

## **SWOT Analysis of Extension Systems in Southern African Countries**

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*Abstract:* This paper examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to extension systems in selected southern African countries of Malawi, Zambia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and Botswana.

This is predicated on the need for improved performance and reinvigoration of extension system for better services. Some of the strengths are development works to improve rural areas, extensive grassroots coverage, and use of committees for research and extension linkages, involvement of NGOs and private sector, and effective setting of extension administration units.

On the other hand opportunities that can be explored are donor will fund well designed programme, expansion in the use of ICT, high involvement of farmers in extension planning, and potential for effective programme implementation. The threats to the extension systems are attempts to privatize extension services, weak feedback to research, and donor fatigue.

The paper recommends that extension administrators, and policy makers should pay proper attention to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to extension systems with a view of making extension services truly more responsive to local concerns and policy.

*Keywords:* extension systems, Southern African, SWOT, administration, research-extension linkage

### **Introduction**

Majority of people in southern Africa countries - Lesotho, Malawi,

Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe - are vulnerable to food insecurity due food shortages, and declining agricultural productivity. In past years, grain shortfalls in the region could be filled with imports from South Africa, but recently that country too has produced lower than normal yields. One of the reasons adduced for making these countries vulnerable is poor extension services to farmers. IFPRI (IFPRI, 2002) reported technology transfers, must be appropriate to the agricultural season, agro ecological conditions, existing farming practices, and household knowledge, skills, and labor available.

The trend of agricultural extension systems used in southern African countries suggest that a pluralistic nature of these systems is partly due to the donor induced and the peculiar socio-cultural milieu of the operators of these systems. This is due to the fact that agricultural extension plays an important catalytic role in agricultural and rural development as it brings the farming community information and new technologies that can be adopted to improve production, incomes and standards of living.

Oladele and Sakagami (Oladele and Sakagami, 2004) noted that agricultural extension programmes are very diverse from an international perspective as most are managed as public sector agencies and some nongovernmental organizations; an equally important variation occurs in the skill and competence of extension staff. Among other challenges facing extension include becoming truly responsive to local conditions and concerns; facilitating constructive inter-organizational collaboration; fostering greater local self-reliance through individual capacity-building and local institutional development; addressing financial insecurity and low educational levels of extension staff; and the specific interests of engaging indigenous knowledge, farmer inventiveness and farmer-to-farmer communication (Farrington, 1994).

The foregoing description of the emerging roles of extension services necessitated the analysis of extension organizations using the SWOT technique so as to highlight the areas of need for improved performance. It will also identify areas where these organizations need to re-position themselves for the future challenges. SWOT analysis provides solution to the questions what advantages, area of excel, relevant resources possessed and strengths as perceived by people; what to improve, area of poor performance, and area to avoid; which are the good opportunities and interesting trends of the organization which obstacles interfere and the compliance with the level of sophistication. SWOT analysis determines the internal situation of an organization by operational forms and functions of such organization.

## Extension Systems in Southern African Countries

### *Malawi*

The extension system of Malawi started as a livestock extension service in 1907 and later changed to a commodity-oriented agricultural extension service with emphasis on plantation crops. The history of the extension services began already in the mid 1920s in the populous southern region but was intensified and diffused first in the 1950s. Initially extension work was limited to propaganda but during the 1950s and 1960s it was extended to include education on methods of increasing agricultural production and compulsory methods were introduced. Extension work first was tried (mid-1920s) in Thyolo as a response to the population pressure. Extension activities were thus linked to issues of *soil conservation*. In Lilongwe district where the postcolonial government, in 1969, implemented its most comprehensive *Integrated Rural Development Program* and where they identified and gave special support to most of the so-called progressive farmers during the 1950s and 1970s. The main aim has been to create a new class of 'yeoman' farmers (Kalinga, 1993). Agricultural staff worked parallel with communities and individual so-called 'progressive farmers' (Kalinga, 1993; Beinart, 1984). In the late 1960s the government implemented one of the first Integrated Development Projects (RDP) in Africa by the World Bank and the country was administratively re-organised into Ecologic Planning Areas and Agricultural Development Divisions (Cohen, 1987; Spring, 1995; World Bank 1998). During the 1980s agricultural policies changed towards deregulation and downsizing of state activities (Harrigan, 2003). The RDP was abandoned and instead extension work was going back to the strategy of the 1950s but by applying the methods of T&V. This system has remained although there have been constant budget cuts affecting the number of visits especially after mid 1990s. At the same time new actors as NGO:s like World Vision International, Action Aid have taken a greater responsibility for extension work based on participatory methods.

