MOZAMBIQUE'S MOVE TOWARD A PLURALISTIC NATIONAL SYSTEM OF RURAL EXTENSION

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Abstract

This paper examines Mozambique’s current move toward the development of a pluralistic national system of rural extension. The Government’s present PROAGRI agricultural policy framework, funded by the World Bank, has resulted in the development of a National Extension Master Plan that calls for the advancement of an Integrated National Extension System (SISNE). SISNE envisages an institutionally pluralistic system of extension, utilizing both public-sector and private-sector extension providers to disseminate agricultural information to farmers. This pluralistic system is to be promoted in part through an outsourcing initiative in two districts of two different provinces, Nampula and Zambezia.

Aside from setting the stage for discussion, this paper has two purposes. The first is to examine the problems and challenges that confront Mozambique’s public-sector extension service in developing a pluralistic extension system. The second purpose is to consider the consequent role of the public sector and its responsibilities as both a provider of public-sector extension services and as a coordinator, overseer and regulator of private sector provision. The paper concludes with a consideration of the meaning of Mozambique’s move toward a pluralistic national rural extension system both for its own purposes and the development of similar purposes in other developing countries.

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The Setting

The Republic of Mozambique on the southeast coast of Africa, a country almost twice the size of California, is organized into ten provinces. Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula, Tete and Zambezia are located in the north, Manica and Sofala in the center, and Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo in the south. Nampula and Zambezia are the provinces where the Government intends to initiate the first two projects in its move toward developing a pluralistic national system of rural extension.

In July 1999, Mozambique’s population was estimated at 19,124,335. Of these inhabitants, 45% are between 0-14 years of age, 53% are between 15-64, and 2% are 65 years and over. An estimated 80% of the population relies upon subsistence agriculture and fishing to survive. The principal staple is corn; wet rice is also grown in the natural flood plains of the country's many rivers; but all wheat is imported. Food security is a major goal. Poverty is high, with the average annual income reaching only $85 (U.S. dollars). Poverty alleviation is an equally major goal.

The main agriculture products are cotton, cashew nuts, sugarcane, tea, cassava (tapioca), corn, rice, tropical fruits, beef, and poultry. Its exports in 1998 totaled $295 million, mainly for the following commodities: shrimp 40%, cashews, cotton, sugar, copra, and citrus. Its imports that year totaled $965 million, mainly for food, clothing, farm equipment and petroleum. Increases in agricultural productivity and production are also important goals for Mozambique.

Its communications systems include an estimated 70,000 telephones, 700,000 radios, one television broadcast station, and 44,000 (1992 est.) televisions. Reaching the vast majority of rural and farming communities with functional extension messages is a daunting task.

A long civil war, recurrent drought in the hinterlands, and early in 2000 a torrential flood in the south have contributed to environmental degradation, as well as increased migration of the population to urban and coastal areas. As a result of its difficulties, Mozambique’s effort to regain self-sufficiency in food production has been slow. In 1998, the Government (GOM) negotiated a loan from the World Bank to improve its agriculture sector. The development of the rural extension sub-sector is an urgent consideration for the GOM in reaching its goals of food security, poverty alleviation and increased agricultural production.

First Phase: Late Beginning

Mozambique’s public-sector rural extension service is one of the most recent in the Southern Africa Region as well as in sub-Saharan Africa. Not institutionalized until March 1987; its initial development took place between 1989 and 1992 (Amisse, 1997; Gemo, 2000). At that time, state farms contributed considerably to the formal establishment and initial consolidation of public-sector rural extension. Assistance was also provided by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations Agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (Carrilho, 1997).

The state farms basically provided field technicians with an elementary academic level in agriculture and professional field experience especially in cash crops such as cotton, cashew and to a lesser extent in tobacco. Government organizations (GOs) as well as the
majority of international NGOs were involved at that time in emergency activities relating to drought and civil war. These emergency activities had more to do with the free distribution to displaced rural people of basic agriculture inputs (e.g., seeds and hand tools) than with extension activities.

The international NGOs contributed significantly to the growth of public extension during this initial phase of extension’s development. IBIS, for example, the Danish Association for International Cooperation (a Danish NGO), was fully integrated with public-sector extension in Zambezia province (1992-1998), providing institutional support. The German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ, a government organization) had a close relationship with public-sector extension in Manica province (1989-1999), giving technical assistance and some institutional support.

The UN agencies such as FAO, UNICEF’s integrated rural development program and UNDP made valuable contributions to technical and financial support. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) also played a significant role as one of the first (and still current) financier of public-sector extension.

