



# **NATIONAL CASE STUDY ON EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES IN MALAWI**

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# Extension approaches used in Malawi 1950 to present

## **1.1950-1964: Pre-independence Master Farmer Approach**

- Selected farmers received preferential treatment from colonial govt ( training, inputs to mount demo (Kabuye and Mhango, (2005): Gerster-Bentaya, (2007))
- Anticipation – other indigenous farmers would adopt the improved technologies
- Created resentment from the would-be followers as MF were thought of as traitors by fellow Malawians (Masangano & Nthinda, 2010)

# Extension approaches used in Malawi

## 2. 1964-1980: After Independence-Conventional Extension System

- Modified to Mchikumbi (farmer) pgm
- Targeted commercial farmers to boost economic growth through private sector growth
- Registered success unlike the MF approach
- Concentrated on those who had political inclination to the ruling party
- Discriminated against the SHF
- Extension methods advanced; radios, mobile cinema, campaigns, magazines/leaflets ,group discussions, demonstrations, field days agricultural shows and individual visits

# Extension approaches used in Malawi

## 3. 1981-2000 - Block Extension System (BES) Modified TV System

- Introduced to increase farmer coverage and reach out to marginalised groups
- Area covered by each FLW demarcated into 8 subsections (blocks)
- Each block visited once a fortnight
- Close supervision of FLW by SMS through monthly visits
- However, reality showed that T&V :
  - Had increased operational costs
  - Denied extn officers creativity – followed fixed visitation schedule
  - Left disadvantaged people e.g women unreached by extn
  - Considered not responsive to farmers' needs (Garforth, 2005)

# Extension approaches used in Malawi

## 4. 2000-todate – Pluralistic Extension Policy

- Launched to accommodate political and administrative changes which called for grassroots involvement and participation in decision making (GOM 2000)
- Decentralization process of public sector in 1998 (GoM, 1998) and of agricultural extension services in 2000 (GoM, 2000) provided opportunities for improving provision of advisory services by allowing pluralism in service provision

## Extension approaches used in Malawi

- Governance structures both at village and district levels were established to provide platforms for stakeholder interaction for demand articulation and responding, and overall coordination
- Studies acknowledge that diversity in sources and types of services provided is a result of availability of multiple players in agric advisory services (Chinsinga, 2008: Masangano & Nthinda, 2010)

# Challenges of the pluralistic agricultural extension

# 1. Coordination of Extension and Advisory Services

- Lack of a coordination mechanism leads to:
  - Conflicting technical recommendations thus creating confusion among farmers
  - Congestion of NGOs in one area
  - Competition over clients between Government workers and NGO staff. This is because NGOs tend to have more resources and offer free demonstration materials. In such cases farmers prefer to work with NGOs



- In the process, the approach kills the self-help spirit cultivated by govt extn workers and ushers in a dependency syndrome that is difficult to remove once the NGO moves away and hands the activities over to govt to continue
- Most of the activities have therefore proved unsustainable for the govt staff to continue, dying soon after the project ends

- Govt's response to the coordination challenge – spearhead the formation of a Malawi chapter of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services whose purpose is to create an efficient and effective network of agricultural advisory services providers
- The challenge to fully implement this forum is inadequate funding (Fatch 2011)

## **2. Poor linkage between public extension service and other actors**

- Linkage mechanisms established include – Technology Transfer Section of DARS and ATCC.
- Before the pluralistic extension policy- easy for MoAFS to ensure that extension workers are promoting only those technologies that have passed through the ATCC.

- With the coming in of NGOs- almost impossible to monitor what is being promoted by extension staff in these organisations.
- It is common for NGOs and projects to import technologies from other countries and introduce them straight to farmers, without the knowledge of researchers. In some cases, researchers become aware when there is a problem.

### **3. Farmers not demanding extension services – resulting in external actors dictating what they want, leaving farmers on receiving end**

- The disadvantaged position of farmers emanate from poor coordination of actors who fail to explore the synergies of pluralism (Chowa et.al 2012)

### **4. High staff turnover**

- Current Govt extn worker to farmer ratio is 1:2,500 (Chowa, 2010) compared to recommended ratio is 1:750 to 1:850.
- High ratio is due to the fact that MoAFS is losing staff mainly due to deaths, retirement, and resignations while some move to the private sector in search of better working conditions.
- Once staff is lost, it takes too long to get a replacement due to limited funding and lack of available trained staff. By end of 2009, the extension system was operating at 46 percent level of staffing (Mthinda, 2010).

