



## AGRF 2016 – SIDE EVENT REPORT

Day 2 - Tuesday, September 6

14:30pm- 18:00pm

Side Event

Creating a Community of Practice for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services - Digital Green

### SESSION BRIEF

**Context:** USAID’s Bureau for Food Security has launched the five-year Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) project, led by Digital Green in partnership with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), CARE International, and additional partners. DLEC will partner with USAID missions, public and private providers of Extension Advisory Services (EAS), and farming communities with the goal to raise incomes and increase resilience of smallholder farmers and their families by scaling and enhancing locally-relevant, cost-effective, and pluralistic agricultural extension systems that bring together information technologies and community-based organizations.

By helping country-led agricultural EAS to become more pluralistic, DLEC will help them become more effective, accountable, scalable, and sustainable. To reach this goal, DLEC will work towards three objectives: (1) conduct in-depth assessments of local extension context and capacities and build on previous research on “best fit” EAS; (2) generate evidence on pluralistic EAS from field-level engagements with smallholder farmers and their families; and (3) convene thought leaders, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners engaged in EAS to advance a broad discussion of “best fit” extension services worldwide.

#### Session Objectives:

- Exchange recent relevant learnings and experiences with strengthening extension and advisory services
- Share a framework for engaging with and investing in extension and advisory services (EAS) developed by the newly-awarded USAID’s Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) program
- Explore ways to address the challenges and co-create feasible solutions for strengthening EAS systems

#### Desired Outcome:

- Initiate a community of practice with a clear vision and mandate for continuous co-development of extension and advisory services globally

**Session Organizers:** Digital Green



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Name	Picture	Discussion
<p>Mr. Rex Raimond, Senior Mediator and Program Director, Meridian Institute</p> <p>Role: Moderator</p>		<p>Mr. Raimond set the session objectives out as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To put African development of EAS into national, regional and global context;</li> <li>• Have an interactive discussion on a framework for engaging and investing in EAS in Africa;</li> <li>• To discuss potential solutions/ paths to achieve expanded EAS in Africa;</li> <li>• Develop consensus toward creating a community of practice and determining the next steps toward implementation.</li> </ul> <p>With the changing environment (climate change, new technologies, growing demand for food), agriculture in Africa has shifted from mere crop production for subsistence to a focus on family food security <u>and</u> commercial farming (mixed farming).</p> <p>Other factors that are impacting farming today include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Need to increase yield as the cultivable land is limited thus without improvement in use of inputs and farming techniques there will be a limit on productivity,</li> <li>ii) Population growth that is fueling increasing food demand.</li> </ol> <p>Thus, there is increasing pressure to improve yields from the existent farms across Africa, including small holder farms – through the introduction of improved seeds, fertilizer, use of soil analysis to support input acquisition and to help farmers use good farming practice and improved farming technology, including mechanization where practicable.</p> <p>Mr. Raimond encouraged free exchange of relevant learning and experiences about how to strengthen EAS in Africa and asked delegates to respond to the share framework that was to be</p>



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		<p>presented on the DLEC program and to help explore ways to address challenges and initiate a community of practice.</p> <p>He further noted that if we help country extension and advisory services (EAS) become more <u>pluralistic</u>, and involve an increasing number of state and non-state actors with improved <u>capacity and linkages</u> to generate relevant knowledge and effectively disseminate and monitor use, our local EAS systems will become more effective, accountable, scalable, and sustainable.</p> <p>Critically, he pointed out, every country is unique and there are no best practices that fit each one per se.</p> <p>Thus, it is important to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build evidence and apply extension services on the ground             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Undertake Diagnostics</li> <li>○ Country engagement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Build communities of practice             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Engage with USAID</li> <li>○ Communicate and engage with stakeholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Mr Rex then invited the panel to make their presentations and began the broader discussion with this question: <b><i>How do we enhance extension and advisory services?</i></b></p>
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Panelists		
<p>Mr. Qureish Noordin, Program Officer, Extension Support, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa</p>		<p>Mr. Noordin is a Program Officer at AGRA and replaced Mr. Tesfaye Mengiste in the panel.</p> <p>He explained that in his view the key priority to enhance EAS in support of agriculture development is to expand the role of the private sector. The success of this has been shown in several projects in Rwanda and Mozambique.</p> <p>He also noted that in Africa today the focus of skills development efforts are primarily on improving the productive capacity of farmers. He believes that more effort should be placed on skills and knowledge enhancement in other areas of the value chain – such as how to gather and interpret market information, how to adopt technology to reduce post-harvest losses and pursue value addition, how to profitably trade.</p> <p>He gave an example of how in the Ethiopia farmer service centers they are boosting the capacity to provide EAS and he also noted that in Ghana purpose built NGO's are being developed are solely committed to extension work and mentoring.</p> <p>Recognizing that provision of extension services is key to increasing production, he also acknowledged that many government have challenges in providing extension, notwithstanding the fact that it was recognized as a high priority, because funding challenges exist.</p> <p>Fortunately, he noted there is a resurgence of focus on extension service provision and governments are today also trying to increase research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments are pursuing public-private partnerships to provide EAS;</li> <li>• Governments are also focusing on building ancillary competencies and retooling, adding skills in networking, partnership building, ICT etc. and improving their overall training curriculum;</li> <li>• Governments are also bolstering their capacity in knowledge and information management. However, getting generally accepted practices in terms of training material is a challenge. Material is also scattered and there are few centralized systems that bring together available</li> </ul>