The Department of Extension Services is headed by the Director. He is assisted by Deputies and work through Programme Managers (PMs), Project Officers (POs), Development Officers (Dos), and finally Field Assistants (Fas) at Sectional Level who are in contact with the farmers. The Block Extension System (BES) is being advocated where each (FA) divides the section into 8 blocks. Each block is being visited once every fortnight to meet people. The type of relation between the Regional Coordinator of Extension is functional but not hierarchical. The extension agents work directly with farmers about transmission

of technical messages and each works with 500 farmers' households. The Assistant is responsible for survey and evaluation. The Specialists of Farmers' Organization support agricultural producers to group formation, train Farmers' Organization on working, negotiation, support producers to seek agricultural products outlet. One specialist on Farmers' Organization works with 30 Farmers' Organizations.

#### *The Republic of Zambia*

The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives is headed by a Permanent Secretary at the national level who is supported by Directors, Deputy and Chief Agricultural Officers. At the Provincial level, the Provincial Agricultural Coordinator is the head of the organisation. He coordinates Agriculture Extension, Research, Planning Marketing, and Veterinary departments. The Heads of these Departments are called Provincial Subject Matter Specialist. At the District level, the District Agricultural Coordinator (DACO) heads the Organisation, Coordinating the following Sub-programmes: Marketing and Cooperatives, Technical Services Branch, Fisheries, National Agricultural Information Service and Extension. The Head of the Department of Agriculture at District level is the Senior Agricultural Officer, under which the extension sub-programme falls, and it is headed by the Extension Methodologist. In the field, there are Block Extension Officers, Camp Officer, and farmers.

Participatory Extension Approach was introduced in Zambia, especially Western Province in the late 1980 and early 1990. Participatory tools and skills were used to stimulate farmers to express themselves, identifying their problems, analyse them and make appropriate decisions on solutions and action to be taken to solve the problems. Participatory approach process is a relaxed process that empowers farmers to think nationally and accept responsibility for their agricultural activities, adopting affordable and suitable technologies conducive to their local situation for long-term sustainability. The extension services approach is in line with the Ministry of Agriculture's policy; to encourage the adoption of proven technological skills and improved organisational skills by all those (including women) who derive their livelihood from exploiting agricultural land for production of crops and livestock products (JICA, 2004).

#### *Swaziland*

The background of Agricultural Extension can be traced to early 1950s whereby foreign Extension Workers from Transkei were grooming farmers to make contour strips in their fields and not to plough down slope. That type of

Extension was of general individual farm visit. Mass meetings and campaign messages were persuasive. The second stage of extension was the Training and Visit (T & V) type of extension, where the extension worker conducted group lecture meetings per sub-area. A contact person is used to act as an intermediary between farmers and extension workers. The extension workers were trained by SMSs every week to train the farmers. This type of extension only lasted for two years. The present type of extension is that of commodity grouping and programme planning. In this type of extension the extension worker draws an extension area action plan which is analyzed from the situation of the farmers needs, and the Extension worker conducts commodity group meetings to communicate messages (JICA, 2004).

The Extension Advisor is to plan, co-ordinate extension activities at National level, direct responsibilities over regional senior extension officers responsible for all personnel and transport issues relating to extension service, act as an advisor to the Director of Agriculture in all issues related to extension, prepare periodic and annual reports as directed by the Director and perform any other duties as assigned by director of Agriculture. The Senior Extension Officers are responsible for the Formulation of annual work programmes, formulation of in-service training programme for extension workers, development of feedback information from farmers to the research, and from research to farmers, budgetary controller of regional activities - capital and recurrent expenditures and human resource management, and development within the region. In addition, they direct the activities of all Extension staff in the region, formulate linkage between rural communities and policy makers, plan and conduct regional activities, supervise staff and maintenance of discipline in the region, coordinate meetings in the region between various interest groups and government and organize educational sessions for staff and farmers.

