Integrating Farmers, their Local Level Institutions, and Social Capital into Extension Delivery Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues, Challenges, and Implications

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Abstract

The tool of organizational scans/analysis was used to analyze the historical, institutional, financial, and political antecedents to the poor state of public sector extension systems in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Presented in the paper are analyses of on-going efforts to restructure the institutional framework for the delivery of extension service in SSA. It was concluded that the process exhibits a pro-privatization bias. The paper then discusses the potential national food security, economic, social, and distributive consequences of privatizing extension in SSA.

Using the emerging theoretical framework of social capital and development, discussed in the paper are the important roles that social networks, local institutions, and their inherent social capital play in the rural economies of SSA. Relying on extensive literature review and on qualitative data from selected villages in Nigeria, the paper’s author posits therefore that on-going efforts to improve the delivery of extension services, stimulate rural economy, and fight poverty in SSA are doomed to failure unless farmers, their traditional institutions, and social capital take center stage. Proposed then in the paper is an empowerment model for improving the delivery of extension services and overall agricultural development in SSA. Finally examined are the policy, institutional, and logistical challenges of integrating farmers and their local institutions into the delivery of extension services. Recommendations for overcoming these challenges are proposed.
Introduction

The survival of public sector extension worldwide, but more specifically in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), is under serious challenge as many national governments explore alternative delivery frameworks. While privatization is gaining prominence in many developed countries and to a lesser degree in the less developed countries (LDCs), the right mix of institutional framework for the delivery of extension services in SSA is still under debate. There is however, no debating the fact that public sector extension services as currently organized in SSA countries, do not possess the requisite financial, human, and organizational resources necessary to deliver effective services to the millions of resource-poor farmers who dominate Africa’s agricultural systems. The already dire position of national agricultural extension systems (NAES) on the continent is further complicated by the fact that most of the improvement in technological intensification, and hence improved agricultural outputs, will have to come from the more demanding, resource-poor, and complex environment of small-holder and subsistence producers (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 1999). Agricultural policy makers are therefore, faced with the daunting challenge of developing an appropriate mix of extension delivery formats that will satisfy the technology needs of resource-poor farmers, promote national food security, and alleviate the persistent poverty that ravages the continent.

Some of the current institutional weaknesses of public sector extension in SSA could be traced to the colonial and post-independence era when the policy of resource extraction, first to satisfy the economic interest of the colonizing powers and subsequently, the national development agenda of the newly independent nations, meant that the concerns of farmers were often ignored in deference to “more pressing” national goals. This explains why colonial and later post-independence agricultural research and extension activities focused almost exclusively on export-oriented and raw material producing commodities such as cocoa, rubber, oil palm, and groundnut (peanut). In fact some of the better known agricultural research institutes in the region such as the Cocoa Research Institutes, have their origin in the colonial era. Unfortunately, independence did not bring much relief to the long-suffering African agricultural producers as post-independence African governments continued the agricultural policy of resource-extraction under the economic policy of import substitution. Under the policy, the newly independent African governments continued to extract resources from the rural sector in the form of agricultural raw materials for the newly established import-sustitituting industry, and as exports to earn foreign exchange. Hence, the current state of extension services in SSA cannot be divorced from its historical antecedents.

However, the mid-1970’s and 1980’s witnessed a major infusion of capital and management restructuring of national agricultural extension systems (NAES) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) through the implementation of programs such as Integrated Agricultural Development projects (IADPs), the Training & Visit extension (T & V), and later Farming Systems Research Extension (FSR/E). While the controversy still rages on regarding the cost-benefits of the investments put into T & V, IADPs, and FSR/E, there is no question that these initiatives gave extension services in SSA, much needed visibility. Each in its own way represented a bold attempt, successful or not, to focus research and extension activities on the technology needs of resource-poor farmers. Through these initiatives many farmers had their first contact with village extension agents, and some technology adoption took place, at least among the relatively well-endowed farmers (Alonge, 1993).

