

Farmer's participation in village development activities: the role of agricultural and livestock development institutions in Tanzania

R.M. Wambura, * and D.F. Rutatora**

*Institute of Continuing Education, Sokoine University of Agriculture, P.O. Box 3044, Morogoro, Tanzania

**Department of Agricultural Education and Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Sokoine University of Agriculture, P.O. Box 3002, Morogoro, Tanzania

Abstract

Increasingly, it is recognized that participatory extension generates widespread and sustainable results. "Participation in extension focuses on joint decision making with regard to problem analysis, solution planning, activities implementation and evaluation of results". This paper is based on a study done in 1998 on "Strengthening Farmers' Participation in Village Development Activities: The Role of Agricultural and Livestock Development Institutions (MATIs/LITIs) in Tanzania". Data were obtained through interviews with MATI/LITI tutors, field extension agents and randomly selected farmers and notes from directed discussions with key informants, and observations. The findings indicated that most institutes had farmers training sections despite the fact that there were difficulties in farmer training; and that there was a possibility of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) to establish formal collaborative links with Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MAC) on extension services using MATIs and LITIs.

Keywords: MATIs, LITIs and participation

Introduction

The level of education for agricultural development is one of the most successful achievements for post – independence in Tanzania. Training facilities have tended to cater for all types and levels of specialties for agriculture. It is possible to identify a high level category of training programs (the university), an intermediate level (the training institutes) and a low level (vocational, primary and secondary schools and informal training schemes). The strategies behind agricultural training program are at present undergoing a whole series of changes in developing countries (Bunting, 1986; Farrington and Martin, 1987).

Farmer's educational objectives are being thoroughly examined and the search for means to make more effective impact to

target group, the farmers, is proceeding (Benor et al., 1984).

Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) is the only agricultural university in Tanzania. The fact that agriculture is the main stay of the country's economy underscores the important role that SUA will have to play in enhancing the nation's economic development. During its inauguration ceremony in 1984 as a new university, SUA was challenged by its first Chancellor, Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere to: (i) expand its functions to include adult education, farmer training, extension work and dissemination of research work to serve the community as a whole; (ii) give education and training appropriate to peasants agriculture; and (iii) answer the needs and solve the problems of Tanzanian agriculture and rural life (Nyerere, 1984).

In keeping with these realities the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) was

created by Government Notice No. 25 published on 29th January, 1988 to serve as an outreach arm of the University. In order to carry out its functions ICE has organized its activities around four major programming areas, namely: (i) extension and farmers education; (ii) continuing education; (iii) educational technology; and (iv) adult education and correspondence. ICE recognizes the importance, and the need for closer cooperation with key government Ministries and Departments as well as other agencies and institutions that perform functions related to its own (Wambura, 1993). Such institutions include the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Training Institutes (MATIs and LITIs). All MATIs and LITIs are expected to carry out outreach programs. The aim of these programs is to enhance cooperation between institutes and nearby villages so that students can learn from the farmers' experiences and disseminate improved agricultural and livestock production techniques (United Republic of Tanzania, 1996). The following sections provide the methodology, findings and conclusions of this study.

Methodology

Data were obtained through interviews with 41 MATI/LITI tutors, 37 field extension agents and 92 randomly selected farmers using structured questionnaires.

Also, notes from directed discussions with 34 key informants and observations were used. Questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) available at the SUA Computer Center. The method of analysis involved univariate and bivariate analysis. Data from researcher's diary were summarized and categorized accordingly.

Results and Discussions

MATIs/LITIs Involvement in Outreach Activities

The MATI/LITI tutors' opinions on the extent to which their institutes were involved in outreach activities were sought. It was assumed that understanding of the extent to which the institutes participated in outreach activities would provide a picture on how MATIs/LITIs promoted development initiatives in the neighboring rural areas. The tutor respondents were, therefore, asked to give their opinions on particular statements related to their institutes' involvement in outreach activities (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that between 68 and 95 percent of the MATI/LITI tutor

respondents stated that students in the institutes were involved in outreach activities. Most institutes had farmers' training sections, although there were difficulties in farmer training because of

Table 1: Percentages of MATI/LITI tutor respondents' on the extent to which their Institutes were involved in outreach activities (N=41)

Statement	MATI/LITI tutor respondents	
	Yes(%)	No(%)
Students from MATI/LITI engage in outreach activities	95	5
Most institutes have farmers training sections	88	12
Institutes do maintain contact with farmers engaged in outreach activities	68	32
There are difficulties faced in farmer training	90	10
There is a possibility of SUA to establish formal collaborative link with MAC on extension services using MATIs/LITIs	93	7

lack of financial support and training facilities. Table 1 also indicate that there is a possibility of SUA to establish formal collaborative links with MAC on extension services using MATIs/LITIs. This sentiment was also given by key informants at the MAC headquarters, SUA, village leaders and MATI/LITI administrators. Further analysis of field data showed major weaknesses of carrying outreach activities as being not adequately including survey of farmer needs conducted by students and the lack of effective collaboration with village based extension workers. However, the study also noted that there were no concrete proposals by the MAC on how to concentrate its resources to the 10 MATIs/LITIs carrying outreach programs in the country. In addition, it is clear from the study findings that all surveyed MATIs/LITIs had an extension sections, which conducted farmers residential training, and students/tutors conducted outreach activities to farmers in their neighboring villages (Table 1).

Extension Contact Using MATI/LITI Students' Farm/Home Visits

Farmer respondents were asked if they were aware of MATI/LITI student outreach activities, and all of them stated that they were aware of such activities in their villages. About 66 percent of the respondents stated that MATI/LITI students had visited them. Also, about 74 percent of them stated that other farmers were present during the students' visits. Further inquiry revealed that 55 percent of the respondents who had been visited by students shared the information with other farmers who were not present during the visits. In addition, about 96 percent of the respondents who had been visited by students stated that they wanted to be visited more frequently. Furthermore, it was established that during the visits students mostly talked about farmers' problems.

