I conduct a farm visit without a MAFFS chaperon in order to learn what the farmers were really saying in response to the GoSL policies. "So, you are going to Koinadugu, what exactly is your background or qualifications??" In response to this I found that I had to present my previous professional experience in relation to my internship, she seemed relatively satisfied with my answers. "Well, make sure you try to talk to some of the farmers to get their perspectives.

Another point to note was that not all the LDOs spoke or gave reports about their respective districts. I assumed after sitting in the session for about forty five minutes that there would be discussions about individual districts. But this did not happen and there was never an inquiry on my part or DG's assistant about exactly what the agenda was, I can only assume that the agenda was tailored based on our presence.

With representations such as the LDOs through the NAFSL, it became quite obvious that there were other local individuals involved and influencing the OFTN initiative. After the meeting I asked DG's assistant about this. This would be the first time that he would speak about the decentralization process in the four weeks that he had chaperoned me around the ministry. This is a very important point because I had expressed an interest in learning about the policy to practice aspect of the government's agricultural production and food security policies. "the decentralization process was meant to improve the social and economic service delivery to the most rural and underdeveloped parts of the country." DG assistant explained

that in the past rural development in Sierra Leone was completely ignored. Most authority was centralized and implemented in Freetown. Since the Local Councils were established five years prior, it was expected that rural development would be taken to the “community and local level” therefore issues such as improving agricultural yield and acquiring food security would be addressed more affectively

*Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture National Project Coordinator –
Jack Jalloh May 2009*

After being based in the Ministry of Agriculture for four weeks and attending the meeting with the NAFSL, I was keen to go to the field, to be at district level in order to see how the government was going about in implementing its agricultural production policies. DGs assistant recommended that I speak to someone within the Operation Feed the Nation Initiative (OFTN). Through the 2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the GoSL had emphasized the agricultural sectors importance towards achieving food security and poverty reduction. (discussion with DGs assistant). So based on this 2005 PRSP and with the support of the UNFAO, UNDP and the USAID CORAD partnership, OFTN was established as the GoSL agricultural response program. Its initial goal was reaching out to small scale farmers producing crops at subsistence levels. In order to do this it would build their skills in addition to organizing them into association like groups. “These Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) would gain reinforced technical farming skills and thus increase productivity in a variety of staple crops and small livestock.”(DGs assistant). An ongoing project which would target this objective was being implemented in the North East of the country in Koinadugu District; the UNFAO Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture Project (FSCA). According to DGs assistant, with the strengthening of these FBOs, the FSCA thus falls in line with the current national food security policy OFTN. Jack Jalloh’s office was located down the hall from DGs office in the OFTN wing of the building. It was in a large grey room with a row of gray desks, in the right hand corner of the room was Jallohs’ assistant, who then directed me to Jallohs office. It was a relatively small office space, gray table and desk, one book shelf – rather unorganized with stacks of loose paper. I introduced myself as having come from the Swedish Agricultural University wanting to learn more about how the GoSL was putting its agricultural production policies into practice. Jalloh, whilst mildly receptive and polite had an edge of suspicion and hesitation in his tone

“Well I am not so sure what I can share with you, well perhaps there are some project pamphlets I can give u to take along- let me get back to you about that”. Whilst one could

label this as being dismissive, I pressed on. I then stated my willingness to volunteer my services and offered him a copy of my resume as a reference to my background in managing international development projects. He browsed the resume and then changed his reception, right away. He then wanted to discuss the possibility of me going to Koinadugu for three months with the FAO country representative. “I think we may be able to use your previous work experience in project management as a resource, in fact I would like to send the FAO country representative your resume today, so please email it to me asap” He then proceeded to tell me about the project, as if it had already been decided that I would go. He reconfirmed the information DGs assistant had shared earlier, that project was meant to mobilize and build the skills and capacity of small scale farmers through Farmer Based Organizations(FBOs). This in turn would result in increased and improve production capabilities. But he also added a new dimension which involved the Local Council (LC). The Local Government Action (LGA) of 2004 restored the Local Government and Local Councils country-wide. In Koinadugu District the LC is responsible for district level program development and budget in terms of planning and budgeting allocation. “In respect to this short and long term agricultural strategies will involve interventions from the Council with the participation of Chiefdoms and villages” (Jack Jalloh). However Jalloh implied that the reality on the ground in relation to the execution of the Local Government Act is not going as well as initially envisioned. Whilst it was a “commendable” policy initiative, which made sense on the part of the GoSL, he claimed, there were some challenges. He explained that the LC members demonstrated commitment and leadership but often lacked the basic skills required for planning and budgeting. There was indeed a disconnect, because he went on to state “we will need to know and understand the dynamics of the local council and how it works so we can know how better to assist them” (Jack Jalloh). Jalloh went on to say that it was a three year project essentially a year and half behind in its implementation schedule. He informed me that with approval from FAO, I would be station in Koinadugu District within the District Agriculture Offices and that he wanted me to “look into the following”

