



Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity

USAID's Bureau for Food Security has launched the five-year *Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC)* project, led by Digital Green in partnership with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), CARE International, and multiple resource partners. DLEC operates under a five-year Leader with Associates (LWA) Cooperative Agreement.

Goals

DLEC will partner with USAID missions in Feed the Future (FTF) and aligned countries to raise incomes and increase resilience of smallholder farmers and their families by scaling and enhancing locally-relevant, cost-effective, and pluralistic agricultural extension systems that bring together information technologies and community-based organizations. By helping country-led agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS) to become more pluralistic, DLEC will help them become more effective, accountable, scalable, and sustainable.

Offerings

DLEC offers a flexible mechanism to demonstrate effective solutions that improve the delivery of EAS in FTF countries and strengthen EAS' global community of practice. DLEC activities are expected to improve the scale and effectiveness of EAS; increase the cost-effectiveness of existing EAS; and build the capacity of civil society, public extension systems, and the private sector to play larger, more effective roles in delivering EAS. Specifically, DLEC can support USAID missions to:

- Build their knowledge base on locally-relevant EAS through research and analysis.
- Identify “best-fit” solutions given prevailing EAS systems and other local factors.
- Engage government and private stakeholders, research institutes, and local civil society organizations for better EAS delivery.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of different EAS delivery models, including those informed by ongoing FTF projects.
- Support the planning and design of FTF EAS investments.
- Contribute to learning about EAS models and ensure that data produced through practice is used to improve future solutions.
- Build EAS capacity in and among governments, private EAS providers, civil society, and other EAS stakeholders in FTF countries.

Accessing the LWA

Under the DLEC LWA, USAID missions can develop mission-level, pre-competed cooperative agreements that fall within DLEC's goals and mandate. The DLEC consortium offers the technical expertise and capacity to co-design and/or execute extension-focused activities under these agreements, in a manner that is both flexible and efficient to mission personnel.

To develop agreements under DLEC, USAID mission personnel:

- Identify an EAS-related need and develop an activity statement.
- Contact DLEC's AOR, Mr. John Peters, to verify that the activity fits within the scope of DLEC and within the available funding ceiling and obtain LWA AOR approval for the Associate Award.
- Receive and review a technical application and budget developed by Digital Green in response to the RFAAA.
- Negotiate, finalize, and oversee an Associate Award.

The DLEC Consortium

The DLEC consortium offers extensive, credible experience in transforming EAS. It includes the following core partners and resource organizations:

Digital Green works to integrate innovative technology with global development efforts to improve human well-being. Digital Green's core approach is to partner with and train existing public and private extension services to produce, disseminate, and monitor the impact of short, locally-relevant videos that share knowledge and prompt behavior change among disadvantaged people in rural farming communities. In a controlled evaluation, this ICT-enabled approach was found to be 10 times more cost-effective and the uptake of new practices seven times higher than conventional extension services. Key factors to success are videos' highly-localized content; human mediation to reinforce key messages; and capacity building that supplements and strengthens, not replaces, existing extension systems. Data and feedback inform the production of the next set of videos in an iterative cycle that progressively better addresses the needs and interests of a community. Digital Green has created and disseminated over 4,200 videos to more than one million farmers, 80% of whom are women, in Ethiopia, India, Afghanistan, Ghana, Malawi, Niger, and Tanzania, resulting in over 1.4 million unique adoptions of improved farming practices.

In addition, Digital Green builds curricula to strengthen public training programs; applies its approach within health extension services to improve health and nutrition behaviors; and uses other technologies, such as broadcast television, radio, and mobile applications, to disseminate and reinforce EAS messaging and link farmers to markets.

IFPRI is the CGIAR lead for extension evaluation and is a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) partner, a New Alliance partner, and a scaling partner for most FTF extension-related activities. IFPRI undertakes research, capacity strengthening, and communications activities to support policy solutions that reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. Key EAS themes IFPRI addresses include: extension system reforms, evaluation of extension impact, gender dimensions of extension, and the role of extension in climate change adaptation. IFPRI has country offices in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, and India. Through IFPRI, DLEC will tap into the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), which is a worldwide network of EAS stakeholders from government, civil society, private sector, and academia. Working through 12 regional networks in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific, and Europe, GFRAS helps to prioritize issues, strengthen capacity, formulate policy priorities, and share knowledge among EAS actors.

