

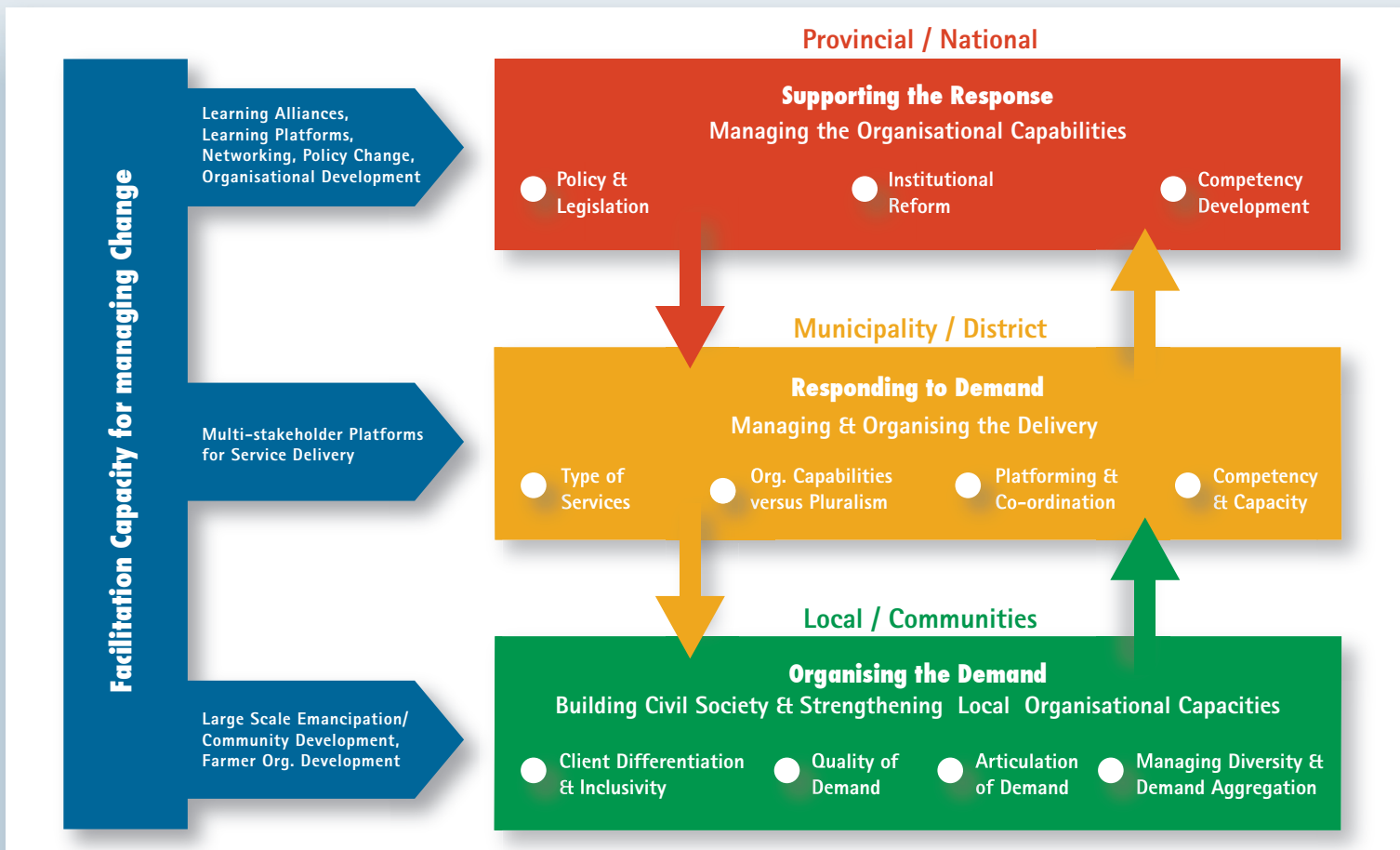


The Service Delivery Framework

Understanding the development of service systems as a systemic change and negotiation process within and across three levels of demand and supply

The dimensions of change required towards renewing / reforming rural service systems necessitate a multi-dimensional intervention at different levels in order to make the whole system more effective, efficient and relevant. A sound conceptual framework can help to guide such complex interventions without prescribing pre-conceived strategies and methodolo-

gies. The framework underlying the scope of this guide is the 'service delivery framework'. It was developed by J. Hagmann, M. Connolly, J. Ramaru and P. Ficarelli from practical experiences gained in change processes for services reform in numerous countries and contexts and has proven its utility in the understanding and design of manifold interventions.