1. The process by which a district goes through in formulating strategies that address the economic potential of the agricultural sector in Koinadugu district.
2. Working with the District Director to create proposals for possible areas of intervention and donor funding on general areas of rural development with a focus food security. Keeping in mind what needs to be advocated for the following groups;
 - a. Women’s organizations

- b. Disadvantaged youth
 - c. The handicapped and war affected
3. Finding out who else is working on commercialization of agriculture initiatives, where and when
 - a. Addressing possible areas of overlapping implementation – possibly creating various consortiums or synergies to address this issue.
 4. Reporting on the structure of the local government and how it works in addition to how develop strategic plans for economic improvements.

After he sated all the above, I asked whether there was a need for a terms of reference(TOR), “no not really just do everything we discussed, you should feel excited about this opportunity!”

Our meeting ended much more amicable compared to how it began, Jalloh was much more friendlier than when I initially walked into the room. Before I left he gave me a copy of the project Document which he wanted me to familiarize myself with. A few days later after our meeting he sent me an email confirming FAOs authorization for me to join the project. He also invited me to meet the FAO country Rep. Kevin Gallagher before mobilization. In response to this email I asked him again about the TOR, “OK sure , why don’t you put one together based on our conversation and I will approve it”(Jack Jalloh)

Reflection

Going into my meeting with Jack Jalloh, I kept in mind what the LDO from Koinadugu had advised about having a ministry chaperon during discussions with people. I thus made sure that DGs assistant was not there when I scheduled to meet with Jalloh. This was even though Jack Jalloh himself was a Ministry employee. I decided to carry copies of my resume in order to present just in case he asked about my qualifications. I now realized that I had to validate myself with whomever I was to meet; this was not an intentional separation from an association with the Ministry but rather a quest to gain credibility and trust. Whilst DGs assistant gave me ample information about the ministries policies, the OFTN and FSCA project, he failed to mention the challenges with Local Council with respect to the decentralization process and its influence on district level project implementation. From speaking with Jalloh, it appears that the Local Councils weak project management and budgeting skills are impeding on the execution of the project activities. This was the first I would hear about the decentralization process in relation to the ability for the government to

successfully implement their policies at the district level. After reviewing my notes from the meeting and as I wrote my own Terms of Reference (TOR) for the assignment , I released that there was indeed a deep disconnect between the LC and the means by which the Central government was trying to implement the project in the district . Why else would Jalloh ask for me to “report on the structure of the local government and how it works” . How could a representative in the Central government not know how the Local Council worked. Also I knew then that once I arrive in Koinadugu, my initial questions on the policy to implementation process to interviewees would involve the theme of decentralization. In addition I continued to experience frustrations with Jalloh never approving a final a final TOR after I emailed it to him with two follow-up emails and a phone call. I concluded that it was just another act of slow bureaucratic in-action.

District Director of Agriculture (DDA), Koinadugu District, Sierra Leone – Haja L.B. Sesay (interviewed – May 20 & 21st 2009 + sit in discussion with DDA and Koinadugu Woman’s Vegetable Growers Cooperative May 22nd 2009)



The main hall in the Koinadugu District Agriculture office

After meeting with the Food Security through the Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA) National Project Coordinator, I received authorization from FAO to join the project. Based on my conversations with DGs assistant and Jack Jalloh, it became clear that the FSCA project was a flagship project for the government's national OFTN policy. The project focused on mobilizing and building the skills and capacities of small scale farmers through Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs), this they believed would result in increased and improve production capabilities. I had four specific outputs to report ; all of which would allow the National Project Coordinator understand what and why there were challenges with project implementation. I was to specifically focus on ; 1) The process by which the district goes through in formulating strategies that address the economic potential of the agricultural sector; 2) Working with the District Director to create proposals for possible areas of intervention and donor funding keeping in mind what needs to be advocated for women's organizations, disadvantaged youth, the handicapped and war affected; 3) Finding out who else was working on commercialization of agriculture initiatives, where, when and addressing possible areas of over lapping implementation – in order to possibly create various consortiums or synergies to address this issue; 4) Reporting on the structure of the local government and how it works in addition to how develop strategic plans for economic improvements.

