

Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision through the Development / Review of Service Charters.

(CISANET)



Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) Tilitonse Project Baseline Report

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Disclaimer: We alone (Henry and Chimwemwe) are responsible for any errors of fact and interpretation that may remain in this report.

Abbreviations

ADC	Area Development Committee
AE	Agriculture Extension
AEDO	Agriculture Extension Officer
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Anti Rabies Vaccine
ASP	Area Stakeholder Panels
CBO	Community based Organisation
CISANET	Civil Society Agriculture Network
DADO	District Agriculture Development Officer
DAECC	District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee
DAESS	District Agriculture Extension Support System
DDC	District Development Committee
DSP	District Stakeholder Panel
EPA	Extension Planning Area
HiV	Human Immune Virus
HQs	Headquarters
MDHS	Malawi Demographic Health Survey
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPP	Permanent Pit Planting
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
T&V	Training and Visit

TA Traditional Authority

VAC Village Action Committee

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

This report presents findings of a baseline study for a project entitled ***Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision through the development/review of District Service Charters. The aim of the project is to contribute*** to the enhancement of pluralist agricultural extension services through the development and implementation of service charters. It is being implemented by CISANET and funded by Tilitonse.

Baseline data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary data was collected in six of the eight project districts. A total of fifteen key informant interviews were conducted as well as a total of six focus group discussions, one in each district. A structured closed questionnaire was administered to a total of 120 respondents.

KEY FINDINGS

The main findings of the study are as follows:

- i. Structures of the DAESS have been formed at local level but their governance is problematic. Some districts have irregular district stakeholder panel meetings, inactive village agriculture committees/area stakeholder panel, bypassed district stakeholder panel and unavailability of resources.
- ii. In the project districts the service charters are practically nonexistent. The only district with a written service charter on agricultural extension is Ntcheu. The charter was set up or facilitated by Concern Universal but the charter is not yet being implemented as it is pending approval of the Office of the President and Cabinet..
- iii. Frontline staffs are knowledgeable and skilled but there are capacity problem gaps due to inadequate dissemination of the new extension policy, mobility challenges, and insignificant numbers of extension workers from the NGOs; and higher farming family per extension worker ratios.
- iv. Up to 84% of farmers highly value and need extension services but high levels of illiteracy and lack of confidence among farmers, coupled with lack of clarity on the meaning of “demand for services” have led the farmers in some districts to be aloof or to be slow in up taking the new approach to the delivery of agricultural extension services.

- v. The District Agriculture Extension Support System faces coordination bottlenecks. The key reasons for these problems include the lack of mutuality of interests in terms of goals, objectives, approaches and policies of the government, NGOs and private sector providers of extension services.
- vi. ; and the dependence on the system on the innovativeness and partnership creation skills of the DADO in the districts when these officers do not have much latitude to influence dynamics.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made

- i. Project must concentrate on making the structures of the DAESS functional at all levels in the project districts as this is central to the success of the overall success of the project
- ii. The project assumed that the districts already have service charters. The findings of the study about the unattainability of this assumption means that the project must actually first establish and institutionalize service charters in the project district. This must be regarded as a high level result at outcome level.
- iii. The project must work out a way of engaging extension service providers i.e. Government workers, NGO workers and private companies to re-align policy goals and objectives to the DAESS so that there is mutuality of interest, collaboration and synergy in the delivery of extension services.
- iv. The project should do more on explaining the practical dimensions of the policy i.e. what it means to 'demand extension services' so that farmers capacity to demand are realistically assessed and the ability of service providers to be responsive is also realistically assessed
- v. Although the project's conceptualization emphasizes strengthening demand capacity, the findings of the baseline suggest that some minimum effort must be expended towards developing systems or spaces through which extension service providers can favorably respond to farmers. The DAESS is new for both farmers and extension service providers so much that the project must consider appropriate interventions on both the demand and supply side of extension services.
- vi. The findings and recommendations of the baseline study mean that the project design must be reviewed especially the results framework in order to target appropriate and realistic results that can be achieved during the lifetime of the project.

1.0. Introduction

This report presents findings of a baseline study for a project that is implemented by the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) funded by the Tilitonse Fund. The project is entitled ***Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision through the development/review of District Service Charters***. The aim of the project is to contribute to the enhancement of pluralist agricultural extension services through the development and implementation of service charters. This is expected to help to provide the basis but also empower the communities to demand extension services from the Government and other service providers in line with the 2000 Agriculture extension policy of the Government of Malawi.

In order to establish the current status with regard to Service Charters in the Districts, CISANET commissioned a baseline study in eight whose findings are presented in this report. This document is a report of the baseline study conducted in 6 out of the 8 targeted districts.

2.0. Objectives of the Baseline Study

The first object is to establish the presence or absence of Agriculture Extension (AE) service charters at the district level. The second objective is to establish, in cases where AE service charters are available, the effectiveness of the same in realizing the aspirations of the agricultural extension policy.¹

3.0. Definition of key concepts

The Tilitonse Fund supports projects that are designed and implemented from a results-based perspective. In this approach, a project's theory of change demonstrates a clear logic between activities that the project implements and the different types and levels of results that the project seeks to achieve. The ultimate results (i.e. impact) that the project seeks to achieve are **accountability** and **responsiveness** of the Agricultural Extension services. In carrying out this baseline study, we deployed the following definitions of accountability and responsiveness:

¹ The assumption here as implied by the terms of reference is that aspirations of the agriculture extension policy accurately describe the needs of the population the policy intends to serve.

3.1. Accountability

A relationship between duty-bearers and rights holders in which duty bearers are answerable for their actions and inactions, omissions and commissions, in the discharge of their duties. Thus the baseline study sought to establish levels of accountability of those who manage and provide agricultural extension services. Lack of accountability or deficiencies in accountability may be due to personality of the incumbent duty bearers, formal and informal rules and practices.

