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CREATING EXTENSION SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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Agricultural extension services have been used and practiced a long time ago in different countries of the world, having different objectives, definition and changing approaches. Initially, it was linked with expanding the research work of the universities beyond the campus. There were more than ten definitions given for extension during the last 50 years. In 2004, it was defined as: Extension is a series of embedded communicative interventions that are meant, among others, to develop and/or induce innovations which supposedly help to resolve (usually multi-actor) problematic issues. Scholars are still giving their working definition for 'extension' based on their local specific knowledge and conditions. According to the World Bank, extension is defined as a "process that helps farmers become aware of improved technologies and adopt them in order to improve their efficiency, income and welfare." The effectiveness of agricultural services depends on a number of factors that include the relationship between extension service activities and changes in the attitude of farmers, the skills to use technologies and improved practices, farmers' access to information and availability of technology, input supply, and other support mechanisms.

Globally, the agricultural extension service delivery has not been free from problems. The major challenges are: problem of coverage, lack of appropriate and relevant technologies, poor policy environment for agriculture and rural

development, weak institutional arrangements, inefficient institutional support services such as supply of inputs, credit and agricultural markets, lack of political support and commitment, shortage of funds, etc.

In order to solve the problems, different researchers and experts have worked a lot to bring about applicable and sustainable solutions. In this regard, there are emerging views on extension services that includes no longer a unified service and top-down approach; it is a network of knowledge and information support for the rural population; extension needs to be viewed within a wider rural development agenda (since market, social and environmental production systems need a differentiated set of services); stage of extension's transformation - from innovation to execution; and providing a menu of options for innovation, information and investment. As a result of these views and consensus reached, there are expected policy changes that governments should take under their specific conditions. Governments need to act in defining and implementing a coherent extension policy for the pluralistic system (a change in role) – pluralistic extension system that includes growth of multiple service providers, reduced public sector responsibilities, requires change in nature of agriculture research and structure of the agricultural sector. The actors involved in establishing a creative partnership in providing the extension services include the government, private sector, civil

society, NGOs, etc. In general, the creation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) is the key under any extension policy reform process. The goals of the extension system should encompass transferring knowledge from researchers to farmers; educating and advising farmers on their decision making; enabling farmers to clarify their own goals and possibilities; and stimulating desirable agricultural development.

1. Introduction

1.1 History of extension Service

Agricultural extension service has been used and practiced long time ago in different countries of the world having different objectives, definition and changing approaches. Initially it was linked with expanding the research works of the universities beyond the campus. But as time goes the objective of extension. There were more than ten definitions given for extension for the last 50 years (1949 to 2004). In 2004 it was defined as: Extension {is} a series of embedded communicative interventions that are meant, among others, to develop and /or induce innovations which supposedly help to resolve (usually multi actor) problematic issues. Scholars are still giving their working definition for extension based on their local specific knowledge and conditions. According to the World Bank extension is defined as a “process that helps farmers become aware of improved technologies and adopt them in order to improve their efficiency, income and welfare” (Purcell and Anderson 1997, 55). Berhanu also give a broader definition to extension service under Ethiopian context as “a service of information, knowledge and skill development to enhance adoption of improved agricultural technologies and facilitation of linkages with other institutional support services (input supply, output marketing and credit) (Berhanu et al, 2006, 3). The effectiveness of agricultural services depends on a number of factors that includes the relation ship between extension service activities

and change in attitude of farmers and skill to use technologies and improved practices, farmers’ access to information and availability of technology input supply and other support mechanisms.

The agricultural extension service delivery globally has not been free from problems. The major challenges are: problem of coverage, lack of appropriate and relevant technologies, poor policy environment for agriculture and rural development, weak institutional arrangements, inefficient institutional support services such as inputs supply, credit and agricultural market, lack of political support and commitment, shortage of funds etc.