I arrived at the Koinadugu District Agriculture Offices on the May 20th 2009 and was taken to meet the District Director of Agriculture (DDA) right away. The first thing I noted was the fact that the DDA was female, after a month in Freetown I had yet to meet any women in senior management positions within the Ministry, most were administrative staff. Whilst she was friendly , there was a sense of wariness and suspicion towards me, not helping was the four staff members who welcomed me at the door and took me to her office- a welcoming delegation perhaps. I presented myself as having come from the Swedish Agriculture University as part of my Masters practical course, I wanted to learn more about how the GoSL was implementing its agricultural production policy , OFTN through the FSCA project. I asked her whether she had received a TOR from Jalloh in regards to me being there , she responded with a “no, but he did mention you were here from Sweden to do your field work for a thesis”. Indeed Jalloh had not shared the TOR or details about the outputs we had discussed in his office. This not only made me uncomfortable in talking to her but left me feeling as though I did not know where to begin. So I decided to begin with learning more about who she was and what she was there to do. The District Director of Agriculture, she explained is the lead civil servant in the District representing the Ministry of Agriculture. She

spoke about the vision and ideals of the Minister of Agriculture elaborating on his intention and unwavering commitment to having the MAFFS move the nation toward food security in line with the presidents' pledge. "The pledge and task is not just making our nation a self sufficient in terms of food , but also commercializing agriculture and making our nation nutritionally balanced"(DDA) I asked her to further explain in detail what exactly the commercialization of agriculture was. She explained that commercialization meant four objectives

- 1) "Intensification" through the provision of mechanized agricultural production" – I asked for her to elaborate, taking into account my non-agricultural training. She was glad to oblige – at this point I noted that she relaxed and starting to take some kind of joy in educating me. Intensification addresses farmers physical cropping methods , moving them from peasant styled , manual labored techniques to the use of machinery, a modern approach. So far the MAFFS had moved to provide five tractors throughout the district which has resulted and increase in acres ploughed.
- 2) The second objective of commercialization was "intensification". This meant the provision of pest control to the farmers in the treatment of outbreaks. Secondly intensification meant the Farmer Field school methodology which has resulted into a production increase since 2006. Finally the use of fertilizer (organic and inorganic) in vegetable production in order to increase productivity and output.
- 3) She continued to the third objective; the agricultural chain. The agricultural value chain? meant input supply to farmers (seed rice, groundnut and an assortment of vegetables) It also meant supervision during the production season and the provision of agro-chemicals. Finally and most importantly she spoke about the creation of market linkages for the famers in order to have an outlet for their produce.
- 4) The final objective in the commercialization of agriculture was the means by which the GoSL would intervene in carrying out all the stated objectives above. This was primarily through donor-funded projects such as the FSCA project.

I then asked the DDA about how she felt things were going in regards to the implementation of these four objectives, she responded with "to make a plan is one thing, to implement is another."(DDA) The DDA began explaining that the implementation agricultural policies at the district level , including the commercialization of agriculture, had been decentralized after the civil war under the Local Government Act (LGA)of 2004. In the past agricultural production policies were formulated at the Ministry of Agriculture in Freetown and then subsequently implemented at District levels. In an effort to break away from this past, the

central government in Freetown initiated this decentralization process. This was seen as a way to create a form of government within the community which was meant to result in improved grass roots project implementation at the hands of the Local Council, “a type of participatory process”(DDA). This reconfirmed what Jack Jalloh had stated during our discussion in Freetown “short and long term agricultural strategies will involve interventions from the Council with the participation of Chiefdoms and villages” (Jack Jalloh). But there were major challenges to this, I asked her to elaborate, she mentioned that the means by which funds were getting to activities were causing time delays in the implementation of the stated objectives (see above). Specifically the route by which funds get to field ; the funds begin from the Ministry of Finance to the Ministry of Agriculture to the Local Councils onto the Line Ministries and then the District Financial Committee. Based on assessed technical intervention needs, the DDA sends the District Financial Committee a proposal for funding. She gave an example of how cooling truck allotted to the Koinadugu District Agriculture Office took over a year to be repaired. The farming cooperatives in the District would rent the truck at subsidized rates in order to transport agricultural produce to local markets as well as to Freetown. When she placed the request for funding with the District Finance Committee, the Local Council repeatedly told her that the Ministry of Agriculture had not sent the money, when she checked with the Ministry of Agriculture in Freetown they said they were still waiting on the Ministry of Finance to release the funds. There was a certain degree of resignation on her part, in that she had done all she could by placing the appropriate request. So after a year the Local Council finally released the funds for the repair but the original estimate did not cover the cost .The truck essentially fell under further disrepair after being exposed to the elements during the course of the raining season. The DDA went onto state that the vegetable growers lost a significant profits that year, especially with transporting their produce to urban markets in Freetown, an eight hour drive. The produce which was not sold ended up rotting.

If the LC had the primary responsibility of executing policies at district level based on decentralization scheme, I asked whether they took any action in regards to the cooling truck situation. She responded in saying that due to the “unfriendly nature” of the Chairman of the Local Council she never followed up unless it was to check whether the money had arrived. It was clear that the relationship between the District Agriculture Office and the Local Council had some “interpersonal challenges”. In fact, according to the DDA, personal and mutual misunderstandings between MAFFS staff and the Local Council are never addressed or resolved. She even claimed that “there is at times a loss of important stakeholders (INGOs

and different donors) due to the unprofessional and unfriendly nature of the Local Council. Ultimately this hindered the timely implementation of project initiatives.” I made a note at this point to speak with someone at the LC in order to hear their perspective.

