Developing Local Extension Capacity
Tailored solutions in agricultural extension and advisory services for smallholder farmers

Feed the Future's Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) project is a network of the world's foremost extension experts providing technical and strategic support to country extension and advisory service (EAS) systems to improve smallholder farmers' livelihoods. The five-year (2016-2021) project is designed to diagnose, test and share locally-customized, best-fit solutions for agricultural extension systems and services across the Feed the Future countries.

Led by Digital Green in partnership with Care International, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), DLEC is an action-oriented, evidence-based learning project. Three mechanisms work together to help reach the project's end goal of building the capacity of country actors increase access, quality and sustainability of EAS systems. These mechanisms are diagnostics, on-the-ground activities and communities of practice.

Diagnostics

DLEC conducts diagnostics in Feed the Future countries to evaluate the EAS ecosystem. The diagnostics provide insight into the strengths and challenges faced by the national extension systems by evaluating the access, quality and sustainability of the governance structures and policy environmnent, organizational and management capacities and cultures of country EAS organizations, and advisory methods used within each system. The diagnostics also review the extent to which the system is market-oriented, how the system engages different communities, including youth and women, and how it supports overall livelihood strategies of farmers. Recommendations on customized improvements and solutions are then provided. View our latest diagnostics here: www.digitalgreen.org/resources/dlec/reports/.

On-the-Ground Activities

DLEC works with USAID missions and other actors to implement on-the-ground activities and action research to test best-fit solutions adapted to each country's context. Activities are based on country-specific needs, and range from integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) to promoting methods of inclusion of multiple actors to developing content about demand-driven practices. For instance, in Bangladesh DLEC is working with the USAID-funded Agricultural Extension Support Activity (AESA) Project to introduce digital tools for output marketing. In Malawi, DLEC is comparing the effect on farmer adoption behavior when using the standard Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS) analog content versus a digitized content model, which has the potential to reach more people with fewer resources. And, in Uganda, DLEC is testing if the gender of the extension functionary has an effect on the adoption of new practices among men and women maize farmers who receive extension messaging. Results from the on-the-ground activities are collected, evaluated and presented to key stakeholders to contribute to current or future extension programs.

Communities of Practice

As a learning project, DLEC's objective is to share knowledge, evidence and best-fit practices, not only from the project, but from the agricultural extension sector as a whole. The DLEC communities of practice are forums where extension stakeholders, whether they are implementers, donors or policy makers, can convene to share their expertise, findings, innovations and problem-solving skills to build better capacity to reach smallholder farmers. This goal will be acheived via global, regional and national meetings, webinars and an online portal. Please join the global community of practice at http://tinyurl.com/dlec-cop.

For more information about the DLEC project, contact Dr. Kristin Davis, Project Director, k.davis@cgiar.org.

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