However, further analysis revealed that many respondents (95 percent) who were able to use fertilizers did not apply them as recommended by students. This may be due to the fact that similar recommendations were given to all farmers in the area, irrespective of their ecological situation (e.g. quality of their soil and availability of water), access to inputs and markets, the resources the farmer had and goals of the farm family. This suggests that farmers realize that these points should influence the decisions they make and, therefore, the optimum way to manage their farms cannot be the same for all, and certainly the blanket recommendations given by the extension worker and the visiting students cannot be appropriate for all. It was also found that 24 percent of the farmer respondents felt that they benefited from MATI/LITI students. It was, therefore, recommended that in extension training, emphasis should be put on the importance of a two-way information exchange between farmers and experts.

Farmers' Participation in MATI/LITI Students Outreach Projects

All farmer respondents were asked if they were aware of different outreach projects organized by MATI/LITI students in their villages. About 27 percent out of 66 percent of the farmer respondents who had been visited by students stated that they were aware of such projects. It was evident from these findings that a small percentage of farmers directly participated in the MATI/LITI outreach activities in their villages.

In order to examine the extent to which the farmers participated in planning of MATI/LITI outreach projects, each of the farmer respondents were asked to identify one outreach project in which they were actively involved in their villages. The number and percentages of respondents who reported that they were

actively involved in particular outreach projects with the MATI/LITI students in their villages are shown in Table 2. Table 2 shows that farmers were involved in MATI/LITI outreach activities related to crop and livestock production. The farmer respondents were further asked to indicate people and their positions who advised them on tasks they selected to implement in the MATI/LITI outreach projects as shown in Table 3. The findings show that, in most cases, village leaders decided to villagers on tasks of outreach projects to implement.

Furthermore, respondents felt that they were involved in making decisions, especially in the choice of plots (70 percent) and where to get capital (60 percent). Village extension officers were identified by 20 percent of the respondents as having been involved in making decisions about the technical assistance to give. Respondents felt that MATI/LITI tutors and students had limited involvement in key decision making related to extension tasks. Only 10 percent of the respondents said that tutors and students had say in the choice of

Table 2: Percentages of respondents who indicated that they were involved in outreach projects with MATI/LITI Students (N=24)

Type of Outreach Project	Farmer Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Vegetable Production	5	21
Piggery	4	17
Cotton	6	25
Paddy	3	12
Soybeans	2	8
Maize	4	17

Table 3: Farmer Respondents' Opinions on Who was Involved in Making Decisions Related to Selected Tasks During the Implementation Stage of MATI/LITI Students Outreach Projects (N= 24)

Type of Task	Who Involved in Decisions Related to Selected Tasks			
	Village Leaders%	Village Extension Workers%	MATI/LITI Tutors/Students %	Farmers%
Source of Capital	30	10	5	60
Choice of Plot(s)	25	10	5	70
Choice of Crop(s)	15	0	10	26
Technical Aid	50	20	0	30
Purchase of Items	95	0	0	5
Timing of Activities	95	0	5	5
Allocation of Output	80	0	5	20

crops. Village leaders, village extension officers, MATI/LITI tutors and students were all involved in making decisions related to particular tasks during the implementation stages of the outreach projects.

The findings also revealed that the respondents were able to evaluate their outreach projects in terms of progress and the type of outputs. Furthermore, it was found that the respondents were satisfied with the advice that the MATI/LITI students gave.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that MAC intended to concentrate its resources to only 10 MATIs/LITIs in the country with students/tutors outreach activities to farmers in their neighboring villages. There were clear indications from the study findings that MATIs/LITIs were willing to cooperate with SUA through the ICE in areas of training and outreach activities. Most institutes had farmers training sections despite the fact that there were difficulties in offering them, and that there were possibilities for SUA to establish formal collaborative links with MAC using the MATIs/LITIs.

This study findings showed that farmers were involved by MATI/LITI students/tutors who participated in planning, implementation and evaluation of outreach projects. In this way, relevant technologies were identified and used in the project villages. The strategy of farmer participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects can greatly improve the work efficiency of VEOs, and enhance the process of empowering farmers.

There is a need, therefore, for MAC to adopt a policy of encouraging VEOs to initiate and use projects as part of their extension strategies. The projects should be developed with the involve-

ment of village leaders and specific farmer groups such as women and youth in the villages. Together they should decide what technologies are important, what information is required and how it should be provided. This is to say that, farmers and VEOs should take active roles with such projects.

References

- Benor, D.; Harrison, J. Q. and Baxter, M. 1984. *Agricultural Extension: The Training and Visit System*. The World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Bunting, A. H., 1986. "Extension and Technical Change in Agriculture". In: G. E. Jones, (ed.), *Investing in Rural Extension: Strategies and Goals*. Elsevier Applied Science Publishers, London.
- Farrington, J. and Martin, A. 1987. "Farmer Participatory Research: A Review of Concepts and Practices". *Agricultural Development Unit Discussion Paper No. 19*. Overseas.
- Nyerere, J.K., 1984. "The Inauguration of Sokoine University of Agriculture", Morogoro, Tanzania, September, 1984 (Mimco)
- Tanzania, United Republic of, 1996. *National Agriculture Middle Level Training Master Plan (NAMTramp)*, Government Printers, Dar-es-Salaam.
- Wambura R. M., 1993. "An Assessment of Extension Strategies on Farmers' Participation in Development activities at Village Level in Tanzania". Unpublished PhD Thesis, University College Dublin.