I then felt that the topic of funding from donors such as FAO had to be examined so I asked the DDA what she saw the role of the donor as being with respect to affective project implementation. “Donor projects being implemented by the Ministry can sometimes be ineffective due to bureaucratic delays and donor conditionality's” (DDA). She went on to explain that in some cases as with the FSCA project, funds were being sent from the donor to the Ministry of Agriculture and this ultimately was a bottle neck. I then inquired whether she was familiar with her role in terms of the FSCA project . She claimed that she was never given a clear terms of reference about her responsibilities, she in fact asked to borrow my copy of the project document. When I then asked her about the progress of the project activities, she referred me to the project assistant who she claimed received orders from Jalloh in Freetown and not her. I presented the project document explaining that according to the terms of the project , she was in charge of all activities in at the District level. she claimed that when she placed an inquiry with the central level about the project she was told that “the staff in the field had autonomy”. I realized then that further pursuing the conversation created more tension, since it became quite evident that she as the DDA was unaware of her responsibilities. It was at that point that I ended the interview and thanked her. I also expressed that I was there to learn and to be of any assistance to her, I was there as a tool of knowledge for her. In saying this I hope that suspicion towards being there for the next month would diminish in some way.



District Director of Agriculture Haja L. B. Sesay – front row, second from the right pictured with District Staff

Reflection

The interview with the DDA was the first contact with the District Agriculture office and field level activities. The DDA's initial reception towards me was far from friendly. My assumption at the time was that it was because I had been sent from the central office, specifically by Jalloh, the FSCA National Project Coordinator. As the National Project Coordinator, the DDA also had to answer to him with regards to for all field activities and all project related daily happenings. My presence there was therefore not by chance, I was simply not a neutral agent in the equation. In retrospect, this meant that her answers were tailored to what I wanted to hear or what she thought I wanted to hear. Right from the beginning, I recognized that there was some discrepancies with implementation, starting with the fact that DDA was not familiar with her state responsibilities as per the project document.

Communication Disconnect: I was soon to learn that there were major communication disconnects between headquarters management of the project (Jack Jalloh) and the district level management with the DDA. After all, the objectives I had left Freetown with had not been conveyed to the DDA before my arrival or even approved formally. Also as I stayed on

in Koinadugu and began to work closely with the DDA , I became an observer of how the project was managed and implemented. One day, I casually asked the DDA how she communicated with headquarters, “Well when they need something they call me” was her response. I also asked whether there was any email threads between her and headquarters as a point of reference to the daily project operations and a reflection of a headquarters/field working relationship , she stated “ well actually we do not have internet, I have made the request with Jack Jalloh’s office since the project started a year and half ago , but I guess I have to place another request when in Freetown next, like I said when they need something they call me”.

Issues with the Local Council: “We will need to know and understand the dynamics of the local council and how it works so we can know how better to assist them” (Jack Jalloh). The DDA was the MAFFS highest ranking official in Koinadugu, therefore she held representation of how the central government dealt with local level government. Contextually my interviews, discussions and observations of the DDA and how the project was being conducted exposed another challenge; a difficult and inter personal relationship between the Local Council and the DDA which seemed to hinder the over all LC – MAFFS working relationship. Personal and mutual misunderstandings between stakeholders (primarily MAFFS staff and the Local Council) were never addressed or resolved, therefore causing further strain during project implementation. As far as the DDA was concerned, the ramifications of this inter-personal disconnect was also an impediment as far as ensuring the speed by which the LC would disburse funds coming from LC Finance sub-committee ie the cooling truck disrepair.

The Capacity of the DDA

After two months in Koinadugu, I had yet received a formal approved TOR based on the discussion with Jack Jalloh in Freetown. I decided to throw in the towel and to make the best of the experience. So in attempt to better understand how the FSCA project was being implemented, I decided to use my previous professional experience and created a matrix which combined the project budget with work plan. This would show each activity by line item with the match funds to be spent. Based on the project document the DDA is responsible for the direct implementation at field level with support and coordination from Jack Jalloh. But as I was to discover, the DDA knew little about what was happening with the project. She even asked to lend my copy of the project document; clearly she had never read it. She was

suppose to be in charge of all the project staff but did not know of their daily activities when asked. As I became versed with the project document I discovered that there were no links between the project work plan, project budget and the activities Jack Jalloh had claimed were occurring. The matrix also reflected the degree by which the project was fiscally performing , I then discovered what Jalloh had referred to : project is a year and half behind with activities that have been allotted a time period of three years. When I initially presented the matrix to the DDA she stated “well is it possible to make it much simpler”, I noted that she could not read an excel spreadsheet, this I did not fault her since not everyone is versed in MS Excel so I explained to her my findings. She seemingly then realized what I had uncovered and told me that she had received orders from central government not to ask questions. “ When I first came on board this position and inquired about the project with headquarters, they told me not ask any question and that the staff in fact had autonomy, they took their orders from jack Jalloh”. Realizing the sensitivity of the issue, I did not press further, I did not want to lose the trust I had established with her over the past two months.