The conceptual framework

The foundation of the framework is the simple fact that service provision needs to follow a demand and supply chain. Both, the demand system and the supply system need to be functioning well in themselves and need to interface very well in order to be effective. Looking at rural services, the demand side are rural communities and their organisations – the beneficiaries of the services, while the supply side is more complex consisting of the direct service providers and in addition the organisations of the service providers and their institutional arrangements. All 3 components need to function effectively in order to build a 'service system'. The service delivery framework describes these three levels as:

'Organising the demand'

This level encompasses the strengthening of local organisational capacities at community and inter-community level and up to District level. An 'organised demand' considers the differentiation of needs and demands of different clients / social strata and tries to be inclusive so that equal opportunities for different groups of people prevail and relevant services can be provided also to the more marginalized. The quality of demand is an important characteristic. High quality demand is built on a deep analysis of causes of problems or issues and on a thorough exposure and assessment of options to address the issues and the understanding of what service providers can contribute at all.

It is in contrast to shallow 'wish lists' of needs and wants often found in community plans. Service demand can only be responded to in a cost-effective manner if a critical mass of people shares the same problem and demand. The diversity and the 'aggregation' of demand needs to be managed and then the articulation of demand towards service providers or the public needs to be well organised with powerful strategies and mechanisms to influence service providers and to claim accountability of providers to the clients. Representation and the organisational capacity of local organisations are critical here. Experience with public service providers has shown that without an effective articulation, it will be unlikely that service providers will respond to specific requirements – they will rather remain at 'goodwill' level of individual extension agents.

'Responding to the demand'

describes the level of the service providers where the delivery of services needs to be managed and organised so that it responds adequately to the articulated service demand. In most cases the demand will be from communities / associations etc, but demands from policy makers and other levels can equally be important. Service providers need to have the capacity to interpret the demand and to identify the type of services which is appropriate to support the different clients.

In a pluralistic environment where there are multiple service providers to be contracted, it is important at this level to assess the performance of the different possible providers and the quality of their services in order to identify who can best do the job. Isolated services on specific issues might not be effective. Linkages between service providers along the platforms of the innovation system or market / value chains are critical to 'make the system work as a system'. The different roles and mandates of service providers need to be clarified and even more important, they need to 'learn to play the roles' and work together in synergistic way towards making a difference. This is a big challenge, in particular in a highly competitive environment where every provider wants to have the credit for themselves.

The competence of service providers is critical to the success at that level and needs to be developed and adapted continuously. A sound competence development and information management system needs to be in place which provides equal opportunities to the different providers.

'Supporting the Response'

describes the management of the organisational and institutional arrangement aspects of service provision. Policies and legislation regulating service provision modes and arrangements as well as finance of services need to be enabling for service providers to perform. Large, public service provider organisations (e.g. extension departments, research, health etc.) require systems and processes allowing their field agents and decentralised structures to perform the tasks in a responsive way. Performance management aspects, continuous adaptations in the organisational structure, culture, systems and processes are aspects which make the 'support to the response' effective and efficient. Institutional reform processes are seen as on-going adaptations propelled by the learning from the experiences in the field and the changes in the environment,



rather than massive one-off events which often do not change the ultimate mode of delivery much. Learning organisations are required to manage that continuous change. Competence development is therefore a central aspect to reach organisational capacity. This is not perceived as a conventional training, but integrally incorporated learning within the organisational development process.

In any intervention, the three levels need to be considered as one system. Experience from the past decades showed that a sole focus on service providers (the supply side) does not lead to demand-oriented sustainable services. The demand side itself (rural populations) need to be supported in organising themselves and have a formalised voice in the service system. On the other side, governance of services needs to match with the requirements (finance, mandate, policy). Any 'forgotten' aspect in the service system can turn out to be a blockage hindering the success of the other and of the overall intervention.

The mainstream thinking until recently was based on often ill-formulated, state-controlled policies with poorly developed support to implementation. At provider level, in extension for example, supply-driven production packages were promoted and at demand level in the past decade, often rather shallow needs assessments were carried out to make the system appear 'participatory' and responsive. The overall effectiveness and efficiency, however, remained poor.