### *Mozambique*

After Independence in 1975, the Mozambican government prioritized the agriculture as base of Country development. However, around 80% of national population lives from agriculture production. So all efforts was a played in agriculture where created enterprises and agricultural cooperatives, powered by international agencies based in Socialist politic system. The lack of qualified human resources and the war contributed for the slow development of agriculture in Mozambique. In the past government staff balanced the production from the farmers and government enterprises and concluded that the production from farmers is very high than the production from government enterprises so decided

empowering the familiar sector. In 1987, they police of agriculture prior zed the familiar sector. All efforts from the government, and non governmental organizations were applied in agriculture. The system used was Training and Visit (T&V) . In 1992 the war finished in Mozambique and many interventions from of NGOs helped the extension service more trainings programs in all levels, investigations service , work shops ,the increasing number qualified human resources took place. Nowadays the extension services use the Farmer Field School, T&V and Trials on station. They link investigation services and target groups (consumers) as well as periodical task on Evaluation of impact of technologies messages, using the integrated methods (JICA, 2004).

### *Lesotho*

During the 1930's, Lesotho was hit by a severe drought that dramatically changed the landscape of the country, cereal production dropped and land degradation increased. It was because of this that the department of Agriculture was beefed with 3 sections in 1935 namely: Veterinary Services, Crops and Cooperatives and Soil Conservation. The extension approach adopted then was a generalist one with all messages communicated to farmers by agricultural demonstrators. The messages were from the British Agricultural Officer at the head office in Maseru. The demonstrators were high school dropouts who could write and speak English. They did not have any formal training in agriculture.

The Lesotho Agricultural College was then established in 1955 with, the, aim of training young Basotho in general agriculture in order for them to become agricultural extension workers. Extension efforts in the Lesotho began as a top down kind of approach with the principle of working with and through paramount chief and their subordinate chiefs Up to the 1950s, extension, particularly in conservation was largely .ineffective because extension approaches consisted simply of instructing arid not making land users understand the importance of what was being recommended. Institutional development of formal extension services received emphasis from the 1950s onwards with a realization that educating farmers to understand implications of the present and the proposed practices can achieve results. This was followed by increased services and activities of extension agents, increasing their facilities and consistent policy and practices of the department of agriculture. However, extension methods were elitists by focusing only on progressive farmers. After independence, the Government of Lesotho created the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) with three departments: Livestock, Crops and Conservation each having its own extension section. Different extensions approaches have been tried in Lesotho over the

years, with the Unified Extension System adopted in 2001. It was observed that extension in Lesotho needed to be adapted to the specific requirements and the socio-political, economic and ecological environment if it was to be effective in building farmers capacity to manage their limited resources effectively and efficiently. This involves community guided problem analysis, solution finding, action planning, implementation, monitoring and review. Networking of partners Government, NGOs, donors, private sector and community-based organizations form a partnership and have close linkages in order to share and use the knowledge and information they have and to create synergies, which are, required to be effective in the interventions aimed at some of the problems facing farmers and the extension service in general. The formation of the research agenda is to a large extent the result of the action learning cycle, which is the nucleus of the unified extension system. An effort was made to eliminate a hierarchal relationship whereby researchers develop and know all the solutions and farmers are just at the receiving end (JICA, 2004).

#### *Botswana*

Mrema (FAO, 1990), reported that the current agricultural extension system has evolved over the past 60 years and has existed under various organizational structures. The department of agriculture was established in 1935 to conduct research and extension on crop and pasture agronomy. It therefore contained the present departments of crop production and forestry and agricultural research. In the period 1935 to 1947 the extension approach used was the so called Foremen farmers whereby Africa foremen were appointed to assist and advise farmers. However it was changed in 1947 to an approach called Cooperative demonstration plot Scheme (CPDS). Under this scheme selected farmers called cooperators had three plots on one acre each on which comparisons could be demonstrated. Inputs were subsidized under the CPDS and farmers were expected to purchase their own inputs after three years. Many farmers discontinued the practice after three years when they got subsidies and did not transfer the new ideas to other plots though yield was higher on the demonstration plots than the other (Mrema, 1996).

From 1962, the CPDS scheme was abandoned and the Pupil farmer scheme that was in use in Rhodesia was adopted and continued until the 1970s. In this scheme farmers were required to join the scheme by applying and depending on their progress could be promoted through categories such as pupil, improved, progressive and master farmer. Emphasis in extension was on individual farmers and each agricultural district had 15 pupil farmers under their care. The problem of expanding the scheme to other farming households rather than the 15-20 pupil