Chief Administrator of the Local Council : Abubarkar Daramy: August 3rd 2009

Clearly I had to speak with someone at the Local Council (LC) in order to see how they viewed the OFTN policy and FSCA project. In this respect, I also had to take into account the following: 1) the challenges with the interpersonal relationships between the DDA and the LC 2) the importance of the Local Council in the implementation of the FSCA project. Once again I made a request with the DDA, with no result. I personally then went to the LC to set up the appointment but was told he had traveled abroad. It was only a week before I left Koinadugu that I was finally able to have a discussion with Abubarkar Daramy, the Chief Administrator of the Local Council, but it was a discussion that happened by chance. Daramy was having a meeting with the DDA that day when I came into the office, I went in to greet her that morning and that’s when she finally introduced me. Seemingly in his mid thirties, Polo shirt, well pressed khaki pants to match, very well dressed compared to most of the other officials at the LC. The meeting with the DDA was ending and he seemed to be in a rush to leave, I pleaded with him having explained that I was on my way back to Freetown and eventually Sweden, he begrudgely complied. He began by explaining that the Chief Administrator (CA) is the lead officer of the administrative wing in the Local Council. This section of the Local Council is primarily responsible for policy implementation by acting as the grassroots executors for the central government. From my discussion with Daramy, I also learnt that despite the decentralization process the CA position was actually MAFFS

appointed. He reiterated that in the LC, the office of the Chairman was primarily responsible for policy formulation. The office of the Chairman is primarily composed of individual council members who represent each ward within the district. The needs of the wards are presented by their respective councilors and eventually influence the types of policies formulated by the LC. The Chief Administrators office is primarily charged with the implementation of policies through mostly donor sponsored projects. I then asked him to give me a bit of a background on agriculture and its importance to the district as well as the role of policy, particularly the national policy(OFTN) to increase agricultural production through commercialization. He mentioned that Agriculture is the predominant occupation of over 95% of the residents in Koinadugu. And that even though this was the case, crop and cattle farming only existed at subsistence rates. He went on to say that most crops and vegetable produce could not be transported to market centers since farmers were constrained due to weak road conditions. Both crop and livestock production was insufficient to meet the national production needs due to the subsistent scale and method of production. He went on to state that with the current national food crisis, it is important that central government, Local Council and other partners involved in agriculture focus their attention on supporting farmers reach their high yield production. He continued in stating that the LCs agricultural strategy and policies to address increased production is found in the District Development Plan (DDPs). These DDPS fall in line with the national policy to increase agricultural production through the commercialization. He added that the LCs outlook on policies was also based on the 2005 PRSP I and MDG I .Despite this, in order for them to determine the content of the DDPs, an initial assessment is conducted within each ward of the District. Needs assessment meetings are held in every village and ward. After this, identified needs are then prioritized to get the village felt needs. These felt needs are then re-prioritized using the PPA (Participatory Poverty Assessment). Based on the findings, funds from central government and external donors are applied to the appropriate activities. But then he added that the needs of each ward are prioritized based on larger national policies and amount of funding available. Funds from external donors are sometimes sent through the appropriate government ministries, who then determine its use. A chronic implementation problem the CAs office faced was the slow pace of funds coming directly from the central government - this collaborated with what the DDA had said previously. The conversation then went on to how much influence the LC had in implementation, there was certainly a sense of frustration then in his tone. He felt as though he wanted the Council to have more say during project implementation and that in fact both the GoSL and the donors recognized the importance of the LC and yet did not include them in

their decisions. "We are better able to identify the needs of the communities since we are that close to them". I closed the interview on that note.

Reflection:

One of the first things I noticed after my interview with the CA was that he was appointed by the MAFFS. And yet both Jack Jalloh and DDA had spoken of decentralization, a policy prescriptive meant to create a form of government within the community. It was also meant to result in improved grass roots project implementation at the hands of the Local Council, "a type of participatory process". Why would they have a MAFFS employee working as the lead implementer of LC policies? This directly contradicted the notion that the central governments has devolved power to the LC. "But we are not doing anything different from what the national government is doing"(CA). The CA continued to elaborate that the information used to formulate the DDP, was from the grassroots level. Yet fund disbursement is based on the overall national priorities, which may not be the same at the district level needs.

