



Performance of Agricultural Extension Services: What are the emerging challenges?

Overview

Agricultural Extension Services include interventions/activities by Government and Non-State Actors (NSAs) that facilitate access of organizations, and other value chain actors to knowledge, information, and technologies; mediate their interaction with other relevant organizations; and assist them to develop their technical and management capacity in agriculture and family life (*NAEP October 2016*).

The Government of Uganda (GoU) reformed the extension services in FY2014/15 and introduced the Single Spine Extension System. It aims at enhancing agricultural production and productivity, value addition, food security, household incomes and export. In addition, building the capacity of individual farmers and farmer institutions to have greater access to and control over structures and processes that transform their resources and assets into the outcomes that they desire to achieve their goals.

This policy brief analyses emerging challenges on the performance of agricultural extension services in the Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) and provides policy recommendations.

The analysis focuses on the period FY2015/16, to FY2018/19 (Semi-annual) and uses data from the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic (MFPED), and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF).

Key Issues

- Lack of coordination and collaboration that leads to duplication of services.
- Low coverage of extension beneficiaries and inadequate provision of services. This is largely due to limited transportation means for agricultural extension workers.
- Poor adoption of agricultural technologies and best practices.
- Ineffective extension approaches.
- Late release of funds that delays implementation.

to address past weaknesses in extension services. The reforms dubbed as “*Single Spine Extension System*” included transfer of the extension function from the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) to the mainstream Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), and the creation of a Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) in FY 2015/16.

In FY 2017/18, the MAAIF focused on institutional capacity building involving recruitment of sub-county and district extension staff, and collection of baseline data on the agricultural sector. For a start, the Cabinet approved a ceiling of 5,000 extension workers for local governments. Implementation guidelines were issued to the district and sub-county staff with a conditionality that 30% of releases were for district level activities, and 70% for sub-county activities. Whereas there is public excitement and expectation over this new evolution in the provision of agriculture extension services in the farming communities.

Introduction

In June 2014, Government re-structured the National Agricultural Extension System in order



The levels of recruitment and financing trends within the system are frustrating the effort.

Financing the Single Spine Agriculture Extension System

There is inadequacy and inconsistency in financing the system. According to the estimated budget in the implementation plan FY2016/17 to FY2019/20, the actual approved budget for the Agricultural Extension Function has stagnated at 31% (table 1). By FY 2019/20 a budget gap of Ug shs 483.4 billion shall be experienced.

Table 1: Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) budget projections for extension service delivery versus MAAIF’s budget estimates for implementation (2015/16 – 2019/20)

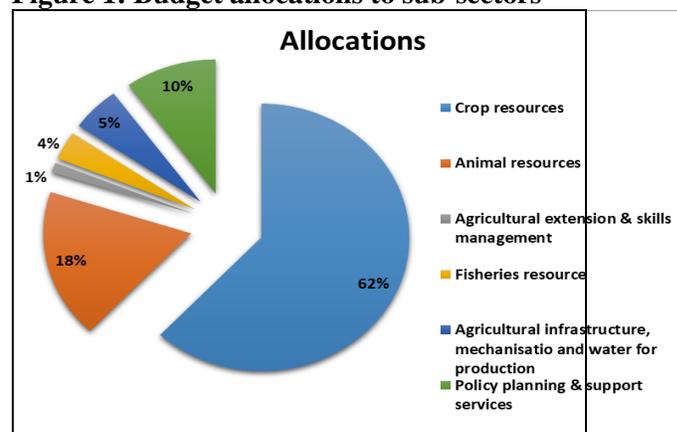
	Total MTEF allocation to extension services (Ug shs, Bn)	Budget estimate for operationalizing Single Spine System (Ug shs, Bn)	Financing Gap (Ug shs, Bn)	Financing gap as a percent of required funds for single spine implementation (% Average)
Year 1: FY2015/16	36.7	149.9	113.1	75.5
Year 2: FY 2016/17	47.8	454.5	406.6	89.5
Year 3: FY 2017/18	53.0	513.0	460.0	89.7
Year 4: FY 2018/19	60.6	568.4	507.8	89.3
Year 5: FY 2019/18	67.5	550.9	483.4	87.7
Entire planning period	265.7	2,236.9	1,971.1	88.1

Source: Background to the Budget 2015/16, Framework Implementation Plan for the Agricultural Extension Services, June 2015 Draft

Analysis of MAAIF sub-sector budgets

Analysis of the budget allocation to MAAIF this FY2018/19 reveals the inappropriate distribution of funds by sub-sector with regards to the role they play in revamping the sector and cushioning its performance (Figure 1). The allocation of only 1.2% (Ug shs 4.043bn) to the Agricultural Extension Function will not significantly impact on the performance and the anticipated outcomes set by other sub-sectors and the entire sector in totality as the extension function is at the heart of the agricultural sector.