The main difference of the service delivery framework in comparison to the former perspective is:

- the systemic and strategic thinking underlying the intervention strategy,
- the strong focus on quality and impact and
- adaptive learning / improvement over time

The conceptual framework aims to guide the design and the decisions of interventions. The operationalisation requires a feasible intervention process.

The intervention framework and process: what does this mean in practice?

The aim of an intervention based on the conceptual framework is to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the service system (all three levels). Ultimately the system should become a learning system which has in-built mechanisms to improve performance and relevance in an on-going manner.

Guiding Principles for RuServe intervention process design & facilitation

A pluralistic service system can not be controlled through hierarchical management and control as it was attempted over decades in the line ministries' service provision. Bringing a multitude of actors to working together and complementing each other requires facilitative interventions towards change. Few of the actors are obliged to follow any 'instructions' from a 'central manager' so their commitment has to be based on interests and potential benefits. Facilitation is to bring out those commitments. Important guiding principles are:

- **Systemic intervention:** exploring the system for the main 'triggers' through which the biggest difference can be made with a rather small intervention. For example, in one case it might be certain policies which inhibit the performance of the whole system. Once improved this might unblock numerous barriers and trigger a whole lot of changes in the whole system. In another case, community organisation might turn around the system due to a stronger demand side... Identification of these triggers is difficult and normally only reveals while working in the system. Therefore, it is important to start with a promising 'trigger' and to explore other aspects of the system ('systemic') through working and following new traits emerging ('Start anywhere, follow everywhere'- from Margret Wheatley). Facilitating systemic intervention requires flexibility in terms of intervention design as new aspects come up and need to be dealt with.
- **Learning process intervention:** the exploration of the systems dimensions suppressing the performance need to be done from inside while being involved with the actors. They need to realise what the issues are and deal with them, not the outsiders / facilitators ('If you want to know how things really are, just try to change them' – from Kurt Lewin). Exploration as well as continual improvement through action and reflection processes (action learning & action research) require rigour in the facilitation in order to reach a high quality analysis and learning. Learning from successes and failures requires good process documentation. Again, flexibility is required to adapt the learning cycles (from action to reflection) to the issues at hand and be open to incorporate new issues regularly.



- **Change management:** Facilitation of performance improvement of the whole service system is a change intervention. Principles and processes applied in change management are thus a pre-requisite at all levels, from community organisational development level, via the service providers to policy and legislation. Besides systemic intervention and learning processes, this requires strategic planning, focusing on core functions, defining desired impacts at different levels, structural changes in the organisations, performance management, development of adequate systems and procedures (e.g. planning, M&E etc.) and a rigorous competence development of staff to adapt to the new requirements.

The quality of facilitation is a critical factor for success. Facilitation competence needs to be in place – either internal or external, depending at which level and which task. The experience shows that this competence is rarely available and needs to be developed at the beginning of such interventions. The cornerstones below will elaborate more on strategies.

Who drives the intervention process? – Role of facilitators / managers

The central question is: who should be the facilitators / managers for the rural service reform? Who should orchestrate the actors and the actions for change at the different levels? It is obvious that there is no overall facilitator who has a mandate and the capacity to manage all levels. Depending on the entry points, one can see the reform process through the perspective of central actors. In the Service delivery Framework and the related RuServe concept, the main perspective is the one of the public services / extension managers at District / Province level and the planners of rural development initiatives.

District extension managers for example, have a mandate to coordinate extension services in their District – making the service system in the District work. He/she needs to know the whole dimension of reform, which strategies and interventions where and how, whom to involve, resource requirements etc. In

this case, he/she could be the managers of the reform process at community level through employing the right facilitators and also at service provider level. When it comes to policy and legislative aspects, he/she might influence his/her own organisation / ministry but might not be able to facilitate this process. In the District, he/she can employ a facilitator supporting him/her or train a group of internal change facilitators. Ultimately there will be different facilitators at the different levels, but ideally they will play together in a complementary way.

From the perspective of a development planner, the intervention design is broader than for a District manager who has a clearly defined geographical boundary. The external intervention might deal with all the levels and have different entry points simultaneously.

Some of the questions for him/her are:

- 'how to define an entry point?'
- 'how to design a strategy and sequence of steps of the change process and with whom?'
- 'how to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different actors from public, private and NGO sector?'
- 'what kind of facilitation & management is required where and who should provide that service?'

The framework and the related RuServe guide based on the LearningWheel methodology will guide the decision makers in finding answers to these questions and support them in designing an informed intervention strategy together with the key stakeholders.

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