In 1992/93, the World Bank initiated financial assistance to public-sector extension in Mozambique. At that time, the Training and Visit (T&V) extension management system, adopted by the public-sector extension service at its establishment, was modified. Since that time greater emphasis has been given to working with farmer groups, and the agenda of extension workers has been determined according to the specific circumstances of each work environment and is therefore more flexible.

During this first phase of extension development, the environmental situation was less than ideal. In addition to the prolonged drought in the country, a high degree of insecurity existed in the rural areas as a result of civil war. There was a hasty exodus of rural families seeking relatively safer zones. Thus too, new extension networks had a tendency to be established near to the provincial capitals or in zones with some level of safety. Even in those zones, however, the daily tasks of extension workers were completed in an average of four to five hours in order to avoid dangerous early morning and afternoon hours. Crucial activities such as supervision, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), on-the-job and in-service training were also affected by these adverse circumstances. In short, normal extension activities were not undertaken until after the civil war, 1992-1995.

The Second Phase: PROAGRI

In 1998, the GOM initiated the World Bank-financed National Agricultural Development Program (PROAGRI). Public-sector rural extension is one of the eight components that comprise PROAGRI.

In line with the general objectives and guidelines of PROAGRI, the GOM developed a National Extension Master Plan (1999-2003) that called for the development of an integrated national extension system, SISNE (Sistema Nacional de Extensão Rural). The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADER) through its Department of Agricultural Extension (DNER) proposes to collaborate with other organizations interested to provide extension, such as NGOs, farmers’ organizations, private-sector commercial farmers, registered groups of certified extension workers, and other private-sector entities.

Thus, within the framework of PROAGRI, DNER will undertake two major tasks: the operation of a number of public-sector extension networks throughout the country and the management of private-sector providers, especially in areas where there are no public
extension networks. Of Mozambique’s 128 districts (not all of which have agricultural potential), public-sector extension services operate in 48 of the 52 districts considered as priority by DNER. These criteria for coverage include density of population, agro-ecological characteristics, accessibility, and degree of rural poverty. The other districts are not covered because of limited available resources, including financial, human and material.

The Current Phase: Outsourcing

The institutional pluralism of extension service providers is considered to be a major strategy in the development of the National Extension Master Plan (1999-2003) and the advancement of a national extension system (SISNE). The Extension Master Plan states that publicly financed extension is open to multiple financial and delivery arrangements. These arrangements include outsourcing, cost sharing with private and community extension structures, and cost-recovery initiatives with individual farmers and farmer’s groups and associations.

Outsourcing is the principal avenue selected for involving private-sector providers, some of whom are already operating extension systems parallel to that of the public sector. GOM plans to outsource the delivery of extension in two pilot projects in two districts, one in Nampula and one in Zambezia. As defined in this instance, outsourcing means “contracting out” responsibility for extension delivery to private-sector providers (Rivera, 2000). It is the act by public-sector extension to promote and support private-sector involvement in extension provision (whether by private companies, NGOs, farmer associations, or registered individual extension consultants). At present, one of the objectives of this outsourcing initiative is to prepare DNER to coordinate, oversee and regulate private-sector providers and to learn from the experience of outsourcing.

In line with the project’s findings, recommendations will be made as to whether to expand the project and, if so, how to improve the project. Ultimately, the project seeks to reach four main goals, which are:

1. To increase farm productivity and production.
2. To increase the value of production and ensure food security by (a) enhancing diversification, (b) promoting value-added processing, (c) improving post-harvest storage, and (d) promoting the establishment of well-functioning markets.
3. To involve farmers in the contractor’s decisionmaking processes, including in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the extension program of work.
4. To encourage the association of farmers into agricultural groups based on agricultural production special interests, cost sharing as appropriate and other criteria, including socio-economic criteria.

With respect to goals 1 and 2, DNER has indicated that the technologies utilized should contribute to agricultural sustainability by the use of natural resource management systems and techniques. With respect to goals 3 and 4, DNER has underscored the difficulty for individual, isolated, resource-poor farmers to influence and obtain the services they need and make their voices heard in decisionmaking processes that affect their lives, without the leverage of organizational influence.
Problems Confronting the Development of SISNE

Young institutions. Outsourcing extension delivery services to private-sector providers is the initial step being taken to develop SISNE. Within that context, the GOM has decided first to open a bidding process directly toward national NGOs. It is expected that NGOs will best serve the initial purposes of the outsourcing project in part because they are likely to create a demand-led system which is responsive and accountable to farmers’ agricultural problems and goals, as well as being operationally effective and financially efficient.

