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Bridging the gap between resource-poor farmers & extension services: The role of community-based extension systems

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ORGANISED BY:





Bridging the gap between resource-poor farmers & extension services: The role of community-based extension systems

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Farmers facing an uncertain future

- Isolation from exchanging technologies & skills
- Lack of feedback from farmers to extension & research
- Vulnerable to shocks & hazards
- Inability to change



Government & private sector not meeting extension challenge in fragile areas

- Government budget cut-backs, including operational costs
- Difficulty in finding staff for remote areas
- Private provision unprofitable
 - high transaction costs + low purchasing power of farmers
- Extension solutions not suited to local conditions
- Extension recommendations unaffordable or risky
- Women farmers receive much less support

Local or Community-based extension systems

- Locally-based
- Practising farmers, livestock keepers, fisherfolk
- “para-professionals”
- Many different models



Review in four countries

Ex-post evaluations of community extension systems

- Faridpur District, Bangladesh
- Samburu District, Kenya
- Canchis Province, Peru
- North Darfur, Sudan

Key questions:

- Are extensionists still practising?
- Do they reach poor farmers in remote areas?
- What are the key elements for success?

Community Extension Agents (CAEs) still active

- One quarter of CEAs interviewed
- Majority still practising
- Different modes of practice: Advice only
Advice & service
Advice & inputs

Country	Still working	Full-time	Main livelihood	Secondary livelihood	Not working	n/a
Kenya (n=36)	89%	25%	25%	39%	3%	8%
Peru (n=55)	81%	20%	36%	31%	13%	
Bangladesh (n=56)	89%	27%	46%	11%	3%	7%
Sudan (n=55)	89%	13%	60%	6%	-	11%

Outreach to poor in remote areas

- 92% households had services from CEAs
- CEAs preferred source of information in $\frac{3}{4}$ locations
- Flexible payment system

“They are near, they are ‘doctors in the house’ with very good service and they also give us the option to pay later”

[Farmer, Bandera Village, Baragoi, Kenya]

“They [CEAs] served almost all categories of people who ask for their service. Sometimes they serve the poor free of charge. Good manners is far more important than wealth in deciding on clients.”

[Focus group, Faridpur District, Bangladesh]

Halima Begum

Poultry Vaccinator
Bangladesh

- ❖ Trained in 2000 and received vaccinators kit at 50% cost
- ❖ Average monthly income from vaccination is 1,000 taka (£10)
- ❖ Reinvested income in her own poultry business
- ❖ Transformed from low status to being highly respected



Rosa Maque & German Cruz

Kamayoqs

Peru

- ❖ Trained in 2003/4
- ❖ Part-time CEAs
- ❖ Advice on animal health, production & breeding to other communities & organisations.
- ❖ Also agricultural advice, especially natural fertilisers
- ❖ Successful guinea pig breeding business



Keys to Success

- Selection & training
- Formal recognition of CEAs
- Income & livelihood opportunities
- Availability & flexibility
- Relevant information & services
- Accountability & linkages
- Updating of skills

Community-based extension: Complementary not competitive

- Change of attitude
- Recognition & certification needed

But

- allow local variation



Provide public resources

- Required for training & updating
- Cost-effective, flexible system
- Work with public or private extension delivery system



Establish good practice models

- Replace top-down model with 2-way information flow
- Replace fixed technology package with local experimentation & adaptation



Scaling-up

- Move from “projects” to strategic support at national and meso levels
- Embed in national agricultural policy



Community-based extension

- ❖ Taps into potential of marginalised farmers
- ❖ Builds local technological capabilities
- ❖ Catalyst for future change