However, despite the billions of dollars of investments in agricultural and economic development over the past half century, SSA still faces persistent problems of food insecurity, hunger, poverty, and diseases. Hence, beginning in the late 1980’s and blossoming during the 1990’s, the development community began to question the economic rationality of government’s domination of the economic sphere in general, but especially its role in managing public utilities, economic services,
According to Cook and Fabella (2000) under the general theory of “government failure,” the international development community began to perceive government’s over-involvement in regulating economic activities in general, and in providing economic, social, and infrastructure services, as the source of wastes, inefficiency, and ultimately, the failure of economic development and anti-poverty initiatives. This paradigm shift coupled with the failing economies of many less developed countries (LDCs) in the 1980’s, led to the diminution of state power, the imposition of painful structural adjustment policies, reduced investments by multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, in public sector institutions, and the privatization movement. From public education, welfare program, extension services, to public utilities to name but a few, privatization became the preferred mode of managing government services, utilities and infrastructure. Therefore, while current efforts to restructure public sector extension in SSA is due in part to a genuine concern about wastes, institutional inefficiency and fiscal mismanagement; the global trend toward private sector control, is probably a major factor in the popularity of privatization as a viable option. The GAO (2002) has argued that privatization allows policy makers to maintain their distance from the political liabilities associated with government programs, while satisfying their constituents' demands for a variety of public services. It is, therefore, important that the popularity of the market-based or privatization approach in the on-going efforts to restructure public sector extension systems be put under closer scrutiny to avoid the inherent danger that privatization is been used as a ploy to excuse policy makers from making the hard choices.

**Purpose**

Over the past decade or so, national and international agricultural development agencies have been engaged in the task of developing the appropriate mix of institutional frameworks for delivering extension services in the less developed countries (Rivera, 1993). National Agricultural Extension Systems in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular have been singled out for their institutional inefficiency, over-bureacratization, and inability to satisfy the technology-needs of the millions of resource-poor farmers who dominate the continent’s agricultural production landscape. Hence, a lot of attention is being focused on developing on alternative framework for the delivery of extension service in SSA. Rivera (2001) characterized this reform agenda as falling under the three broad categories of decentralization, privatization and participatory approaches to the delivery of extension services. Expatiating further, Rivera (2001) described the three reform strategies as including decentralization through fiscal system redesign, structural decentralization from central government to sub-governmental control, and thirdly, management decentralization through farmer participation in decision making and, ultimately, taking responsibility for extension programs.

After a critical analysis of on-going discussion about reforming public sector extension, this paper has identified three broad themes or tendencies that seem to predominate. The first theme can be summarized as the tendency to over-value the ability of the market and non-government organizations to deliver extension service to the resource-poor farmers (World Bank’s AKIS Team, 2000). The second trend is the tendency on the part of the development community, and policy makers to regard public sector extension has having run its course, and no longer able to play its traditional role as one of the main instruments for technology transfer, and agricultural development in the LDCs. The third trend, in spite of pretensions to the contrary, is the tendency to underrate the huge potential represented by farmers, their local level institutions, and the social capital inherent in them, as major players in the technology transfer process in specific, and overall agricultural development in general. While, there is no doubting the potential of the private sector to unburden the public sector by taking over extension responsibilities in the well-endowed, market-oriented farming systems in the LDCs, it is equally important not to overlook the reality that for the vast majority of the resource-poor in SSA, the public sector working in concert with community-based institutions, and producer organizations will continue to remain a major player in the delivery of
The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to analyze current reform proposals for improving the delivery of extension services in SSA, in light of the continent’s unique historical, agroecological, economic, and political experience. This analysis will then be used as a springboard for proposing a participatory, farmer-centered, empowerment model for extension. Specifically, the paper will be organized along the following broad themes:

1. Apply an organization scans model to analyze the current state of extension services in SSA.
2. Analyze current proposals for reforming national agricultural extension systems in SSA, with a special focus on the privatization agenda.
3. Propose an empowerment model that integrates farmer groups, their social networks and the social capital inherent in them, in the delivery of extension services in SSA.