The task of providing extension education to farmers is, however, enormous -- in part because of the country’s large size, the lack of infrastructure mentioned at the beginning of this paper, and the national urgency to promote increased and sustainable agricultural production. The involvement of both public-sector and private-sector extension providers is seen as complementary and strategically crucial if a nationwide system of extension is to be developed. Notwithstanding, the private-sector extension NGOs focusing on smallholders on a non-profit basis are in the initial stages of development, as is the public sector.

The majority of the NGOs undertaking extension only started work in the mid-1990s, shifting at that time from emergency to the development activities. There is little or no coordination of the international NGOs in Mozambique, and little or no collaboration among them. A 1998 public-sector extension survey indicates that a total of 67 NGOs currently work in extension throughout the country. The geographical coverage of each one of these organizations varies greatly -- sometimes covering only one or two parts of one district, sometimes covering three or even four districts as in the cases of World Vision International and Care International (in Zambezia and Nampula provinces). Beneficiaries are principally smallholders.

Lack of collaboration among extension providers. To date, there are few instances of collaboration between public and private (non-profit and for-profit) extension entities. Public-sector extension had (and still has) some notable partnerships with international NGOs. For examples:

- IBIS is still working (1999-2003) with public-sector extension giving institutional and technical backstopping to public-sector extension in two districts (Alto-Molocue and Mocuba) of Zambezia province while public extension provides staff.
- CLUSA (the Cooperative League of the USA), an international American NGO operating under a formal agreement in Nampula Province, provides technical field assistance to farmers and training in management issues to help consolidate farmer groups into organized associations. This experience is occurring in four districts and involves approximately 7,000 smallholders, since 1999/00.
- Sasakawa Global 2000, an American-Japanese international NGO, is working with public extension since 1994/95 in five of the ten provinces of the country, providing institutional support to farmers for the rational use of inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers and some herbicides for maize and rice.

Apart from the above, there are no significant examples of collaborative relationships between public-sector extension and non-profit private extension providers. In general, even collaboration between NGOs is weak, even when they are both working within the same province. NGOs tend to be small in size, independent, and differ in their philosophies; these attributes, as Farrington notes (1997), militate against the creation of effective forums,
whether at national or provincial levels. In the last two to three years some forms of informal and occasional relationship has started to grow between public services and NGOs, particularly at provincial level, with some national and international NGOs. The same cannot be said in relation to private enterprises doing commodity extension. Exception can be given to a former JVC called LOMACO, in the district of Montepuez in Cabo-Delgado province with which some relationships have occurred particularly during field days, field demonstrations, some degree of sharing of technical information, etc.

**Lack of farmer organizations providing extension.** GOM hopes and excepts to expand the present pluralistic approach to extension by eventually being able to include farmer organizations in the SISNE plan. The promotion of farmer organizations currently constitutes a task for both government and private-sector extension, although for different reasons depending on whether the private-sector entity is a for-profit or non-profit organization. In Mozambique there are very few known examples of farmer organizations carrying out extension or supporting such services in rural areas. In general, these types of organizations are in an initial stage of development. But, they are seen as having considerable potential for promoting farmers’ empowerment and local sustainability.

It is important to distinguish between non-profit and for-profit farmer entities. In the Northern and Central regions of the provinces of Cabo-Delgado and Nampula as well as Manica and Tete, there are thousands of smallholders organized in both informal and formal groups (or associations) around commodity-extension activities. This commodity-extension (or technology transfer) occurs through contractual relationships between enterprises and these farmer groups. These arrangements were initiated and developed in the early and middle 1980s.

**The Joint Venture Companies.** JVCs carry out purely commodity extension (e.g., for cotton, tobacco, and cashew). It is irrational to try and engage these organizations in the private sector to undertake projects involving diversification, unless a profit can be clearly anticipated. Also, their orientation is quite different from that of government or the NGOs. JVCs tend to consider external inputs as the routine mode for production of cash crops, while Government encourages the rationale of chemical inputs by farmers, highlighting environmental and human issues, not only economic issues. However, the outsourcing project envisions the involvement and contribution of JVCs, probably under NGO subcontracting to deliver input supplies and/or develop markets.

**The Challenge**

The present initiative towards an institutionally pluralistic national extension system is confronted with significant external problems, some of which are outlined in the previous section. In addition, public-sector extension must confront two internal challenges, having to do with organizational structure and management. One challenge is to review and clarify the goals of its public-sector delivery service, given the proposed development of private-sector delivery services. The second challenge is to develop its management capability both as a provider or extension services and as coordinator, overseer and regulator of private-sector extension delivery services.

At present, public-sector extension is comprised of approximately 700 agents, of whom only about 200 are permanent employees; the rest serve on a contractual basis. Many questions arise. Should the number of permanent employees be increased? What should be the status of the contracted agents? If the public sector service is to be expanded, what will be its goals? How can those goals best be accomplished? Does public-sector extension have a professionally adequate number of administrative and field staff to realize its goals?