3.2. Responsiveness

A phenomenon in which duty bearers i.e. agricultural extension service providers listen to and consider seriously the interests and demands of farmers and other agricultural stakeholders and demonstrate that they are doing something positive about their demands and interests. Lack of responsiveness or inadequate responsiveness may be due to personality of officials, formal and informal constraints or simply an entrenched negative attitude towards farmers.

3.3. Service Charters

A formal agreement akin to a social contract through which service providers pledge to service users to provide specific services to specific standards. Thus, in this project, service charters are agreements through which agricultural extension service providers commit to the farmers to deliver specific services in specific ways. Service Charters are increasingly seen as instruments for achieving accountability and responsiveness of service providers and therefore necessary for the improvement of service delivery.

4.0. Data Collection Methodology

Data for the baseline study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches for primary data collection and literature review for secondary data but also for providing insights for the development of tools for primary data collection.

4.1. Qualitative data collection

4.1.1. Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted in six of the eight districts targeted by the project. The interviews were held with agricultural officers at the district and technocratic/programming personnel in NGOs working in the agriculture six the selected districts. Fifteen interviews were conducted in total of which eight were with NGO representatives while seven were with Ministry of Agriculture officers (See Appendix I). The interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide that sought information on a number of issues that are relevant to the project (see Appendix II).

4.1.2. Focus group discussions

FGDs were held with farmers in each of the six districts that were visited for the study. A total of about 360 farmers were involved in the study. The FGDs were facilitated using a checklist of key issues on which the study sought to collect collective views of communities (See Appendix IV).

4.3. Structured questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered to twenty farmers that were randomly selected in six communities in the six districts. Thus a total of 120 questionnaires were completed. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix V).

5.0. Malawi's Agriculture Extension Models in Historical Perspective

5.1. Colonial period

Agriculture extension has continuously evolved since its first traceable roots from the country's colonial period around the 1890's largely owing to the then Nyasaland's perceived dismal economic prospects due to frequent droughts, epidemics and locust plagues exacerbated by the practiced shifting cultivation method (Masangano&Mthinda, 2012). Coercion to follow recommended practices was used when it became necessary to increase the productivity of small holder farmers to produce raw materials for export (MoA, 2006). Failure to follow the rules often led to meting out fines or short prison sentences (Kettlewell 1965 and Dequin 1970 quoted in Masangano and Mthinda, 2012). According to Masangano and Mthinda, in the 1950s, a Master Farmer approach was initiated which in itself has experienced an evolution but is still used in some sort of form today. The

Master Farmer approach has evolved alongside a wider agriculture extension evolution through to post independence period.

5.2. Post-independence, one-party period

Post independent Malawi saw a repeal of all the repressive agriculture extension laws to a “more educative and persuasive system” (Masangano and Mthinda, 2012). Unlike the master farmer of the colonial period, the “progressive” farmer or “*Mchikumbe number 2s²*” entered the stage (Ibid, 2012) with similar preferential treatment. Mass media was used to support the transfer of messages to the farming communities.

In 1981 a block extension system was introduced. The block approach saw working areas (Sections) divided into blocks with 1 Section comprising of 8 blocks. The main approach used in the block extension system was the Training and Visit (T&V) Approach. In this approach, trainings were conducted for a group of farmers and individual farm visits would be conducted to farmers by the extension worker. While this approach was very effective, the downside was the limited coverage as there was only as many farmers that the extension worker could afford to visit in any husbandry practice time period (i.e. land preparation). In addition to this, another weakness was the “blind targeting”. This is the targeting where all farmers (practically whole villages) whether a farmer was growing the crop or not, were targeted. Some farmers lost interest as a result and this led to absenteeism and hence the approach’s reduced impact.

The block extension system evolved to the group extension system which is currently being practiced. While the block extension system blindly targeted farmers, the group extension system is based on farmer interest groups. For example, farmers interested in cotton production are grouped together and extension services provided to them as a group. The group extension system has developed alongside the progressive farmer approach in the name of “Lead Farmers”. In focus groups conducted in the target districts, farmers described the current extension system as open, and that “farmers are able to freely express their problems and challenges as well as share ideas with their fellow farmers”.³

5.3. Agriculture Extension in the new Millennium

The country’s political, economic and public health evolution has had an impact and to a large extent shaped the practice and delivery of agriculture extension. Political pluralism ushered attendant liberties including freedoms of choice and association, market liberalization and new ways of

² His Excellency the Life President Ngwazi Dr. H Kamuzu Banda was Mchikumbe No. 1.

³ Focus Group Discussion in Nsipe EPA in Ntcheu District.

organisation governance including decentralisation. With this, there was also an emergence of private voluntary organisations (PVOs) working in several areas including agriculture. The late 1980s also saw the rapid spread and increased mortality of productive age farmers and extension workers due to HIV & AIDS. For agriculture extension, this meant a radical rethink of both the organisation of agriculture extension as well as its provision.

Therefore, in 2000, the Ministry of agriculture came up with a new extension policy which was meant to counter the challenges presented by democratisation and governance reorganisation; the emergency of HIV and AIDS; coupled with a shrinking public purse and the opportunities presented by the emergency of PVOs (non-governmental organisations) and for profit organisations dealing in agriculture extension. The policy was suitably titled “Agriculture Extension in the New Millennium: - Towards Pluralistic and Demand Driven Services in Malawi”. It has three main provisions as follows:

- a) Agriculture extension services are open to be provided by any and all stakeholders with the capacity to provide services
- b) Farmers and farmer organisations to demand services they need
- c) Government will play a monitoring and regulatory role.