**Method**

The paper is organized along the philosophical/theoretical/thematic framework. The theme development is based primarily on extensive literature review, specifically in the areas of social capital, institutional development, and decentralization, and the author’s personal and research experience in the sub-Saharan Africa region, spanning decades. Where appropriate, qualitative data collected over the past twelve years, mainly in the Middle belt and Southwestern regions of Nigeria are used to elaborate the themes. The most recent data were collected during a rapid rural appraisal assignment in a village in southwestern Nigeria in July 2002, with a team from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria.

**Theoretical Frame**

The theoretical foundation for the discussion about the potential role of farmers, and their local level institutions in the extension reform agenda, is located in the emerging field of social capital and development. Often associated with the seminal work of Putman (1993) in north Italy, social capital has emerged over the last decade as one of the dominant frameworks for analyzing, and organizing a vast array of development initiatives, both in the developed, but more so in the less developed countries. Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions (World Bank, 2002). Adopting a micro-institutional frame of reference, Rose (1997), defines social capital as consisting of informal social networks and formal organizations used by individuals and households to produce goods and services for their own consumption, exchange, or sale. While not minimizing the importance of the micro-institutional conceptualization of social capital, it is, however, now generally recognized that from a development stand-point, its macro-institutional dimension is a more useful tool (Putnam, 1993, Flora, 1998, & Brown 2002). Macro-level social capital or what Flora (1998) denotes as entrepreneurship social infrastructure (ESI), refers to the density of horizontal and vertical linkages between social networks and institutions within and across communities. From an extension programming and service delivery cost stand-point, communities with a dense vertically linked social networks will be much easier to manage, since they would tend to have a more developed local organization capacity from experience dealing with extra-community groups and institutions.

Most rural communities in the LDCs are isolated and often have little, if any access to formal government institutions and social amenities. Hence, traditional or local level institutions and social networks, including cooperation groups, peace pact systems, and household systems, constitute important forms of social capital on which many poor depend for their social, and economic well-being (Alonge 2002). This is especially true in sub-Saharan Africa, where so much rural economic activity is not yet fully monetized, and where extended family ties and social networks provide access...
to production resources, otherwise unavailable to many poor households (Rose, 1997). Research findings from different parts of the globe have also demonstrated that social capital is as a major factor in achieving and sustaining community development. Putnam (1993) in his comparative study in Italy, Flora (2002) in the US Great Plains and Corn Belt, Sandoval, Cordova, Ascarrunz, Balboa, and Velasques (1998) in Bolivia, Grootaert, Gi-Taik and Swany (1999) in Burkina Faso, Grootaert (1999) in Indonesia, and Narayan & Pritchett (1997) in Tanzania, all reported a strong link between social capital and the degree to which societies prosper economically, and the sustainability of the development. Social capital and trust can make economic transactions more efficient by giving parties access to more information, enabling them to coordinate activities for mutual benefit, and reducing opportunistic behavior through repeated transactions (Dasgupta, 1988).

Social capital helps to refocus attention on the important function of non-market forces, such as social networks, and human interactions in moderating market forces, and in determining who gets access to resources (Edwards & Foley, 1998), hence it is seen as a counterbalance to the overly econometric focus of conventional development models. However, a careful analysis of the ongoing discussions about the future direction of extension services will seem to indicate that many analysts are making the same mistake of over-estimating the role of the market to provide extension services in LDCs. Conversely, they tend to underestimate the potential role that farmers, their traditional institutions, and social networks could play in the delivery of extension services. Therefore, incorporating the social capital perspective into ongoing discussions about the future of public sector extension services in SSA may help to correct this oversight, and thus ensure a balanced and sustainable solution.