In addition to reviewing its priorities and within that framework setting realistic goals to be accomplished, public-sector extension will need to develop a systematic and useful (and effectively used) management information system founded on regular monitoring and evaluation. The latter
performance and program control features become particularly important as public-sector extension moves toward a bifurcated system in which it must both operate publicly provided extension services and coordinate, supervise and regulate privately provided extension services.

Apart from the challenges cited in this and the preceding section, there are also external as well as internal national and sectoral development policies needed that relate to commerce, public infrastructure, fiscal arrangements and civil service incentives. Also agricultural policies relating to agricultural prices, credit, input supplies and markets need to be reviewed and revised. When extension stands alone, it is a weak instrument but, as Röling (1986) notes, it becomes powerful when combined with price incentives, input supply, credit, seed multiplication, and other agricultural development support systems. Contado (1997) argues that each country should have a comprehensive agricultural extension policy that ensures (i.e., mandates) coordination with research, education, input supply, and credit and marketing systems, and provided the flexibility needed to reflect the dynamic nature of the agricultural sector. Although not the main issue in the present discussion, there are a number of policy initiatives that appear needed to harmonize extension policy with other development policies. In several zones of the Northern and Central regions of Mozambique, for example, public-sector extension is ineffective in part because meager opportunity exists for agricultural commercialization, formal and established channels of input supply are non-existent, rural infrastructure is lacking, and agricultural research stations function at a low level. These constitute serious constraints to the success of public-sector extension.

Funding also represents a major problem for public-sector extension. The degree and timeliness of funding at different levels of intervention directly influence the capability of services. In Mozambique, public-sector extension is for the most part financed by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development and in the provinces of Manica, Tete and Zambezia through direct and indirect contributions by DANIDA. Technical interruptions in extension delivery often occur due, for example, to lack of government contributions or because of bureaucratic delays, temporary suspension by audits and other institutional problems. The challenge to provide effective, high quality and sustainable public-sector extension depends on coordinated funding arrangements currently lacking within the international and the governmental arenas.

Next Steps

The outcome of the outsourcing project depends on several factors. On the positive side, extension management staff, from top to bottom, is comprised in general of young professionals who are willing to innovate and try new forms of organization and intervention.

There is notable commitment and a growing understanding among central extension management staff that outsourcing is neither an alternative to public-sector extension nor an effort to prove that public-sector extension is ineffective. Outsourcing is beginning to be seen as a way to develop a national system of extension delivery, to promote the participation of other actors and further pursue the involvement of farmers in extension programs. The view of the role of government is changing, from the only provider to one among many providers of extension, functioning also as regulator, supervisor, evaluator and facilitator of extension provision. This changing view among management staff is important because it creates a favorable and motivated work environment.

There is considerable supportive leadership at MADER headquarters encouraging central extension management to learn from different extension alternatives including outsourcing. This is important because it contributes to a creative work environment. Donors, particularly the WB, are committed to a collaborative effort regarding PROAGRI and to financing new forms of extension intervention, especially outsourcing. As for the available NGOs, and also several JVCs, there is evidence of genuine interest to participate in the outsourcing project.

On the negative side, educational levels of extension staff are low. At the provincial level (with the exception of Nampula where there are five technicians with B.Sc. degrees) only one or two technicians have B.Sc. degrees. Thus, training of technicians and/or the recruitment of new qualified
staff will be necessary to monitor and evaluation, as well as to assist the pilots. DNER at the central level will have a crucial task in guiding the process of outsourcing and developing and training provincial staff in supervision and M&E. M&E require further strengthening, despite considerable efforts undertaken in this regard since the end of 1999. Outsourcing demands an even more complex M&E system. Institutional development involving human resource advancement in new knowledge and skills is urgently needed.

Conclusions

Mozambique is moving toward the development of a pluralistic national system of rural extension. The decision to outsource delivery to private-sector organizations, beginning with NGOs, creates a new role for the public sector and adds new responsibilities. Now public-sector extension must both provide services as well as coordinate, oversee and regulate private sector provision of services. This new role and the accompanying responsibilities will require adequate and timely external and internal support, managerial savvy at all administrative levels of public sector extension, tight organization and decisiveness, leadership that includes participatory involvement in decisionmaking, individual dedication and programmatic vision. The public-sector appears to be striving to meet this challenge.

Mozambique’s move toward a pluralistic national rural extension system has implications for the nation’s agriculture, and also for its social and economic development. The outcome of Mozambique's move may also have an impact on the determination and direction taken by other developing countries confronted by the exigencies of poverty and food insecurity and the demanding challenges of globalization.

References