The 2000 Agriculture extension policy is hinged on several principles. These principles are meant to guide the implementation of the policy to achieve the three main provisions of the policy. These principles include: Demand Driven Extension Services; Accountability; Those who benefit pay (Service at cost); Resource Sustainability; Equalisation; Promotion of Pluralism and Decentralised Co-ordination

5.3.1. Demand driven extension services:

While for a long time, services were provided as determined by supply, the new policy provides for farmers to demand the advice to which service providers will respond, effectively turning farmers into clients of extension services and putting them more in control. With agricultural liberation this entails varied and specialised extension services covering a range of agricultural production activities. In effect, it also implicitly places the duty for service providers to be prepared to provide the advice that is likely to be sought.

5.3.2. Accountability

The special relationship that has emerged between the farmers and extension service providers is a departure from the status quo. There is therefore need for accountability mechanisms to be established in order to guarantee quality of services. According to the policy, “farmers will need to have a voice in the way that such extension is planned, implemented and evaluated.” The policy

points to political decentralisation, strengthening farmer organisations and other stakeholders involved in providing extension as a foundation for upholding accountability.

5.3.3. Service at Cost

Given shrinking public resources, certain services are segmented as public interest extension services. These are extension services targeted at promoting national policy objectives of the environment, poverty eradication and food security. Other extension services falling outside these and those especially promoting private interests will have to be paid for through the promotion of private participation in the provision of extension services.

Under resource sustainability, the policy calls for improved management of extension to reduce costs associated with the provision of extension. Through working with stakeholders, the policy calls for the promotion and mobilisation of other extension providers as a way of diversifying extension services financing. In line with “those who benefit pays” principle, commercialising and privatising agricultural extension activities will also lead to diversifying of extension financing.

5.3.4. Equalisation/Inclusiveness

Equalisation is aimed at ensuring that the “poorer segments of the society, women, youth and people with disabilities are not left out of the development process for purposes of equity and equality. These are the segments of people that will be reached using public funds in the interest of achieving poverty eradication and food security.

5.3.5. Pluralism and coordinated decentralisation

A greater choice and diversity of services in line with the market oriented economy means opening up the playing field to more than just government as the extension service provider. A pluralistic approach means the promotion of a variety of actors for extension provision. Opening service provision as thus requires more prudent regulation which according to the policy can best be done through a decentralised coordination structure which is at the district level. According to the policy, “coordination at a decentralised level is of particular importance, especially with greater pluralism, in that, it is possible to achieve stakeholder interaction, linkages and harmony towards fulfilling common goals” as most likely, at this level, interests are more easily aggregated and hence structured service provision possible. Suggestions for possible coordination approaches include joint planning and implementation, information sharing and training and joint financing of extension activities.

6.0. CISANET Project focus in Pluralistic and demand driven Extension Model

While promoting all the principles as outlined by the policy CISANET's project will mainly focus on the first and second principles. The focus is on strengthening "farmers' voice" through establishment and/or review of service charters as well as assessing the capability of farmers to demand services and the service providers to make those services available. The District Agriculture Extension Services System implementation guidelines specifically point towards Service Charters as one way of promoting accountability and defines and explains them as:

"...a written, publicly available (often displayed) commitment that enshrines and elaborates the responsibilities of organisations involved in the regulation, coordination, quality assurance or provision of services for farmers or their organisations. It articulates the rights of clients obtaining services, the standards to which services should be provided and the obligations of organisations/companies across the services system in meeting specified standards. Standards include ethical practices in the services chain as well as quality of deliverables in technical/professional areas. Such charters demonstrate pro-active and transparent commitments to clients' rights and satisfaction – as contrasted with the often reactive and negative experiences encountered with bureaucracies involved in services regulation or provision."
(MoA, 2006)

In the following sections, we highlight the results of the study answering specific questions posed by the study terms of reference.

7.0. Results of the Study

7.1. Organisation and Governance of Local Structures for Agriculture

Assemblies at the district, town, city and municipal level were established by the Malawi Local Government Act of 1998. These assemblies are mandated to form committees at the district and lower levels as a way of facilitating participation in governance by constituents. Main committees according to the administrative levels include District Development Committee (DDC) at the District

Level, Area Development Committee (ADC) at the Traditional Authority level and a Village Development Committee at the Village Level.

In addition to the many functions of the assemblies, in the second schedule of the local government act, sub section 22 under “Other Functions”, the assembly is also mandated to “take charge of all decentralised services and activities which include...crops, animal and fisheries husbandry extension services (Local Government Act, 1998). Following the new agriculture extension policy which is demand driven, structures in conformity with the current democratic dispensation are necessary to ensure representation and accountability.

To facilitate this, the Ministry of Agriculture has developed the District Agriculture Extension Support System (DAESS) as a parallel structure at the local government level to manage the coordination and provision of agriculture extension services starting at the district level to the village level (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006). The structure has three levels:

- A) District stakeholder panel (DSP) (Farmers and farmer groups, NGOs, CBOs, Agribusiness and others)
- B) Area Stakeholder Panels (ASP) (same participants at the Traditional Authority Level)
- C) Village Agriculture Committee / Village Action Committees (VAC)⁴

At the district level, as described by the District Agriculture Development Officers (DADOs), the District Stakeholder Panel is supported by the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee which is a committee of technocrats responsible for coordinating agriculture extension activities. This committee reports to the District Agriculture Committee established by the extension policy implementation guidelines⁵. At the district level, the implementation guidelines also establish the District Stakeholder Panel which is roughly made up of 50% technocrats with the other 50% mainly representing farmers interests (Farmers, farmer groups).

Ideally, extension services demands are generated at the village level in the village agriculture committee and passed on to the Area Stakeholder Panel (ASP). At the Area Stakeholder panel, the demands are aggregated and prioritised. Prioritised activities are then passed on to the District Stakeholder Panel which presents the further aggregated and prioritised list to the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee. With the leadership of the DADO at this level, the

⁴ As called by the District Agriculture Development Officers. Please note that this level does not appear in the extension policy implementation guidelines.