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		<p>knowledge. Development of ICT platforms like e-extension eg. Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Ghana tried to address this. However, there is significant need for support from public sector. There is need to develop content and contacts etc. In Ethiopia farmer training centers are working to improve access to information via e-applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is also an effort to develop extension capacity through the development of community extension workers. Here government extension workers support, train and supervise community extension workers.</li> </ul> <p>The last point that Mr. Noordin made was that M&amp;E is important to ensure that impact is tracked.</p>
<p>Dr. Usha Zehr, CEO, Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company</p>		<p>In her introduction, Dr. Zehr introduced herself and presented the Barwele mission, vision: i) to promote research, technology and knowledge in the areas of agriculture, health care and education for human welfare; and ii) to work for the alleviation of poverty and to improve livelihoods by increased food security;</p> <p>Core activities included: 1) working to increase crop productivity through the use of improved agricultural technologies; 2) applying novel know-how and technologies to attain sustainable productivity in agriculture; 3) providing the information and hands-on training for better utilization of such innovative technologies in a more applied manner; and 4) addressing policy issues pertaining to new developments and applications in the field of biotechnology for agriculture and farming community.</p> <p>In her remarks she noted that often in the private sector there is not necessarily a designated extension department. Rather, extension is built into all of functions and forms part of the core of the business (she used the example of Coca Cola. While roles and titles may defer - Everyone is selling coke!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge sharing is about products and how farmers can get the best from the products; and</li> <li>• Advising about what practices the farmer should follow so that the life of the product can be as long as possible.</li> </ul>



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		<p>She continued to explain that her company works with 2 types of farmers: 1) production farmers (who produce seed to be sold to commercial farmers) up to 100,000; and 2) commercial farmers (3 million) so there is a real need for information among these two components of the value chain. Each is looking for basic information eg. cost of produce at harvest, government incentives.</p> <p>Her company has created a platform where farmers register, so they all can receive useful information and this has made it easier to advise them in different areas. They are now experimenting a new service of providing advice to farmers via cell phones about extension relating to their own farming systems. They are also forming seed clubs to allow for data capture. Lastly, use of mobile phone to disseminate information, her company has also begun shares agronomic practices via sms.</p> <p>Lastly, she noted that her “extension” revolves around improving practices and using technology and inputs with the end goal of making the products they sell more competitive . . . so she can sell more of it. Sales can’t be at zero cost, if you want to ensure your product stays in the market – you have to invest in improving it.</p>
<p>Dr. Kristin Davis, Executive Secretary, Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services</p>		<p>Dr. Davis began her discussion reiterating the key role of CAADP in promoting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity building and retooling,</li> <li>2. Policy advocacy to increase finance to extension,</li> <li>3. Knowledge management to extension</li> </ol> <p>She continued that reflection on CAADP is key as we focus on developing and reforming continental extension policies to make them more effective.</p> <p>She further noted that:</p> <p>i) <u>Policy Development and Reform</u> - There is a need for guiding principles, and a coordination mechanism to provide an improved enabling environment for extension in most countries in Africa. As a starting point she noted that <u>29 countries in Africa have some form of extension policy;</u></p>