and improved farmers that were concentrated on discouraged the continuity of the scheme. In 1972 the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was proposed and Extension services focused on commercial rather than subsistence farmers so the coverage was limited. In 1973 the Accelerated Rural Development Programme was implemented but the poor implementation capacity of ministry of agriculture attributed to lack of manpower encouraged only the development of human resource capacity. Subsequently farming system approach was approached and programmes such as Arable land development programme (ALDEP) and Livestock management Infrastructure development Project (LMIDP) Irrigation and Water Development Project, Development of Extension Services, Dairy Improvement, Pandamatenga developments and other agricultural projects funded under the Financial Assistance Policy, have been introduced with the objective of assisting farmers with input to increase their productivity (MOA, 2006). ALDEP has been Botswana's most important programme in support of smallholder dryland agriculture. The main emphasis has been on the promotion of a technology package by providing highly subsidised inputs to selected farmers. ALDEP started in 1982, financed by IFAD and ADB, running through to 1996. It is currently entering a 2nd phase entirely funded by the Botswana Government to run from 1997 to 2003. The Arable Lands Development Programme (ALDEP) Phase Three, like its predecessors will focus on strengthening of the extension services, technology transfer and adoption, training and supporting previous and current beneficiaries of the programme to utilize packages acquired. The target group for the programme is the resource poor farmers whose farming efficiency is hampered by inadequate resources. Currently the programme in place is the National Master Plan for the Arable Agriculture and Dairy Development (NAMPAAADD) which seeks to improve the performance of the agricultural sector, by modernising it through the introduction of improved technologies and efficient use and management of land and water resources and by commercializing it (MOA, 2007).

### **SWOT Analysis**

The application of SWOT technique for the analysis of extension organizations in the countries studied, examined the organization setting of extension services and the indicators for determining their effectiveness, capabilities and efficiency were examined. SWOT analysis makes it possible to assess the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) within the agricultural extension system as a whole. Carrying out an analysis using

Table 1 - SWOT analysis of extension systems in selected Southern African countries

	MALAWI	ZAMBIA	SWAZILAND	MOZAMBIQUE	LESOTHO	BOTSWANA
Strengths	Development works to improve rural areas Extensive grassroots coverage Use of Committees for research and extension linkages	Use of Committees for research and extension linkages Involvement of NGOs and private sector	Improvement of extension systems and methods High feasibility of plans Effective setting of extension administration units	Extensive coverage of farming population Involvement of NGOs and private sector	Extensive grassroots coverage Use of Committees for research and extension linkages	Potential for privatized services Effective and systematic training of extension workers Effective funding of programmes
Weaknesses	Shortage of funds Poor logistic support High bureaucratic set up	Poor information flow Low educational status of extension advisors	Over centralization of budget for extension works Inadequate manpower	Inadequate funds Low manpower for research and extension	Poor extension facilities Shortage of funds Low manpower for research and extension	Limited use of alternative extension methods Weak research – extension – farmers linkage Low educational status of extension staff

Table 1 - continued

	MALAWI	ZAMBIA	SWAZILAND	MOZAMBIQUE	LESOTHO	BOTSWANA
Opportunities	Donor will fund well designed programme Expansion in the use of ICT	Increased participation of private sector High involvement of farmers in extension planning	Increased supervision and monitoring of extension programme Expansion in the use of ICT	Donor will fund well designed programme	Donor will fund well designed programme Expansion in the use of ICT	Potential for expansion Potential for effective programme implementation Opportunities for GO/NGO alliances
Threats	Attempts to privatize extension services Donor fatigue	Attempts to privatize extension services Donor fatigue	Attempts to privatize extension services Weak feedback to research	Attempts to privatize extension services Weak feedback to research	Attempts to privatize extension services Weak feedback to research	Over reliance on government services Stereotype services Attempts to privatize extension services Weak feedback to research

the SWOT framework helps to focus activities into areas of strengths and where the greatest opportunities lies (Hanyani-Mlambo, 2002). In this study, a SWOT analysis was carried out on the organizational setting, and focused on the public system of extension service delivery. Tables 1 outlines the findings of the analysis. Some of the strengths are development works to improve rural areas, extensive grassroots coverage, and use of committees for research and extension linkages, involvement of NGOs and private sector, and effective setting of extension administration units. On the other hand opportunities that can be explored are donor will fund well designed programme, expansion in the use of ICT, high involvement of farmers in extension planning, and potential for effective programme implementation. The threats to the extension systems are attempts to privatize extension services, weak feedback to research, and donor fatigue. The extension managers and policy makers should focus on the identified strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats with a view of evolving an effective and sustainable extension system.

## Conclusions

The paper has shown the state of affairs of extension systems in some southern African Countries such that their strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat s are examined with a view of suggesting how to reinvigorate the extension systems for effective and efficient response to client needs. The threats highlighted are to be noted for policy considerations so that extension services will be more truly responsive to local condition s and concerns.

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