I also noted the CA was the first to use the term "crises" with regards to food production. NAFSL, Jack Jalloh and the DDA never once mentioned that the food production in the country may have been at crisis levels. I did not follow-up with a question with regards to this but would have actually wanted some more emphasis on what he meant by this.

Another important topic the CA brought up was the fact that the operations and implementation of projects such as FSCA are solely located within the central government under the guise of Jack Jalloh. The CA seemed to be saying that the LC was not being included in the implementing process and as far as he was concerned the LC was the closest to the communities. If the FAO (donor) and the central government meant to have a true participatory agenda- the LC would be involved at all levels of implementation especially with the monitoring and evaluation of the project. A key component of the FSCA project document addresses and acknowledges the importance of the LC and acknowledges LCs weak capacity toward the implementation of projects- both the DDA and Jalloh had spoken about this. However, component 1.3 of the FSCA project document states the project would address "District Council capacity to plan, coordinate and monitor agricultural development and food security initiatives"(FSCA project doc,22) and yet I was shocked to discover that even the CA had not read the project document.

Farmer Field Visit (on site visit with project staff)

After meeting the National Association of Farmers in Sierra Leone ((NAFSL) in Freetown a few months prior to my stay in Koinadugu, I was determined to meet some farmers based in rural areas. I wanted to learn more about how government's commercialization of agriculture policy had touched their lives during implementation. I also kept in mind what the LDO from Koinadugu had suggested during the NAFSL meeting , speaking with farmers without Ministry personal. This would happen through two separate encounters; 1) a sit down discussion between the DDA and The Koinadugu Women's Vegetable Growers Cooperative 2) a farm site visit with one of its active members, Haja Sundja .

We initially met whilst she was meeting with the District Director of Agriculture. On that day, Haja Sundja and two of her colleagues from the Vegetable Growers Cooperative were meeting with the DDA to express frustrations about recent inputs provided by the FSCA project. Whilst I did not participate in the discussion, the DDA was eager for me to tape it, actually asking me to record the session "Florence I hope you can record this to share the information". Haja stated that farmers were facing two specific problems in relation to the support coming from the FSCA project; weak seed varieties and timeliness of getting the seeds. "It may be good idea to consult the farmers before the purchase of seeds ...right now we are unable to extract seeds from the crops which result from these seeds, even if we put fertilizers on them , there is very little output and the crops are very small." She then went on to mention that this creates a dependency on government and donors season to season when they should be able to extract and save seeds for the upcoming season. The second challenge they face with regards to the FSCA seed provision is delays in receiving the seeds... "we have also not received the seeds on time". The DDA was seemingly trying to defuse the situation by stating that she understood and agreed with their sentiments and that she would continue to communicate with headquarters about these concerns. She then referred to me and said "well it is also good that we have others here to listen to your plight, so that it may perhaps be reinforced by more than one person apart from myself".

After the meeting with the DDA , I spoke to Haja outside requesting whether I could come and visit her farm site and learn more about what she does. She was quite obliged and agreed. This is would be the most direct contact with beneficiaries of the government's policies with projects such as the FSCA

So I made arrangements which included being dropped off at her home at 4am. Upon arrival she describe what would be a long day ahead. "I suppose farmers all over the world have long

days, even the ones overseas??!!” Upon entering the home, the first thing I noticed was the amount of people living there, about eight to ten. The house had cemented floors, no beds, falling walls and chickens running freely indoors. She invited me to have some breakfast with her and her family whilst we waited for our ride to the site, though I was concerned with the “hopefully he will show up today, sometimes the roads are pretty bad and now that the raining season is coming he may not make it at all”. But I settled in with their generous breakfast offer of “la-fedee” made of rice(country rice as she put it) oil, dried fish and peppers. She mentioned that the rice came from this past seasons harvest. As I ate the rice my attention drifted to the fact that as I chewed I came across stones. I also thought about how they processed the rice and how they could eat this quality of rice daily.



Haja Sudja's family home.

About an hour or so later I joined Haja along with seven of her farm workers to board a large truck carrying other farmers, their workers and tools to their various farming sites “in the interior” as Haja put it. Along with her workers and their tools, we drove about two hours in country. We were dropped off in a very heavily wooded area, then had to walk about two