Organizational Scans/Analysis of Public Sector Extension in SSA

One of the lessons of past attempts to reform extension systems in the LDCs is the danger of failure inherent in recommending generic solutions without regard to the unique historical, social, economic, institutional, and political characteristics of each national system. Just because a reform initiative works in one country, especially in an industrialized country, does not necessarily mean it would work in another, especially in a less developed country. This lesson seems to have been forgotten in ongoing discussion about the future direction of extension services in SSA. Because of the relatively successful implementation of privatization in the industrialized countries, with their unique sets of characteristics, it is now being assumed that privatization would work in sub-Saharan Africa. No assumption could be further from reality. In order to illuminate some of the unique characteristics of public sector extensions systems in SSA and thus provide a framework for evaluating various proposals for reform, an organization scans or analysis, using the model (figure 1) developed by Vos, Oudnam, & Biesboer (1988), is conducted. It is hoped that such an analysis will help to highlight potential pitfalls in current reform proposals for extension services in SSA. The paper recognizes that the utility of the analysis is limited by its generic nature. It is always prudent to point out, that while SSA countries occupy a common geographical space and often share some common social, historical, political and economic characteristics, each country has its own sets of unique characteristics which must be borne in mind in determining the pathways to reforming individual national extension system.

A historical analysis of extensions systems in SSA is crucial to understanding the current state of NAES in the region. Although, colonial authorities established research and extension institutions in SSA, formalized extension service is a relatively young phenomenon in the region in comparison with the United States Cooperative Extension Services and national extension systems in Europe. According to Birmingham (1999), most national extension programs in Africa were started in the 1960’s and 1970’s with some exceptions, such as Guinea, where an extension service that included smallholders was not established until 1984. Agricultural research and extension during the colonial period tended to focus on cash crops, such as cocoa, rubber, and oil palm, because of their
value as export crops to the colonizing powers. Therefore, given its resource-extraction goal, colonial agricultural services were hardly geared toward advancing the economic interests of the farmers. Unfortunately, the policy of resource extraction, and exploitation continued unabated in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, as the newly independent countries perceived agriculture as the engine of growth in its dual but related roles as a source of foreign exchange through agricultural commodity export, and as the source of raw materials for the policy of import substitution industrialization. The negative outflow of resources from the rural sector continues through factors such as the pro-urban food policy of keeping food prices low, currency over-valuation and the activities of government-controlled marketing boards. Hence, when multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, speak of agricultural subsidies, one wonders from which direction the subsidies flow. In many instances, the agricultural sector in SSA countries seem to carry the burden of hidden subsidies, not the other way round, as most analysts erroneously assume.

Despite on-going attempts at decentralization, most public sector extension services in SSA countries are still structurally top-down, highly-centralized, and bureaucratic. Extension program development is largely conceptualized along a linear technology transfer model with minimal input from the farmers. While a geographical and stakeholder analyses of extension’s client-base will reveal a largely rural, widely dispersed and resource-poor producers, service delivery tends to be concentrated in well-endowed farming systems. Resource-poor farmers, especially women, who account for a high percentage of total agricultural output in most SSA countries (Beaudoux, et al., 1994) have little, if any access to extension service, and when access is available, the quality of service tends to be poor (Alonge, 1993). Hence, public sector extension services in SSA tend to suffer a huge credibility gap with its clientele. This credibility gap was apparent during a recent rapid rural appraisal assignment in southwestern Nigeria, when the farmer group, assuming that members of the research team were government officials, almost denied the team access to the village. They claimed that previous contacts, and numerous data collection activities by government agricultural agents have yielded no fruitful results, despite promises to the contrary. The group was unanimous in its opposition to any plan to commercialize extension services. They however, expressed a willingness, to pay for technology and agricultural inputs. Given their negative experience with public sector extension services, this lack of credibility is not surprising, but remains probably the single most important challenge to on-going efforts to reform the delivery mechanisms for extension services in SSA countries. Whether private, public, or non-governmental, future extension providers
In SSA will face the challenge of overcoming this credibility gap.