In order to solve the problems different researchers and experts have worked a lot to bring about applicable and sustainable solutions. In this regard there are emerging views on extension services that includes no longer a unified service and top-down; it is a network of knowledge and information support for rural population; extension needs to be viewed within a wider rural development agenda (since market, social , environmental, production systems-needs differentiated set of services); stage of extension’s transformation- from innovation to execution; and providing a menu of options for innovation, information and investment, As a result of this views and consensus reached there are expected policy changes that governments should take under their specific conditions. Governments need to act in defining and implementing a coherent extension policy for the pluralistic system (a change in role) –Pluralistic extension system that includes growth of multiple service providers, reduced public sector responsibilities, requires change in nature of agriculture research, and structure of the agricultural sector. The actors involved in establishing a creative partnership in providing the extension services include government, private sector, civil society, NGOs etc. In general the creation of the Public- private partnership (PPP) is the key under any extension policy reform process. The goals of extension system should encompass transferring knowledge from

researchers to farmers; educating and advising farmers in their decision making; enabling farmers to clarify their own goals and possibilities; and stimulating desirable agricultural development.

1.2 History of Agricultural Extension Service in Ethiopia

Agricultural extension service in Ethiopia has followed the same world trend in establishment and development. The start years goes back to the 1953 with the establishment of the then Imperial Ethiopian College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts. At the later dates the mandates of agriculture extension service giving undergone restructuring and shifted to the Ministry of Agriculture. During all this fifty years time different extension systems has been introduced and practiced in different parts of the country that includes the land grant model, filed service, the comprehensive package, Minimum package I & II, Training & Visit (T&V) system, Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System (PADETS), and training and advisory services. The common features of all the extension models are focusing on transfer of technology that was generated from the research systems, top-down, state managed, based on donor funding, address the rain fed agricultural production system. Irrigation extension has been non existent. The extension programs were not based on a long term strategic vision of the extension service that encourage varies partners and agencies within the agricultural extension system to provide efficient and effective services that complement and reinforce each other.

2. Challenges of the Extension Service

In general the following are the major constraints of the past and current agricultural extension service delivery:

- Absence of the national framework of agricultural extension policy that has been developed in a participatory manner-top down

- Un clear extension approach
- Lack of suitable adaptation of technology packages to local conditions
- Frequent restructuring of the extension institutions
- High turn over of staff
- Limitation in the quality of field and technical staff
- Inadequate budget for the implementation of the extension system
- Limited private sector involvement in service delivery
- Administrators unnecessary interferences on technical matters
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation of the extension system
- Weak system of agricultural inputs supply and distribution (seeds, fertilized, credit, subsidies etc) systems
- Involvement of experts on duties other than extension responsibility
- Weak market linkage and information system
- Weak linkage of research-extension-farmer
- Absence of public private partnership in extension service delivery
- Not enough attention given to indigenous knowledge of local people
- Absence of irrigated agriculture focused extension and research systems

3. Future Direction/ the Way Forward

The agricultural extension service delivery has faced with many problems that need immediate attention by the policy makers. Consultation made with the ministry (MOARD) officials and experts revealed that there is a dire need to revisit the current extension practices and systems and work out a new extension policy framework and systems. Irrigation extension is not totally focused and institutionalized within the existing different public institution's organo-gram. The current extension service delivery system needs to be studied in a participatory way to formulate the national agricultural extension policy

framework. The following strategic actions are worth mentioning at this stage in time:

- Study the effectiveness of the current extension systems implemented throughout the country and formulates a pluralistic national extension system policy framework.
- Make sure the newly formulated extension system address effectively both the rain-fed and irrigated agricultural production systems under the growth pole concept.
- Define the role of the different stakeholders in delivering the services-public, private, civil societies, NGOs etc
- Promote the PPP in delivering extension service for the irrigated agriculture under the suggested growth pole concept
- Establish one national agency/body that is responsible for organization and support/facilitation of the Ethiopian professional entrepreneurs (out side and inside) and partners to establish commercial irrigated farms. The facilitation works include access to credit finance with project collateral, access to land, tax holidays etc.
- Look the appropriate institutional arrangements for delivering the extension services that avoids duplication of efforts. The basin based development institutions, the current bureau of agriculture and rural development, bureau of water resources, irrigation development authority etc need to be studied in order to have the appropriate organizational arrangements and staffing to deliver the irrigation extension system for farmers.
- Establish a merged agricultural research and extension institution-less than one umbrella organization. The attempts made to establish a research extension farmer liaison committee/council at national and regional levels have not been functional and effective in rendering the required coordinated services.
- Strengthen the agricultural training institutions that produce trained skilled manpower in the areas of agricultural extension. Revisit the current curriculum of the ATEVET colleges and maintain the quality of education. Acquiring practical skills are very vital in terms of transferring knowledge and skills to the farmers.

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