miles before finally reaching the Haja's vegetable growing sight. During the trip she spoke about how confident she was that the farmers of Koinadugu could produce enough food for the whole country, "why else would they have the World Food Day here in Koinadugu". But she also spoke of her dismay in the kind of support coming from the government. "I am not really sure I know what they do for us, for example our four hour trip to this site should have only taken an hour if we had a feeder road from the main road (apparently the point where the truck had dropped us off) Haja also began to talk about what she felt was one of the biggest challenges she faces, the post harvest period. She referred to the fact that there were no cooling rooms located in Koinadugu to preserve their harvest for sale. I asked her then whether she knew anything about the OFTN policy by the GoSL which would increase production and provide post harvest support to farmers such as herself. "Well whatever policies they have, I am not aware of and besides don't they need to talk to us before they decide what we need, there is such a hierarchy sometimes, it's us and them" She also proceeded to show me her lettuce crop, which she explained needed the most labor but gave the least returns. There was also no market in the immediate rural areas, since it was simply not part of the local diet. She also said that many of her farmer colleagues have expressed that not only is the lettuce not part of the local diet, but nutritionally lacked what they needed to be working in the fields all day. She then said that at least with something like "la-fedee" for breakfast, the workers and her family will not need to eat for most of the day until the evening. I asked her why she had used the lettuce seeds, "well that is what we were given", was her response. We were at the site the whole day and I actually asked Haja if I could engage in anything to help, I did not want to stand around and have all the other workers watching me watch them work. She of course laughed and said "I don't think you can handle it"!! I mustered up and she had me de-weeding a few plots. Apart from the fact that I had never engaged in any arduous farm labor, I came to recognize the hard work that the farmers engaged in. I asked Haja if she knew anything about subsidized mechanical machines that were meant to modernize their techniques in addition to making it more efficient. She answered with "that would be nice, if it actually happened, I did hear about it since last season but as you can see labor on this farm has not benefited from it". We were on the site until seven pm in the evening; I did not get home until 12 pm that night. Whilst I decided to take the day off the next day, my thoughts only went to Haja Sudja and her workers who had to wake up at four am in the morning again. I had little to nothing to complain about.



Haja Sudja showing us her plots



Haja Sudja at her daughter in law house within the compound

Reflection :

One of the main points I took away from this particular experience was that regardless any policy initiatives by the GoSL or FAO rural farmers still have to feed their families at the end of the day. Also , farmers were not as informed about what their government was actually doing for them. I must be cautious in stating though that it was one farm visit and the experience of one site. It would have been even more interesting had I gotten the opportunity to visit and speak with farmers that the government had claimed to have benefitted from the OFTN policies. I was certainly grateful for the LDO from Koinadugu district suggesting I independently speak to farmers without MAFFS personal. Because after the farm visit, I began to question who the farmers were that I met at the NAFSL meeting and whose interest were they really representing. It was quite obvious to me that Haja and her family were quite poor, working hard on their farm sites, living day to day on what food they could get. With their talk of exporting their products to Europe, it may now seem as though NAFSL represented the interests of well off commercial farmers and that their outlook on food security was perhaps different form farmers like Haja Sudja. This is also reflected in the fact

that the NAFSL farmers were well versed in the GoSL policies and yet rural farmers such as Haja Sudja were oblivious to what they were. But again I caution that the meeting with NAFSL was after all under a controlled environment in the ministry. Had I the chance again I would want to visit Mr. Pessima's the chairman of NAFSLs farm.

I felt that in the meeting with the DDA and Haja, there was a sense of condensation mixed with reassurance toward Haja and her colleagues, specifically when she asked me to tape the discussion. In addition, after the farmers left her office she stated "well I feel it's rather difficult to deal with these farmers sometimes because of their illiteracy" (DDA) Perhaps labeling it as condensation is too strong of a term, one could also see it as viewing the farmers in a paternal way. In interactions with NAFSL, Jack Jalloh and the DDA, there seemed to be an assumption that the farmers didn't know what they were doing. They needed to be closely guarded and told what to do. But visiting the farm site and seeing just how hard and long these farmers worked clearly demonstrated that they do not need to be told by the government or anyone else how important agriculture is to their existence. In fact by all accounts rural farmers such as Haja Sudja see the government as the problem. In their daily lives they can not afford to sit until the government tells them what to do and how to do it or what skills they need. Being food secure is not a choice to be made, there is none in fact since they have to feed their families with whatever little they may have.

8.0 Discussion

In accordance with the president's declaration of eliminating hunger and alleviating poverty the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), with the support of various UN agencies, have been implementing the national food security policy initiative; Operation Feed the Nation (OFTN). Supporting Pillar II of Sierra Leone's Poverty Reduction Strategy (SLPRS), *promoting pro-poor growth for food security and job creation (in a healthy macro-economic environment)* and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 and 8 *eradicating poverty and hunger and developing a global partnership for development*, OFTN looked to stimulate agricultural sector reform.