In the areas of financial and resource analyses, public sector extension services in SSA countries are not only under-funded, but often lack the requisite human and technical resources to carry out their institutional mandate for agricultural development. Additionally, extension’s ability to carry out its mandate is hampered by weak agricultural research infrastructure in SSA and the poor research, extension and farmers linkage. The problem of the poor financial and human resource base of SSA national agricultural extension systems is further exacerbated given the fact that its stakeholders, the resource-poor farmers, are often isolated and widely dispersed geographically and often operating in marginal and complex farming systems with poor, if any transportation and communication infrastructure, thus increasing delivery and operational costs.

In view of the above organizational analysis, there is no doubt that public sector extension systems in SSA face serious institutional, structural, financial, and resource problems, not to mention their less than stellar historical foundation, all of which make them ill-equipped to meet their statutory responsibility for promoting agricultural development. It is also obvious that in this era of small government and privatization, any hope for major investments in funding public sector extension services is at best remote. Therefore, ongoing search for alternative delivery formats is inevitable. The point of contention, however, is how best to distribute responsibilities for the delivery of extension services among a multi-institutional framework of providers, in a way that empowers the farmers, and promotes sustainable agricultural development, without unacceptable social, economic, environmental and equity consequences.

**Extension Reform Agenda**

In response to incessant criticism of public sector extension in the LDCs, dire budgetary constraints, and the dominant international development paradigm which favors privatization over public sector control, many national agricultural extension systems in SSA have already embarked on the process of restructuring. Rivera (2001) characterized this reform agenda as falling under three broad categories of decentralization, privatization, and participatory approaches to the delivery of extension services. Expatiating further, Rivera (2001) described the three reform strategies as including decentralization through fiscal system redesign, structural decentralization from central government to sub-governmental control, and finally, management decentralization through farmer participation in decision making and, ultimately, taking responsibility for extension programs.

**The Privatization Argument**

However, a critical analysis of the literature on the subject of extension reform will clearly reveal that the privatization approach in its different forms from vouchers, cost recovery, to outright private sector market-control dominates the debate. To a lesser but a significant extent, the role of non-governmental organizations in the delivery of extension service has received some attention. Often lost in the debate is the role of farmers and their local level institutions in the extension reform process. That the pro-privatization side dominates the extension reform debates is not surprising, given the global trends in the other sectors of the economy. From public school reform, municipal, state, and national utilities, to public infrastructure, privatization is being presented as a cure-all for the perceived failure of the public sector to manage these programs and services effectively. According to Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994), beginning in the mid-1970’s, the focus of development specialists began to gradually shift from “market-failures” to “government failures” as the cause of poor economic performance, stagnation, and decline. Public sector institutions and enterprises, especially in LDCs, are simply represented as a deviation from the ideal or first-best state, with public enterprises operating inefficiently and with higher costs, that invariably absorb large amounts of public subsidy (Cook & Fabella, 2002). Comparing public extension systems in SSA to
their counterparts in the developed countries is to lose sight of both historical and institutional realities.

Given the trend in the other sectors of the economies of sub-Saharan Africa where privatization has become the dominant mode of management, it is safe to presume that many national agricultural extension systems are on their inevitable path toward one form or another of private sector control or management. However, as we contemplate this bold world of market-driven extension services, River’s (2000) analysis of the impact of extension privatization in The Netherlands and New Zealand is very instructive. Among the consequences identified by Rivera (2000) are the tendency to reduce linkages and exchange of information between organizations and farmers, the trend toward enhancing large-scale farming to the detriment of small-scale farming, and diminishing the concept of agricultural information as a public good, while promoting knowledge as a salable commodity. The consequences of privatizing extension services in many SSA countries, where the human infrastructure for the agricultural sector is already being devastated by the AIDS pandemic, where the infrastructure for private sector regulation is very weak, and where a large percentage of the population depends on subsistence agriculture, are likely to be even more devastating.