⁵ The District Agriculture Committee is not one of the committees established by the LGA, however, the act gives power to the council to form other committees as necessary.

demands are presented to the DAECC as a shopping list from which stakeholders are able to select interventions they are able to provide.

Interviews with the District Agriculture Development Officers in the targeted districts indicated that these structures are available in the districts however, the level of functionality varied from district to district.

According to the DADO for Nkhatabay District Agriculture Office, the institutions to support the district agriculture extension system are established and relatively active and functional. According to the Extension Methodology Officer for the district, “the District Stakeholder Panel requires a considerable amount of resources in order to meet, resources that are not readily available.” As a result district stakeholder panel meetings are irregular and far apart. On the other hand, Village Agriculture Committees are more active. They plan their meetings to coincide with Village Development Committee meetings.

In Nkhotakota, the district has a very strong District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee (DAECC). While Area Stakeholder Panels have been instituted, they are at varying degrees of development with some of them active while others are inactive. Most of the village agriculture committees are not operational even though they have been formed.

In Chikhwawa, the structures have been formed at the District (District Stakeholder Panel and District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee) and TA level (Area Stakeholder Panels). Village Agriculture Committees have not been formed yet. With regard to functionality, the Area Stakeholder Panels are more functional compared to the District Stakeholder Panel. Once ASPs aggregate demands, the demands are channelled directly to the DAECC without going through the DSP as is supposed to be the case. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is because the composition of the DSP and the DAECC is almost the same with the exception of the presence of farmers and farmer groups in the DSP.

In Mulanje and Machinga, the story is quite similar to the other districts where the structures have been instituted but not as active. For example, the last time the DAECC met was at the end of 2013, and yet they were supposed to meet on a monthly basis. In Machinga, partners reported that the DAECC had not met in the past year.

In Ntcheu, DAESS decentralised structures are available but inactive, however the DAECC is reportedly active, chaired by Concern Universal.

Several factors were said to be responsible for the situation including the following:

- a) Committees are not trained on their roles and responsibilities.
- b) Committees are not empowered to generate their own financing mechanism for funding their meetings.
- c) Lack of ownership for the committees as they consider the initiative a “government initiative”
- d) In some cases, there is lack of proper composition of the committees with representation of the committees coming from one particular side of the Traditional Authority especially for Area Stakeholder Committees.
- e) Stakeholders contend that the frequency for meetings is not appropriate (monthly) and it is too frequent.
- f) Stakeholders keep changing representation at district meetings which affects continuity.

A strong district agriculture extension support system assumes functional decentralised structures at the district level which clearly does not seem to be the case in the targeted districts.

7.2. Existence and Performance of Service Charters at the District Level

One of the seven principles of the 2000 agriculture extension policy is accountability. The fact that the relationship between extension beneficiaries (farmers and farmer groups) and extension service providers has been overhauled requires an overhaul of the prescription guiding this relationship. The risk of sitting it at home while waiting for farmers to demand services (literal interpretation of the policy) is high as we will discuss in the next sections. Also as is the case with novel ideas, sometimes things do not work as they are anticipated to, hence there is need for accountability mechanisms to be established that spell out the roles of clients and service providers. While participating in the different committees is one way of giving voice to the farmers, just as important is the management of expectations by both sides. This has been done through the use of social contracts appropriately called Service Charters.

A service charter is an undertaking, a social contract, or a covenant made with stakeholders of a particular service. It outlines the services that stakeholders can expect from a service provider as well as establishes pathways to accessing such services and systems for redress in cases where services are not provided as expected. It was important to establish whether Service Charters were available or not in each of the districts.

While most districts targeted indicated that they did not have service charters existing at the district level, Nkhatabay district indicated that they were in fact using the service charter developed at the national level. There was however no evidence to support this view especially from interviews with extension officers.

In Ntcheu district, with support from Concern Universal, the District Agriculture Development Office managed to put a service charter in place. This charter has however not been operationalised as it is currently being vetted at the Office of the President and Cabinet. However, even when the charter becomes operational, monitoring its application beyond TA Makwangwala will be problematic considering that the supporting agency is only working in this one TA.

It would therefore be safe to conclude that none of the targeted districts had service charters in operation. Given the foregoing, the next question with regard to the performance of service charters became void. It is however important to learn lessons from districts that have prior experience in the development and implementation of service charters before proceeding with project implementation.

7.3. Frontline Staff Capacity to deliver demand Driven Services

In conducting the study, the capacity of frontlines workers was conceptualised as including knowledge and skills, availability of enabling infrastructure to provide services (capacitation) and the quantity of human resources available.

Generally, across the targeted districts, frontline staffs are rated as knowledgeable and skilled enough to deliver services according to the design of the extension policy with minor variations especially when looking at new staff that are coming out of school and have not gained enough field experience. In Nkhotakota, it was pointed out that additional gaps in skills are as a result of inadequate dissemination of the District Agriculture Extension Support System (DAESS) to extension staff. Field extension workers are a bridge between the technocrats in the ministry and the farmers and communities that are supposed to benefit from any policies promulgated by the ministry. One success factor in policy implementation is the quality of knowledge possessed by frontline staff. While key informants with the exception of Nkhotakota felt that extension staff were knowledgeable and skilled, interviews with extension staff themselves revealed a less rosy picture. While 82 per cent of the extension works interviewed (n = 49), indicated they were familiar with the current policy, only 31 per cent indicated they were fully aware of its provisions, supporting the position of Nkhotakota that the DAESS had not been fully disseminated. As a wider system issue, capacity building and on job training of extension workers was a unique challenge in all the districts.