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		<p>iii) <u>Implementation Needed</u> - Beyond policy, however, there is a great need for implementation;</p> <p>iv) <u>Additional Resources Needed</u> – Even where there was some budding activity, and particularly where there was not any, there is a greater need for financial and other resources, including the need for more people to be involved in EAS.</p> <p>She noted that only 5 countries have legislated EAS policies; which ensures that extension remains a key focus as regimes change. More need to adopt such examples. The governance environment she continued is very important: growth of community extension workers (CEW), NGOs in the sector, and thus coordination and quality assurance is an issue;</p> <p>v) <u>Alignment</u> – There is also a need for governments to coordinate and ensure that extension speaks to national development goals and is inclusive; and</p> <p>vi) <u>Finance</u> – There is also a need for innovative financing mechanisms, greater accountability to banking clients, a need for blended finance, and a focus on sustainability.</p> <p>Dr. Davis then encouraged that it was important to exchanging relevant learning and experiences geared toward strengthening extension and advisory services in Africa and to collectively explore ways to address the challenges yet existing in the EAS sector. Together, she continued, we can create feasible solutions toward developing a community of practice which has a clear vision.</p> <p>In closing she noted that the theory of change in EAS through DLEC was comprised of two key areas: i) building evidence and applying EAS-related solutions on the ground (diagnostics and country engagement) are the key starting points to developing the tailor made solutions needed in each country; and ii) engaging with stakeholders in Africa, Asia, and Latin America can accelerate the learnings across the continent as stakeholders will have access to a variety of good practices and solutions to adopt.</p> <p>A common framework will help to: engaging EAS systematically, aligning all stakeholders, identifying levers for change, and agree on intervention areas and a shared learning agenda will be key.</p>
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		<p>In closing she proposed the following “next steps”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for EAS at the AGRF – All stakeholders attending;</li> <li>• Further develop ideas from this convening and share with potential funding and implementation partners – All stakeholders attending;</li> <li>• Share convening summary</li> <li>• Organize follow up convening’s             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ GFRAS Annual Meeting Side Event (7 October 2016)</li> <li>○ Virtual CoP dialogue (TBC)</li> <li>○ Organize CoP convening (TBC).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establish a virtual platform (e.g., a list serve and on-line platform)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.feedthefuture.gov">www.feedthefuture.gov</a></li> <li><a href="http://www.digitalgreen.org">www.digitalgreen.org</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Mr. Rikin Gandhi, CEO, Digital Green</p>		<p>In his remarks, Mr. Gandhi noted that the concept of extension has changed beyond the nomenclature and today increasingly involves ICT technology as a training tool/ vehicle. The key question today is how to use these technologies most effectively (social media, information technologies, mobile finance, radio, television etc.).</p> <p>The transition is really about knowledge exchange:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Localization is key. Farmers share information. How do you leverage social networks to ensure more information is shared among farmers? You need to have a mechanism to capture data throughout the skills development system;</li> <li>2. Work with the mobile etc. data shows that the most effective way to disseminate such learning is through people sharing information;</li> <li>3. It's not about one channel of extension but it's also not about more channels of extension- as the situation is certain channels are good for certain things eg. Tv is good for mass communication, Mobile and in person can be useful for reinforcement;</li> <li>4. There is a lot of opportunity for content reuse across multiple platforms and to reach varying stakeholder groups;</li> </ol>



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		<p>5. There is also a need to include other services such as marketing, finance etc. – along with EAS and digital technologies can be used to link different audiences for access to markets, finance etc.</p>
<p>Ms. Alesha Black, Director, Global Food and Agriculture Program, Chicago Council on Global Affairs</p>		<p>Ms. Black commented that extension is on the agenda of many governments in Africa today but the issue is that extension provision has not been/ is not being adequately funded. The issue is thus about HOW to fund extension as more stakeholders recognize its importance.</p> <p>At present there are many “band aid” approaches that are not really sustainable, including many of those involving development partner program sponsorship and/or subsidy:</p> <p>Some of the challenges that exist include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low confidence. There is high variability in what extension is, what are donor funds buying?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is the metric;</li> <li>b. What's the cost per farmer;</li> <li>c. Issue is about quality;</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. What's the model for extension. Is there an essential package, what's the minimum;</li> <li>3. What is the cost of extension...compared to what? What's the ROI, what's the share cost;</li> <li>4. What's the collaborative agenda? Can it be integrated with other sectors/ how can these platforms converge?</li> <li>5. How will the extension look different if most people are young?</li> <li>6. Question on literacy, are the farmers being trained literate?</li> </ol>



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		Making a case for minimum quality standards and having some return on investment findings can help make the case for funding extension stronger.
<b>Q &amp; A</b>	Is there a model that you follow? What particular model will be promoted?	This will use a best fit approach as there is no best approach. Best fit that is contextual to geographies, crops and political economy and capacity of farmers, resources etc.
	Working relationship of Dr. Usha with Digital Green? What might the cost be?	No formal relationship at this stage so I can't answer about the cost but as we are in the same country maybe in the future
	Where do we go to get information on extension?	Many places to go for knowledge on extension eg. <a href="http://www.betterextension.org">www.betterextension.org</a> , GFRAS, this community of practice will be more than a place to find information, it will be also a place to share information. Ex in India farmers call Dr. Usha's company for information
	As a project what are your metrics to measure your success?	Different depending on what the funder wants? It's hard to measure the impact of extension on the smallholder farmer because we work with regional organizations and in the same way it became difficult to get funding
	What channels do you recommend for education?	- Mobile forms of communication, - ex in Uganda community workers are used as agents to provide services to farmers
	What models of farmer feedback have been tried and what is their experience?	It's a combination of using extension agents and farmers themselves as well as data collecting and using apps to supplement. Extension can adapt depending on a country or area...
	How can we get helped with the Projects in Zambia where we have issues on how to get feedback on the impact of technologies we are trying to provide to farmers?	- In Mali, Nigeria, Uganda we work with the government who commit on resources, we are now helping the government to get agriculture extension. - Some governments design their own programs of extension so it's tailored to the need of their farmers. -There is no one method in extension which is best for all, the thing is to adapt it depending on needs.
	How do you bring synergies where there are many extension providers?	It depends on the specific context (capacity, policy, players....), Market engagement should be the first step.



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### **Summary**

The key points to EAS success are: i) having good governance structures and policy environment; ii) having strong organization and management; iii) having good advisory methods; iv) having market engagement; v) having livelihood strategies; and vi) having community engagement!

"It is Time to Act!"