

# **The role of Agricultural Extension in Africa's development, the importance of Extension workers and the need for change**

**By**

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**Planning Meeting – Policy Learning for Improving Effectiveness of  
Extension and Advisory Services**

**Wageningen, The Netherlands, 20-23 August 2013**

# Presentation structure

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results and discussion
- Conclusion and recommendations

# Introduction

Agricultural **extension** plays a critical role in agricultural development

- ✓ It brings the farming community information on new technologies
- ✓ It provides a channel through which farmers problems can be identified for research and for modification of policies
- ✓ Provides a framework through which farmers are organized in functional groups – access credit, inputs, market services

## Introduction cont...

- Extension system has been blamed for not performing effectively
- A study was carried out by the Africa Extension Reform Group (AERG) to determine issues and challenges that hinder effective performance of extension
- enable the group to make a strong case for an alternative approach to extension programming, organization, and practice in Africa.

# Objectives of the study

1. To determine the demographic characteristics of extension workers
2. To assess Extension Agents' knowledge on the roles of extension in development
3. To examine extension workers' access and ability to use information and communication technologies in extension.
4. To determine the capacity building needs of extension workers.

# Methodology

- The study was conducted in nine (9) selected African countries: Ghana, Tanzania, Botswana, Cameroon, Senegal, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Nigeria
- A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 395 extension staff that operate at the village, sub-district and district levels
- Key informant interviews and observations
- Data were analyzed by SPSS computer program.

# Results and Discussion

## Background k2 of extension agents

- 72% were men, 70% live in the same woorking area.
- About half can speak the local language of the respective area
- have experience in rural life since they were born and raised in rural settings

Make it easier to deliver extension services. BUT not exposed to extension work outside their regions and countries within which they work.

## **Background k2 of extension agents cont...**

- Work experience ranged bwn 5 months and 38 years.
- The number of years since completion the highest level of education ranged between 0 and 39 years.
- About 19% have not attended any in-service training in the past two years
- 50% have participated in 1 to 3 in-service training



# General content of the training

Content	N	%
Generally, it covered agricultural subjects/topics.	263	66.6
Generally it covered communication skills.	115	29.1
Generally, it covered leadership/supervision issues	113	28.6
Generally, it covered administration/management issues	104	26.3

# Knowledge of Extension Agents on the roles of extension in development

- [Table 2](#) The majority were aware of
  - ✓ increase agricultural production,
  - ✓ improving rural livelihoods
  - ✓ Facilitating linkage between research centers and farmers
  - ✓ Facilitating integrated rural development
  - ✓ Promoting gender equity or women's participation in development

# Perceived level of achievement of extension roles in development

- The majority felt that they have not well achieved the roles of extension in [Table 2](#)
- ✓ They have not managed to increase agricultural production
- ✓ helping farmers to gain access to credit/farm inputs/markets
- ✓ promoting gender equity or women's participation in development
- ✓ facilitating linkage between research centers and farmers

# Job satisfaction

- Generally they seemed to be satisfied with their achievement as extension agents. **Challenges**
  - ❖ low salary and lack of incentives related to the job and resources to work
  - ❖ Low number of extension staff
  - ❖ low level of education
  - ❖ low opportunities for higher education
  - ❖ lack of opportunities for short-term training
  - ❖ Poor cooperation from other govt. ministries

# Extension approaches

- A number of approaches developed: training and visit (T & V), demand-driven, the pluralistic extension system

Felt that:

- These approaches have not been very successful
- The extension approaches are changing too frequently
- They are not adequately oriented and trained to implement the new approaches

# Extension reform

- Extension system have been undergoing reforms
- Extension agents are often not informed when their countries are reforming extension
- It was of the opinion that agricultural extension performs better if it remains as a Department under the MoA
- BUT their activities should be well linked to other different sectors of the MoA

# Extension communication and use of ICT

- Extension agents had opinion that communication is at the heart of development since it brings development partners together
- Use of ICT is crucial for effective communication BUT
- more than half of extension agents do not own or have access to ICT for extension [\(Table 3\)](#)
- do not have the knowledge or competency to use the ICT for extension

# Communication and ICT training need

- More than 70% of interviewed extension staff indicated that they need training on:
  - communication planning,
  - supervision,
  - Coordination and linkage skills
  - use of ICT in extension,
  - Writing skills
  - integrated rural development
  - communication for development



# Summary of identified constraints

- ❖ There is less number of women extension agents
- ❖ low salary and lack of incentives related to the job
- ❖ Inadequate resources to work
- ❖ poor cooperation from other government ministries
- ❖ ineffective extension approaches like T&V and pluralistic extension approaches

## **Summary of identified constraints cont...**

- ❖ lack of information on changes in the introduced approaches
- ❖ little or no training on how to implement new extension approaches
- ❖ Extension agents are not informed about extension reforms
- ❖ Lack of knowledge and access to ICT

# Conclusion and recommendations

- Extension agents are well aware of the extension roles
- There is a number of challenges that hinder extension to perform its roles effectively
- Also a number of needs were raised for effective performance of extension roles

# Conclusion and recommendations

- These **suggest a need for change** to an alternative approach to extension including:
  - ✓ re-examining extension training
    - at the field,
    - colleges;
    - University
  - ✓ Rethinking the structure and function of extension systems in Africa.

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THANK YOU

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