With regard to the capacitation of staff to do their job, mobility is most challenging in all the districts. There is not enough funding to procure enough fuel and maintain available motorbikes and

vehicles. This limits the mobility of staff at the EPA and District level to provide supportive supervision to field workers. Field workers are, however, equipped with bicycles that are used in reaching out to farmers. Maintenance issues with the motorbikes were noted especially in Nkhatabay.

At the district level, the lowest cadre in the extension system is the Agriculture Extension Development Officer (AEDO). Each extension planning area is divided into sections manned by an Agriculture Extension Development Officer (AEDOs). The AEDOs are the crucial link between the extension system (DAESS) and the farming communities. In assessing the capacity (quantity) of frontline workers, the study looked at the available AEDOs and other extension workers from the NGO sector. It was learnt during the study that most of the NGOs did not have their own extension workers with exception of a few NGOs such as Africare in Mulanje. NGOs relied on government extension officers to support farmers.

At the section level, all districts had vacancies leaving out communities not covered by extension services. On average, each AEDO was serving 2,955 farming families. This is 3.6 times higher than the recommended farming family number of 800 per extension worker. The table below shows the situation by district

Table 1: Capacity gaps for extension in the Project's districts

Name of District	Number of Sections	Manned Sections	Unmanned Sections	Farming Families	Ratio
Nkhatabay	53	43	10	63,000	1 : 1,465
Mulanje	57	47	10	202, 000	1 : 4,297
Chikhwawa	124	45	79	107, 021	1 : 2,378
Nkhotakota	77	50	27	93, 000	1 : 1,860
Ntcheu	107	58	49	169, 027	1 : 2,914
Machinga	16	7	9	33, 734	1 : 4,819

There is a high staff turnover in the districts especially for staff that are graduating from the Natural Resources College. Most of them get posted and leave almost immediately looking for opportunities in urban areas⁶. In addition to the desire to work in urban areas, in Chikhwawa, the weather is said

⁶ Interview with the Nkhatabay DADO

to be another contributing factor to new recruits leaving the district⁷. In all the focus group discussions conducted, the issue of numbers of extension providers came up as one of the likely challenges of service charters. Communities noticed the poor working conditions of extension workers citing that extension workers houses are poorly maintained.

7.4. Farmers Capacity to demand Services

The 2000 Agriculture Extension policy assumes that, *ceteris paribus*, farmers have a need for extension services and that if services are offered, farmers will demand them. In establishing the status quo, the study conceptualised that demand for services can be determined by several factors including the farmers literacy, established need and confidence in their own knowledge and skills to successfully cultivate without the advice of extension workers. In order to establish the status quo with regard to whether farmers were demanding services or not, the response was mixed with some districts indicating that farmers were not demanding services, while others were indicating that the demand for certain services was overwhelming. It was realised however that the idea or definition of “demand for services” was not uniform, which in part led to the varied responses.

For example, an individual farmer can demand services to be rendered on farm, as in advice on how to perform tasks like planting for certain crops. This is contrasted to a situation where an organised farmers group would like to cultivate or raise crops and livestock that have not previously been provided. In Nkhatabay, the DADO indicated that the farmers were actively demanding services and indicated that an example of a service that was demanded was pig farming and improved rice varieties to mention a few. In the same districts however, interviews with field extension workers did not seem to agree as they indicated that farmers were in fact not demanding services. In Mulanje, the DADO pointed out that the district was limited by the several challenges such that if farmers were to genuinely demand services, the extension system would not cope.⁸ As an example, she indicated that the district is able to administer the anti-rabies vaccines (ARV) only once a year, however the demand from the communities is that this should be done several times a year. While human resources and vials are not a problem, the challenge is how to reach these beneficiaries.

In order to gauge the literacy levels, through a structured questionnaire, the study asked about the levels of education of the farmers and whether they could read or write. Sixty nine (69) per cent of the farmers could read or write (approximately 77% for men and approximately 65 percent for women). From the total interviewed, only 21 per cent had not attended school in their lives, while 56 per cent had primary level education and the remaining 23 per cent had some secondary

⁷ Interview with the Chikhwawa DADO

⁸ This comment was in reference to the public extension services.

education. National literacy rates are at 67 per cent for women and 81 per cent for men (MDHS, 2010). The national rates are not significantly different from those found in this study especially considering the sampling that targeted rural farmers whereas the MDHS was more random. Farmers were asked if there was a time in the growing season when they felt they needed extension services. The table below shows the proportion of farmers who felt they needed extension services by level of education.

	Yes, I felt I needed Extension services.	Total in category	% of Category
No Education	14	25	56%
Primary Level	48	67	72%
Secondary	24	27	89%
Total	86	119	

Discounting specific farm situations, it appears education levels are positively correlated with the recognition of need for extension services.

Illiteracy is likely to be a greater barrier if the farmers were acting alone, however, more often than not, farmers are organised in groups for purposes of accessing loans, markets and other services. In the study, nearly every second person (45 per cent) belonged to a farmers group (club or association). It is therefore anticipated that disadvantages brought about by illiteracy are counter acted by belonging to clubs and benefiting from group decision making power. Belonging to clubs ends up being a “double edged sword” as farmers themselves identified belonging to clubs and associations as one way of countering the human resource capacity gaps (quantity) of extension providers⁹.

In addition to literacy, the study also conceptualised that self-belief or confidence in own experience in crop production and/or livestock production would mean less demand in extension services. The study therefore enquired how long farmers had been engaged in the production of crops they had grown in the 2013/2014 growing season. The majority (65 per cent) had 10 or more years’ experience growing the crop; however, asked about their confidence levels, only 30 per cent

⁹Focus Group Discussions in Mitole EPA in Chintheche, Nkhatabay.

indicated that they were very confident. With regard to seeking extension services, 83 per cent of the very confident indicated there was a time in the growing season at which they felt they could have used extension services. According to these results therefore, it does not seem that confidence in ones skills is related to not seeking extension services.