Figure 1: Budget allocations to sub-sectors



Source: Ministerial Policy Statement FY2018/19



Emerging challenges

1. **Lack of coordination and collaboration:** Agricultural Extension Services in Uganda are fragmented and uncoordinated due to the diverse players involved in their delivery. These operate largely independently of each other and in some cases, their operations are unknown and unrecognized. The players include; the Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services, Technical Directorates, Agencies (such as: Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) and Cotton Development Organization), District Local Governments (DLGs), Private Sector Organizations and entities, among others. This fragmentation has created gaps in service delivery, duplication of efforts and conflicting messages. For instance, Policy, Planning and Support Services, UCDA, and Local Governments all planned for recruitment of extension workers for FY 2018/19. Similarly, there is poor accountability and duplication of activities under the two LG grants - Production and Marketing Grant (PMG) and Extension Grant.
2. **Low coverage of extension beneficiaries and inadequate provision of extension and advisory services:** FY2018/19 will mark the fourth year of implementation of the Single Spine Agricultural Extension System. However, the recruitment exercise has not yet filled all DLG required positions to increase access to this critical service. According to the Ministerial Policy Statement FY 2018/19, MAAIF has recruited 3,854 (77%) extension workers at district and sub-county levels out of the initial target of 5,000 extension workers. As a result, the current ratio of extension worker to farmer is 1: 1,800 whereas the recommended is 1:500 (the approved structure is 13 officers at district level and 3 extension staff at sub-county level). The 5,000 extension staff were for 116 districts in FY2015/16, but districts have since increased to 128. This is an addition of 12 districts and 94 sub-counties, that has led to inadequate staffing levels both at the district and sub-counties. Currently, staffing levels at DLGs are at 68% and 39% at Central Government, of which 8.3% are substantive and the rest in acting positions.

The ability of extension staff to visit targeted communities on a regular basis is hampered severely by the limited availability of transportation, fuel and maintenance of the old

transport vehicles. This affects field visitation frequency during pre-season, within the season, and post season for comprehensive coverage of extension services.

Transport means for the extension staff in the district and sub-counties are still not enough to enable staff mobility. In FY 2018/19, MAAIF planned to procure and distribute 4,000 motorcycles to DLGs, but only 1,061 motorcycles were handed over in March 2019.

3. **Poor adoption of technologies and best practices:** Only 15% of technologies generated by research institutions reach the farming communities. The optimal utilization of these technologies is estimated at 28% indicating low uptake and utilization of improved technologies (*DAESM semi-annual Report FY2018/19*). As a result, 68% of the agricultural households are trapped in subsistence production and are outside the money economy. Several factors significantly influence farmers' demand for extension services and the adoption of improved technologies and practices in crop, livestock and fish production. The main factors include, lack of access to information, low income sources, and resistance to change by farmer groups.
4. **Ineffective extension approaches:** Current extension delivery approaches are based on face-to-face contact which is unsustainable in light of the inadequate human and financial resources. This is compounded by the existence of numerous unskilled extension workers that require orientation and skilling. However, MAAIF remains constrained by limited capacity building resources and largely depends on donor projects.
5. **Late release of funds:** Increase in agricultural productivity, enterprise performance and input supply efficiency are directly affected by the ability of value chain actors to access finances. Inadequate and late release of funds for agricultural extension activities has remained a big challenge. The required operational funds cater for; fuel, vehicle maintenance and allowances of extension workers, demo materials for farmers, exchange visits and study tours for farmers. The operational funds are also used for mobilization and monitoring



by district leaders, among others. Constant delays in the release of funds distorts execution of the above activities.

For instance, in FY2017/18 there was poor implementation of the Agricultural Extension and Skills Development Programme due to late release of funds by MAAIF which led to poor readiness by districts to implement planned activities. At half year FY2018/19, extension service implementation in Kayunga, Nebbi, Zombo, Oyam and Kamuli districts was slow due to delayed releases and disbursement of funds from the district collection account to the implementing department. The delay led to late procurements.

6. Unequal access to extension services between men and women

In FY2017/18, there were gender inequalities in access to the extension grant activities across the districts. For example, in Kiryandongo District, out of 202 farmers who benefitted from sensitization meetings, trainings and field days, 39 (19.3%) were female and 163 (80.7%) male. Similarly, in Nakapiripirit District, 26 (43%) of the 60 farmers who benefitted from development of commodity value chains were female, while 34 (57%) were male. Women were more involved in the dairy leaning platform, while men were majorly represented in the high value commodities (groundnuts and apiary) that had a very good market. Women's participation in this programme was constrained by lack of land to establish demonstrations, illiteracy that limited their participation in training programmes, and inadequate access and long distances to markets for produce (*BMAU Monitoring Report FY2017/18*).

Conclusion

The Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries embraced the Single Spine Agriculture Extension System with intentions of addressing public outcry from farmers on the state of agricultural extension services in the country. However, there are several unmet farmers' demands for extension services that need to be affectively addressed.

Recommendations

1. The MAAIF should expedite and provide for the recruitment of 1,767 extension workers to achieve the targeted 5,000. The ministry should also ensure that the extension workers are adequately skilled in order to safeguard the quality of services provided to farmers.
2. The MAAIF should follow the strategy and plan by procuring at least 1,000 motorcycles annually, to facilitate mobility of extension workers. Extension workers need at least 4,000 motorcycles both at district and sub-county levels.
3. The Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services through MAAIF should engage in more effective agricultural extension approaches such as the Village Agent Model, Nucleus and Model farms. In addition, there is need to leverage new and innovative approaches and technologies especially ICTs for effectiveness and efficiency.
4. The MAAIF should support capacity development of farmer groups through the Village Agent Model. This model includes selection, training/building capacity of the village agents to provide extension services.

References

- BMAU Annual Budget Monitoring Reports FY 2015/16 -FY 2018/19
- MAAIF, 2016. Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2015/16-2019/20.
- Economic Policy Research Center Report No. 16
- The National Agricultural Extension Policy October 2016
- National Agricultural Extension Strategy
- Department of Agricultural Extension and Skills Management Semi-Annual Progress Report FY 2018/19.

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