The closest insight into the potential impact of privatizing extension services in SSA can be gleamed from the findings of research that have analyzed the impact of structural adjustment policies of the 1980’s. The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) (1995) in its assessment of the impact of the Structural Adjustment Policy’s of privatizing agricultural input procurement, and removing government subsidies in Ghana in the 1980’s, reported an almost 90% drop in use of insecticides and fungicides for tree crops. A precipitous drop in the use of fertilizer for the major food crops, including corn, was also reported. In another study, (Kempkes, 1997) reported that private firms were only interested in providing inputs when they were able to realize a reasonable profit, hence, poor farmers and farmers in remote regions are often not reached by private suppliers, because financial risks are too high and returns too low. Therefore, privatizing extension in SSA is almost tantamount to depriving resource-poor farmers of even the little service they currently enjoy through public sector provider.

Empowerment Model for Extension Services

While the debate about the future direction of extension services in the LDCs has largely been dominated by issues such as privatization and the role of the state, a third approach, the empowerment approach, has slowly emerged on the scene. From Farmer Field School, to “gestions de terroir” or Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) (Lewis, 1998), different forms of participatory approaches to agricultural development in general, and extension services delivery in particular are beginning to take root in the SSA. Beaudoux, et. al. (1984) chronicled case studies of on-going efforts in several African countries to decentralize and involve farmer organizations in agricultural development. They observed that the evidence was becoming compelling that success in agricultural research and technology is more likely when farmers-as farmer organizations, not individual farmers-participate in its development. In the same vein, Alonge (1993) reported that indigenous social networks and institutions were critical factors in resource mobilization, and technology adoption among the Nupes of Mid-Belt, Nigeria. Strong local groups mobilize the interest of the wider community and sustain action well beyond the period of direct contact with external agents (Roling & Pretty, 1997). Chamala (1997) also observed that the empowerment role can be a cornerstone of the new approach to extension, noting that extension personnel need to develop a new philosophy where their role is to help farmers and rural communities organize themselves and take charge (empowerment) of their growth and development.

This paper contends that the context of the debate about the future direction of extension services in SSA needs to move beyond the choice between market- and non-market-based reform, to
include the empowerment of farmers to take control of their development. Hence an empowerment model (figure 2) for the delivery of extension services in SSA is proposed. The foundational principles for the empowerment model of extension include the belief that farmers’ experiences, their social networks, institutions, experimentation, and knowledge are real, and of great value. That past “one-size fits all” lineal models of development are ineffectual, devalue human worth, and breed dependency. Central to its implementation are the farmers’ stock of human, physical, and social capitals, and their indigenous institutions. The empowerment model envisages a new extension paradigm in which farmers’ agroecological, human, economic and social capitals, their local level networks and institutions, working in collaboration and partnership with the public and private sectors, civil society and non-governmental organizations, become the organizing framework for agricultural development.

Critical to the successful implementation of an empowerment model is a comprehensive analysis of the nature and density of the distribution of social networks, and the local organization capacity (LOC) of farmers groups to serve as a framework for delineating sustainable extension groups. In other words, farmers operating within horizontally and vertically articulated social capital networks, either on the basis of shared commodity, geographic, social, or cultural interest, could be organized into an extension delivery unit. Using this framework, a multi-sectoral approach to agricultural development including technology development, input procurement and distribution, and other local organization capacity-building activities may be implemented within an empowerment node framework (Alonge, 2002).