Finally, the value of extension services was tested among farmers. Farmers were asked if they felt extension services added value to their agricultural practice. The majority (84 per cent) answered affirmatively.

It is clear therefore that farmers find value in extension services and if enabled, they are capable of demanding services. There are constraints however in accessing services that might affect demand including the non-functionality of mechanisms for expressing extension demands and the sheer lack of extension service providers in the area. The fear of unknown is also a real factor among factors as some of them misunderstand the demand driven approach as meaning that extension workers will only interact with them when they demand services. This was the feeling expressed in the FGD held in Thuchila EPA. Of importance however is their recognition of their own need for getting sensitised on the approach.

7.5. The District Agriculture Extension Support System Coordination Challenges

The current agriculture extension system is pluralistic, meaning that different stakeholders especially NGOs can also provide extension services. The DA ECC is the coordinating structure at the district level with the DADO playing a regulatory role in addition to being a provider. Experience has however shown that since NGOs are independently led by their own structures with their own goals, objectives, approaches and policies. These have at times been in conflict with the practice and goals of the extension system. For example, in Chikhwawa, like many other districts, lead farmers are used to provide extension to other farmers. They are used by both government and NGOs; however, some NGOs were paying incentives to their lead farmers while government was not, effectively making it less attractive to work with government as a lead farmer and opting to work with NGOs and or demanding similar treatment from government. In another district, an NGO was promoting a different Permanent Pit Planting (PPP) technique different from the one recognised and approved by government.

Key informant interviewees also observed that unlike government which has a mandate to provide extension services everywhere in the district, NGOs often have particular geographic impact areas

and are not flexible to take up new areas and new extension disciplines owing to commitments they have with their financiers. The implication is that even though NGOs can make a welcome contribution to extension efforts, they may not always cover the district in a perfect fit leading to certain areas being serviced more than others.

The aim of establishing the DEACC was to coordinate extension efforts at the district level. It was observed however in one district that in some cases, NGOs directly implement in the areas without the knowledge of the District Agriculture Development Office. As such, it becomes difficult for the DEASS process to be inclusive and make use of the available resources.

Stakeholder interviews at the district also showed that the vibrancy of the DAESS is to a certain extent dependent on the commitment of the DADO in the district. In its current status, the implementation of the DAESS stresses reliance on the assembly to generate resources for implementation in addition to the resources coming from the central level and other donors. This being the case, the functionality of the DAESS becomes dependent on the innovativeness and partnership creation skills of the DADO to drive the DAESS leveraging resources from government and other partners.

8.0. Implication of the Results of the Study for the Project

8.1. Implications for Implementation

Given the results of the study, the following are implications of the study which need to be carefully considered before progressing with the implementation of the project:

- a) As has been observed, while institutional arrangements are available at the district level, these institutions (DAECC, DSP, ASP and VAC) are not capacitated. In order for the service charters to work, these institutions will require capacity building, not only on the implications of service charters and their formation, but also on mechanisms for sustaining their being.
- b) Farmers will also require substantial education and information in order for them to play a proper role. As was noted in the FGDs, the evolution of extension in the past few years has already paved way in that the current extension system is considered “open”. It should therefore not take a lot to get them sensitized. In an interview with the DADO for Mulanje, it was indicated that with resources available, a month should be adequate to cover an entire district with messaging on the current policy.

- c) The service providers will need to be better supported than they currently are. This means more attention paid to their transportation as well as maintenance of vehicles and other infrastructure required for them to perform.
- d) Putting in place service charters will require a broad coalition with stakeholders at the national, district and community levels. Efforts at the national level (Ministry's, NGO stakeholder HQs) will be aimed at garnering political support for the district initiatives, while the coalition at the district level will ensure support for the charters at that level. Involvement of communities in the process of formation will ensure support by the communities during implementation.

8.2. Implications for the project's Results framework

The findings of the baseline study have important implications on the design and implementation of the project. All the implications have to do with the Results framework of the project as follows:

- i. The design of the project hinged on the assumption that service charters were available in the districts but were not operationalised. The finding of the study is that the service charters are non-existent and unoperational despite policy provision. Thus, the project will have to make institutionalisation of service charters one of its results at outcome level. This will entail reviewing and realigning project activities.
- ii. In the results framework, the results are presented in too many words and sometimes it is not very clear what result to track or focus on. It is recommended that results should be streamlined and presented in a manner that is not ambiguous.
- iii. The indicators of results in the current results framework are essentially and mostly project activities that will be executed to achieve the results. This presentation is somewhat tautological. It is therefore recommended that once results have been framed properly, proper indicators of the same should be identified and the indicators should be neutral and without bias or targets included in them. Results at output level should be framed in a manner that is measurable or empirically observable. In the current formulation of outputs one and two, it is not clear how 'increased capacity' and 'increased ability' can be measured or observed.
- iv. Output three –enhanced interface among agricultural sector players – is clearly achieved by the project at lower levels i.e. district and sub-district levels. The project in its current design does not have activities to be implemented at national level so it is difficult to see how the output will be achieved at that level.

Conclusion

This report has presented baseline values for qualitative and quantitative indicators that should be used to improve the design of the project and track progress in the achievement of results. The key findings are that there is very little awareness and understanding of the recent Government policy or model for the provision of extension services both among extension providers and farmers. Consequently, Service charters have not been instituted and the necessary structures for their implementation are either dormant or lacking in capacity. The results of the study should therefore help the project to focus on project activities and results that bring forth knowledge on the current model for providing extension services and build local level institutional capacity for farmers to be able to demand services and for extension workers to be responsive.