The aim of this thesis statement was to prove *that the process* by which the government of Sierra Leone is implementing its agricultural production policies could fail to yield desirable results if not reviewed. *Furthermore the argument propagated that all too often there is more of a focus on the stating and proclaiming of policies rather than the process of how they are to be implemented.* In a quest to prove the statement correct, evidence and the conclusion was formed by focusing on what the agents who are involved with implementation (both

national and district levels were saying. In addition, there was also a focus on the agents who are meant to benefit from these policies (farmers). This was presented through narrative accounts. The narrative accounts thus exposed what and how the policies were being implemented through a specific project, FSCA. The FSCA project would eventually result in an increase in agricultural production and thus food security. This increase in production would happen through mechanization, high yielding seed supply and a delivery oriented approach. The donor, FAO, held key budgetary authority whilst the day to day implementation was left at the hands of Sierra Leonean officials with the MAFFS.

According to the MAFFS agents interviewed, food security is to be achieved through the OFTN policy and projects such as FSCA, but this is not the whole story. Being in Koinadugu exposed the disconnects between the MAFFS and district management of the FSCA project. In Freetown, and in first meeting with Jack Jalloh, it was my understanding that the FSCA project was failing. The project document in this context revealed that the day to day management and implementation was to be completed and supervised by the National Project Coordinator (NPC), Jalloh at the Ministry level and the DDA at the District level. However, the first discussion with the DDA revealed that the communication links between the two were little to nonexistent. Jalloh was also not aware of the institutional dynamics of the LC, given his inclusion of this very fact within the four point outputs placed within the TOR of my task. In the field the DDA, the lone MAFFS official charged with field level implementation was oblivious to what was happening with the FSCA project. She also failed to display the basic managerial skills and capacity to monitor the project. There were also interpersonal relationship disconnects between the LC and the (DDA) and yet the project called for daily and frequent collaboration. It should be noted though, that given the GoSL decentralization policy, the DDA was actually meant to be supporting the LC. The narratives also revealed the theme of politics between the central government and the Koinadugu Local Council. The Local Council and farmers at district level felt excluded from policy implementation and formation. The Chief Administrator (CA) of the Local Council complained profusely about implementation deficiencies and yet knew nothing about how the FSCA could address his concerns. Like the DDA, he had yet to read the project document. In addition, a farm visit revealed some startling facts. The first being that the farmers were not informed about the policies meant to affect them, secondly they were seemingly engaged in farming practices that were not only subsistence but had little to no returns

9.0 Concluding Comments

One of the main lessons learnt in writing this thesis is simply that policy takes time to implement. Its effectiveness during implementation is also affected by the actual process by which it is implemented, particularly the day to day management. In reviewing how the GoSL is implementing its core food security response policy, there is nothing that addresses this very process, or yet, there is little to no government intervention. Increasing agricultural production through commercializing agriculture is only the first and one dimensional step in acquiring food security. Why would a group of hard working rural farmers engage in farming a crop that needs high amounts of input and yields little output. As the District Director of Agriculture in Koinadugu ever so eloquently said; “ it is one thing to say what you’re going to do and another thing to actually do it. The lettuce farming may just be one farmer, but a justifiable example of how the GoSL implementing its agricultural production policies.

Bibliography

Interviews

Mansaray, A.(2009, April 30th). Interview with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security . (F. Conteh, Interviewer)

Sankoh, F.(2009, May 5th). Interview with the Directory General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security.(F. Conteh, Interviewer)

Sesay, H. (2009, May 20th). Interview with Koinadugu District Director of Agriculture. (F. Conteh, Interviewer)

Daramy, A(2009, August 3rd). Interview with Chief Administrator of the Local(F.Conteh, Interviewer)

Sundya, H. (2009, June 22nd). Koinadugu Womens Vegetable Growers Cooperative Onsite Field Visit. (F. Conteh, Interviewer) Koinadugu District, Sierra Leone.

Discussions

NAFSL quarterly meeting, Freetown Sierra Leone

Books

FAO. (1996b). *Agriculture and Food Security: Developments since the World Food Conference and Prospects* (Vol. 1). Rome: FAO Publications.

FAO. (1992). *Agriculture, Food and Nutrition for Africa: A Resource Book for Teachers of Agriculture*. Rome: FAO Publications.

Roe, Emery (1994) *Narrative Policy Analysis: Theory and Practice*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press.

Reports and Documents

Food Security through Commercialization of Agriculture (FSCA) - Project 2008. Rome: FAO Publications.

GoSL. (2005). *Government of Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Report 2005 to 2007*. Government of Sierra Leone. Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone.

MAFFS. (2007). *Agriculture Sector Review and Development Strategy*. Sierra Leone Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security Publications.

MAFFS. (2008). *Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security Sector Report*. Freetown: Sierra Leone Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security Publications.

Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy 2008-2012

UNDP. (2007). *Sierra Leone Human Development Report*. New York: UNDP.

Articles

Brinkerhoff, D.W. (1996) Process Perspectives on Policy Change: Highlighting Implementation, *World Development* 24(9): 1395-1401

Mosse, D(2004) Is Good Policy Unimplementable ? Reflections on the Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice, *Development and Change* 35(4): 639-671