Figure 2. Empowerment Model of Extension
In order to be effective, the implementation of the empowerment model should be preceded by a comprehensive organizational/institutional analysis (see Figure 1), including the farmers’ local level or traditional institutions. This analysis has the dual, but complimentary function of helping to determine the local organization capacities of not only the farmers’ local level organizations, but also of the extension service providers (public, private, and non-governmental). Additionally, data collected through organizational analysis could help tailor extension services to the unique circumstances of different farmer groups and communities. For instance, for farmers operating in communities, organizations, or groups working in marginal or resource-poor farming systems, or characterized by weak organizational capacity, a high proportion of extension services may be provided by the public sector, complimented by civil society/ non-governmental organizations, in order to provide the added support for advocacy, and strengthening local organizational capacity. Conversely, those farmers operating within groups with high organization capacity, or working in market-oriented, resource-abundant production system, a high proportion of the responsibility for technology development, and extension may be provided within a market-based format.

Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

Public sector extension systems, globally, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are in the process of a historical reconfiguration. The restructuring process in SSA is complicated by unique historical, institutional, structural, socio-economic, and political factors. With a relatively young history dating back only to the post-independence 1960’s, NAES in SSA were shaped by colonial and post-colonial agricultural development policy of rural resource extraction for colonial and post-independence national development. Hence, their top-down, bureaucratic structures are a carry-over of these policies. The decades of the 1970’s and 80’s marked an era of massive investment in institutional building and management restructuring for public sector extension in SSA. However, with the persistent problems of agricultural stagnation, poverty, regional food deficit, coupled with the poor state of the national economies of SSA, the pressure of globalization, and the paradigm shift which favors privatization over public sector control, national governments in SSA are under intense pressure to downsize, decentralize, privatize, and restructure their NAESs.

After a holistic analysis of these issues, the paper concludes that the route to restructuring extension systems in SSA is not limited to a choice between market or non-market reform as many analysts are wont to suggest. The paper recommends a third approach, a pluralistic multi-institutional empowerment model for the delivery of extension services in SSA. Grounded within the philosophical and theoretical frameworks of human empowerment and social capital, respectively, the proposed model has at its center the farmers’ unique agroecological, human, economic, and social capitals. On the basis of organizational and stakeholder’s analyses (see Figure 2), the delivery of extension services could then be tailored to the unique circumstances of farmers.

Reconfiguring national agricultural extension services in sub-Saharan Africa from their linear technology transfer model to one driven by farmers’ empowerment, especially given their unique historical, social, economic, institutional and political antecedents, is certainly an undertaking of herculean proportion with great implications. These implications and recommendations for actions are discussed in the following section.

1. A shift from a resource-extraction, national-goal driven extension model, to a farmer-centered, demand-driven framework has implications for institutional, structural, and cultural reforms of NAES. The highly centralized, top-down institutional, structural, and cultural orientation of many NAES in Sub-Saharan Africa is incompatible with a farmer-centered, empowerment model of extension. Hence, major investment in institutional and cultural restructuring, staff reorientation, and professional development will be critical for success.
2. One of the major challenges inherent in working with the local level institutions is their critically weak local organization capacity. Hence, empowering local institutions to serve as true and credible partners in the delivery of extension services will require great investment in institutional capacity-building.

3. Although, the empowerment model may lower cost in the future by shifting the cost of extension from the public sector to the private market as farmers become more economically empowered, it may not be a cost-saving approach at the front-end as investments have to be made in institutional and cultural (organizational culture) restructuring, staff development, and capacity building (World Bank, 1998).

4. While the democratic mode of government, defined at its most basic form is gradually taking root in SSA, the pluralistic approach to governance as measured by the empowerment of the grassroots and the electorate is slow to develop. Institutional and fiscal centralization and concentration often work to the financial advantage of government bureaucrats and the political class. Hence, decentralization and fiscal deconcentration that are necessary for the successful implementation of an empowerment model are likely to come at the political and financial expense of the political class, and bureaucrats (Alonge, 2002).

Although, in comparison to the privatization approach, the empowerment route is a much more complicated, more resource-demanding, and a slower route to reforming extension services in sub-Saharan Africa, it is the only route to sustainable agricultural and economic development.

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