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Appendix I: List of Key Informants

District	Name of Official	Institution	Designation
Nkhata Bay	Mr. Alex Chirwa	MoA	DADO
Nkhotakota	Mr Davies Phangaphanga	MoA	DADO
		MoA	AEDEC
	Mrs Lillian Kama Chaguluka	Concern Worldwide	Programme Manager
Chikwawa	Mr Duncan Magwira	MoA	DADO
	Mr Pythons Kayira	Evangelical Association of Malawi	Project Officer
Mulanje	Mrs Sheila Kang'ombe	MoA	DADO
	Mr. VenasioChome	Africare	Programme Manager
	Mr. Innocent Ntenjera	Africare	Project Manager
	Mr. Maxwell Litafula	World Vision Int	Cluster Manager
	Ms. Get rude Chibwana	CARD	Field Officer
Ntcheu	Mr Msukwa	MoA	DADO
	MrsMweso	Concern Universal	Prog Manager
Machinga	MrMtobwi	MoA	Extension Services
	Henry Macheмба	World Vision	Prog Manager

Appendix II: Interview guide for Key Informants

Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) / Civil Society Governance Fund (Tilitonse)
Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision
Baseline Survey
Guide for KII

Key Informant Interview Guide

Introduction

- 1) What are some of the noticeable evolution that agriculture extension has gone through in Malawi?
- 2) Has the evolution of agriculture extension been largely positive or negative? Please support your response with a reason?
- 3) Are you aware of the current agriculture extension policy?
- 4) What would you consider as some of the major aspects of the current policy?

Existence and performance of District Service Charters

1. One of the approaches being promoted is the use of pluralist agricultural extension services supported by district agricultural extension service charters. Do service charters exist in your Agriculture Development Division or District Agriculture Development Office?
2. How were these service charters developed? Who participated in the development? Who funded the development of the service charters?
3. How functional are the service charters?
4. What role does the local government play in facilitating the implementation of service charters?
5. Are the institutional arrangements in place for ensuring the implementation of the service charters? i.e. are the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committees (DAECC) and Stakeholder panels existing at the district (DAECC) and area level (Stakeholder panels)
6. How are these institutions supported to fulfil their mandate?
7. How many extension service officers does the district have at each level

- a. District Level
 - b. EPA Level
 - c. Section Level
8. How many farmers do you have in the district?
 9. Is there any evidence of the impact of service charters? What is the evidence?

Capacity of Frontline Staff for Delivering

1. In your opinion, do you think field extension workers are adequately trained to provide quality extension services as envisaged in the service charter?
2. In your opinion, do you think field extension workers are adequate (in numbers) to provide quality extension services ?
3. In your opinion, are field extension worker supervisors adequately trained to provide quality supportive supervision to field extension workers in their bid to fulfil their obligations as spelled out in the charter?
4. Are extension officers at the district level adequately trained to provide quality supportive supervision to at the field level?
5. How do you work with the NGOs'/ Government counterparts in the provision of agriculture extension services
6. What approaches to collaboration have you adopted? i.e. do you plan together? Do you implement together etc?

Farmers Consumption Capacity

1. The ideal situation is that farmers should demand for extension services from providers. How is this working in your area?
2. What are some of the successes with regard to the demand driven approach ?
3. What are the challenges with this approach?
4. What can be done to reduce the challenges and enhance current capacity?

Appendix III: Guide/Checklist for FGDs

Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) / Civil Society Governance Fund (Tilitonse)

Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision

Baseline Survey

FGD Guide

Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide

Introduction

- 5) What are some of the noticeable evolution that agriculture extension has gone through in Malawi?
- 6) Has the evolution of agriculture extension been largely positive or negative? Please support your response with a reason?
- 7) Are you aware of the current agriculture extension policy?
- 8) What would you consider as some of the major aspects of the current policy?

Existence and performance of District Service Charters

10. One of the approaches being promoted is the use of pluralist agricultural extension services supported by district agricultural extension service charters. Do service charters exist in your District Agriculture Development Office?
11. How were these service charters developed? Who participated in the development?
12. How functional are the service charters?
13. Are the institutional arrangements in place for ensuring the implementation of the service charters? i.e. are the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committees (DAECC) and Stakeholder panels existing at the district (DAECC) and area level (Stakeholder panels)

Capacity of Frontline Staff for Delivering

7. In your opinion, do you think field extension workers are adequately trained to provide quality extension services as envisaged in the service charter?
8. In your opinion, do you think extension workers receive enough support from their supervisors and offices?
9. What are some of the suggestions you would make to improve the capacity of field extension workers?

Farmers Consumption Capacity

5. The ideal situation is that farmers should demand for extension services from providers.
How is this working in your area?
6. What are some of the successes with regard to the demand driven approach ?
7. What are the challenges with this approach?
8. What can be done to reduce the challenges and enhance current capacity of farmers to demand services

Appendix IV: Structured Questionnaire

Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) / Civil Society Governance Fund (Tilitonse)
 Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision
 Baseline Survey
 Structured Questionnaire (Farmers)

Identifying Information

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
1	Name of Respondent: _____	
2	Gender of Respondent: <i>(Please circle one)</i> 1. Male 2. Female	Please circle
3	Name of District <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-left: 100px;"> <input style="width: 40px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 10px;" type="text"/> </div> 1. Nkhotakota 2. Nkhatabay, 3. Mchinji, 4. Ntcheu, 5. Mangochi, 6. Machinga 7. Chikhwawa 8. Mulanje	Please enter code of district in box