CARE works in 55 countries to increase productivity and productive capacities by diversifying agricultural practices, developing value chains, strengthening producers' groups, and promoting climate smart agriculture. CARE does this through a package of proven approaches, including: (1) Village savings and loans associations that regularly save small amounts of money and use the combined savings to lend to their members to support income-boosting activities; (2) Community-based climate change adaptation that enables communities to work with local and national authorities and service providers to analyze their vulnerability to climate change, and engage in participatory planning for adaptation; (3) Farmer field and business schools that offer farmers opportunities to learn new agricultural techniques by doing them; (4) Context-specific sustainable agriculture practices that channel EAS to increase yields, reduce seasonality, and promote dietary and economic diversity, improved soil health, and climate resilience; (5) Gender dialogues that work with women and men's groups and community leaders to analyze gender roles and promote actions that transform power relationships; (6) Community score cards, a citizen-driven accountability measure for assessing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating EAS service delivery.

DLEC's *resource organizations* offer specialized capacities in the following areas:

Research & Knowledge Generation
Colorado State University offers expertise and research in EAS capacity building, precision agriculture, climate smart agriculture, remote sensing for agricultural advisory systems, and research in livestock agricultural production in dryland areas. CSU experts build the capacity of others through workshops, train-the-trainer sessions, and expert shadowing. CSU will contribute its expertise to DLEC by identifying gaps in local EAS systems and leveraging its online education platform.
University of Michigan Information and Communication Technologies and Development Research Group will provide qualitative and quantitative research services related to understanding local needs and aspirations and exploring how digital tools can address the challenges DLEC tackles. It will support the iterative design of EAS programs for improved impact and randomized controlled trials for impact evaluation.
JSI Research & Training Institute works to strengthen local extension agents' capacity to integrate nutrition and agriculture content in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. JSI uses ICT to monitor and improve the quality of systems for behavior change communication. JSI can support content production and dissemination at the EAS-nutrition nexus.
Technology
Farm Radio International works with local and regional radio stations and journalists to develop participatory radio campaigns that provide farmers with information they need, give them the opportunity to discuss their concerns, and ultimately boost adoption of improved farming practices. FRI reaches 600 million people across 39 countries and will leverage its radio expertise under DLEC.
Awaaz.De is a social enterprise based in India that has developed a cloud-based, two-way interactive voice response (IVR) system, accessible on any mobile phone, that currently connects over 300,000 people in seven countries to useful information on farming, education, health and other topics. Under DLEC, Awaaz.De will extend the reach of its current IVR service and test new IVR capabilities.
Practical Action is an international NGO specializing in the use of ICT to develop demand-based EAS systems, develop platforms to answer farmers' questions, build the knowledge base of extension agents, and manage farm-related data in Bangladesh, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Senegal, and Latin America. It created knowledgepoint.org, a West African francophone community of technical expertise to answer farmers' questions, and is ready to replicate and develop new ICT tools under DLEC.
Dimagi is a social enterprise that creates low-cost mobile technologies and information systems to help organizations deliver quality services to support agricultural extension, cooperatives, logistics, and finance in over 20 countries. Under DLEC, Dimagi will build organizations' capacity to develop and deploy smartphone applications to collect, process, and act on relevant data, including in the form of performance management tools for frontline EAS providers.
Capacity Building & Policy Advocacy
AGRA is an Africa-based organization with connections to public, private, and civil society organizations across the continent involved in EAS. AGRA manages a loan guarantee fund that supports smallholder farmers and agribusinesses to test solutions in soil fertility, seeds, and markets. AGRA also supports advocacy efforts for policies to strengthen the delivery of EAS.

For more information, please contact:

John Peters
AOR
USAID/BFS
jopeters@usaid.gov
+1 202-712-0726

Gary Alex
Alternate AOR
USAID/BFS
galex@usaid.gov
+1 202-712-4086

Rikin Gandhi
Technical Advisor
Digital Green
rikin@digitalgreen.org
+1 702-355-8926

Kristin Davis
Project Director
IFPRI
K.Davis@cgiar.org
+27 82 253 4695

You can also contact Alex Dunlop, Deputy Project Director, alex@digitalgreen.org or +1-202-420-9886.