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
4	<p>Name of Agriculture Development Division</p> <p>1. Karonga ADD</p> <p>2. Mzuzu ADD</p> <p>3. Kasungu ADD</p> <p>4. Lilongwe ADD</p> <p>5. Salima ADD</p> <p>6. Machinga ADD</p> <p>7. Blantyre ADD</p> <p>8. Ngabu</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <input style="width: 50px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> </div>	<p>Please enter ADD code in the box</p>
5	<p>Name of Extension Planning Area</p> <hr style="border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 20px;"/>	
6	<p>Do you belong to a farmers group? Yes __ NO __ </p>	
7	<p>What is the name of the group you belong to?</p> <hr style="border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 20px;"/>	
6	<p>How many years of school have you completed?</p> <p>Years <input style="width: 50px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black; margin-left: 10px;" type="text"/></p>	<p>Please count repeated years as</p> <p>1. Ex. A standard 7 drop out = 7 years of school; a form 3 drop out = 11 years</p>
7	<p>Can you read?</p> <p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. No</p>	

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
8	Can you write? 1. Yes 2. No	
9	How much land do you own in total? Acres <input data-bbox="493 562 608 651" type="text"/> Hectares <input data-bbox="493 736 608 826" type="text"/> <div data-bbox="724 701 1153 887" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-left: 150px;"> <i>Please only enter one field, data will be entered in the database in acres and any hactarage figures will be converted before data entry</i> </div>	

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
10	<p>How much land did you manage to cultivate in the past growing season?</p> <p>Acres <input data-bbox="493 443 608 533" type="text"/></p> <p>Hectares <input data-bbox="493 618 608 707" type="text"/></p> <p>Please note, if land cultivated is greater than which they own; ask:</p>	
10b	<p>Where did you get the extra land?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rented (in exchange for money) 2. Bought 3. Borrowed 4. Other (Specify)..... 	

Please only enter one field, data will be entered in the database in acres and any hectare figures will be converted before data entry

Demand for & Importance of Agriculture Extension Services

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
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Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
1	<p>What did you grow on your farm in the 2013/14 growing season?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cash Crop (Tobacco) 2. Cash Crop (Cotton) 3. Cash Crop (Sugar canes) 4. Cash Crops (Legumes) 5. Cash Crops (Rice) 6. Food Crop (Maize 7. Food Crop (Rice) 8. Combination of Cash & Food Crops (Any combination) 9. Other _____ 	
2	<p>How many years' experience do you have growing the crop you grew in the 2013/14 growing season?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No experience 2. Less than 3 Years' experience 3. Between 3 – 5 Years' Experience 4. Between 5 – 10 Years' experience 5. More than 10 Years' experience 	
3	<p>How confident did you feel with regard to crop husbandly practices of the crop you grew?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Confident 2. Relatively confident 3. Not as confident 4. Not sure 	

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
4	<p>Having reached this stage in the production process is there a time that you felt you could have used agriculture extension services to manage your crop?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. Not Sure 4. I do not know 	<p>→Q8 →Q8 →Q8</p>
5	<p>If there was a time that you needed agriculture extension advice, did you in fact seek that advice?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. I cannot remember 	<p>→7 →8</p>
6	<p>If you did not; Why not?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
7	<p>If you accessed or intended to access extension services in the current growing season, how easy or difficult was it to access these services?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very easy – (<i>Took 2 days or less to attend to request</i>) 2. Relatively easy – (<i>Took between 2 -5 days to attend to request</i>) 3. Not easy – (<i>Took more than 5 days to attend to request</i>) 4. Non Responsive – (<i>Did not respond to request</i>) 5. Out of Reach (<i>No extension worker nearby</i>) 	
8	<p>In your opinion, do you think extension services are useful to you as an individual farmer?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. No opinion 	<p>→Next Sect.</p> <p>→Next Sect.</p>
9	<p>If your response is NO, why do you think so?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

Existence & Performance of Service Charters and Institutional Arrangements

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
1	Do you know what a service charter is? 1. Yes 2. No	
2	Are you aware of the existence of a Ministry of Agriculture Service Charter at the District Level? 1. Yes 2. No	→End Interv
3	Have you heard of a farmer, or were you part of the farmers that participated in the formulation or adaptation of the service charter? 1. Yes have heard of a farmer 2. Yes, I was part of the group 3. NO I have not heard neither was I part of	
4	On a scale of 1 – 10; how well do you think the service charter is performing? <i>(Where 1 is dismal performance – this is a situation likened to the absence of a service charter – it's as if a service charter was not available whereas 10 is the best performance possible from a service charter – All obligations are fulfilled by all parties.)</i> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input data-bbox="810 1563 906 1659" type="text"/> </div>	Enter the performance score in the box.

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
5	<p>What are some of the challenges affecting the implementation of service charters at the district level?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of financial resources 2. Lack of human resources 3. Charter not fully supported by stakeholders 4. Charter not fully supported by farmers 5. Charter unrealistic 6. Farmers do not demand services as per charter 7. Other _____ 	<p>Circle all that apply</p>
6	<p>Do you have a District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. I do not know 	<p>→Q10 →Q10</p>
7	<p>How functional is the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee (DAECC)?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functional (Very Active) 2. Functiona 3. I (not very active) 4. Non Functional (Instituted but in active) 5. Non Functional (not instituted) 6. Other _____ 	

Quest #	Question	Skips & Other Instructions
8	<p>Do you have a Stakeholder panel at the District level?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. I do not know 	<p>→Q13 →Q13</p>
9	<p>How functional is the Stakeholder panel at the District level?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functional (Very Active) 2. Functional (not very active) 3. Non Functional (Instituted but in active) 4. Non Functional (not instituted) 5. Other _____ 	
10	<p>Do you have a Stakeholder panel at the Area Level</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. I do not know 	<p>→End Inter →End Inter</p>
11	<p>How functional is the Stakeholder panel at the Area level?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Functional (Very Active) 7. Functional (not very active) 8. Non Functional (Instituted but in active) 9. Non Functional (not instituted) 10. Other _____ 	
