

Translating Policy into Action—Human Resource Review of Extension Agents in Kilolo and Mufindi Districts—To Support Household Economic Strengthening in Tanzania

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Introduction

Translating national policies to local action is frequently a challenge. In Tanzania, IMARISHA, a USAID-funded project, works with the Department of Social Welfare and local government authorities (LGAs) to support economic strengthening efforts (agriculture and savings in particular), as well as nutrition, in alignment with the National Costed Plan of Action II (a child protection policy). IMARISHA is implementing a pilot in Mufindi and Kilolo Districts to achieve integrated health, nutrition, and economic outcomes. IMARISHA conducted a human resource assessment of extension agents to better understand the day-to-day realities of ward-level extension agents.

Methodology

IMARISHA collected data in August 2013 with the assistance of four IMARISHA staff. The survey included quantitative and qualitative questions to improve the understanding of ward extension officers in local government. IMARISHA used purposive sampling in collaboration with district staff to identify 47 ward-level extension officers—community development officers, agriculture and livestock extension officers, education extension officers, medical assistants, and other district health workers—across 20 wards in Mufindi and Kilolo. District Council staff facilitated introductions for the team to ward extension leaders and staff in all surveyed wards.

IMARISHA pre-tested the interview guide with extension officers in Kinondoni District in Dar es Salaam before using the tool in Iringa districts. Additionally, IMARISHA provided staff working as interviewers with a half-day training session to become familiar with the interview guide before field interviews. IMARISHA anticipates the assessment findings will: 1) be useful for planning and budgeting for resource allocation to support economic strengthening (ES) at the ward and district levels; 2) inform public sector institutions of the existing opportunities for and challenges in meeting their commitments regarding ES and livelihood support for vulnerable households; and 3) provide information to the Department of Social Welfare, the Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS), and other ministries in determining how to support and coordinate ES within the context of support for MVC and PLHV.

Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili. Qualitative analysis was done of the translated interviews, and quantitative data were analyzed in MS Excel.

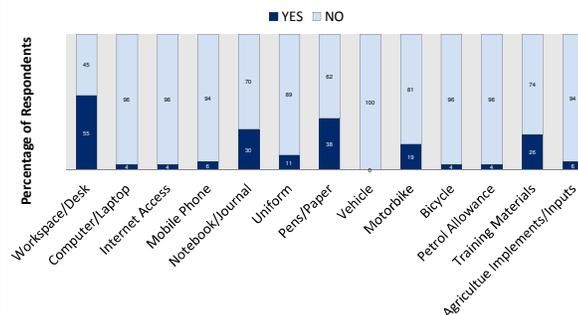
Findings and Interpretations

The team interviewed ward-level government staff whose jobs were most likely to include household economic strengthening activities—interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability of households and empowering them to provide for the basic needs of family members through a variety of livelihood-oriented activities. These activities may involve small-scale business and agriculture, savings mobilization and access to finance, and skills training, as well as government-provided “productive social safety net” services such as conditional cash transfers, cash for public works, and food support. Figure 1 shows ward-level extension staff interviewed by area of expertise.

Several challenges with staff management and supervision were identified, including:

- Differences between the high-level program of service and the individualized job description.
- Major differences in actual job descriptions and the added job tasks and responsibilities that staff acknowledged taking on due to local staffing shortages.
- Limited investment in pre-service or orientation training.
- Loose supervision structures with limited direct oversight at the ward level.
- Limited resource budgeting and planning for ward-level staff, who have been left with few job resources and supplies to manage their work.
- Inadequate work space to perform required duties.

Figure 2: Availability of Resources and Supplies to Support Extension Services



Knowledge of national policies, laws, and programs supporting vulnerable households were limited; 64 percent could not name any national-level policies without prompting. The survey team asked specifically about government plans or frameworks as they relate to most vulnerable children (MVC), HIV/AIDS, and people living with HIV (PLHV), social protection and productive social safety nets (PSSN), and value chain (VC) strengthening.

Figure 3: Awareness of Key Policies and Programs

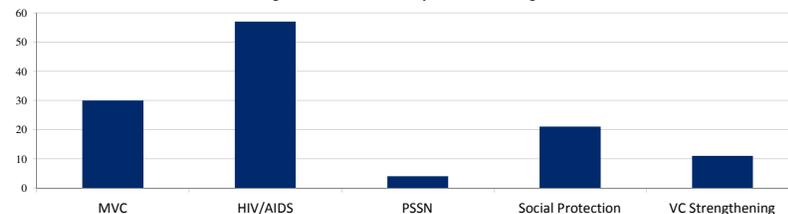


Figure 1: Respondents by Technical Area of Extension Service

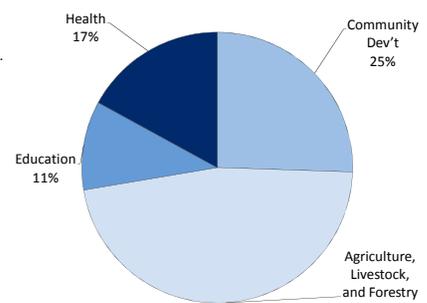


Figure 2 demonstrates the limited resources available to support extension. Some 15 percent (n=7) said they are forced to use their own resources to purchase airtime, fuel, training materials, and medication in order to do their jobs. As a whole, it appears that Kilolo had fewer resources available for district staff than Mufindi.

Recommendations

- **Policies need to be translated literally and figuratively to ensure that they are enacted.** Swahili language copies of these policies must be made readily available for staff to review, along with job aids that provide a simplified articulation of the policies and directives to improve enforcement.
- **Government needs to expand understanding of current evidence of effective strategies to vulnerable households.** Extension agents need opportunities to understand the latest evidence on how to appropriately support vulnerable households in their communities on improved food security, asset accumulation, and business growth. There is also a need to better understand how to support subsistence agriculture and business to manage risk and return in relation to vulnerability.
- **Investments in social support strategies need improved monitoring in order to measure results.** Ward extension officers need more tools, skills, and experience in monitoring and evaluation to improve performance.
- **The national social protection strategies and safety net programs need to better link subsidy-driven strategies (for example, cash transfers) with other strategies to enhance livelihoods, employability, and access to finance.** Only then will interventions translate into improved social outcomes and eventual graduation from support.
- **LGAs need to engage with private sector actors to address development issues.** Councils must consider private sector involvement in development and support extension officers to increase their work and involvement with existing private sector institutions in their locations.
- **There is a need for improved coordination across ALL local partners.** This includes local and international nongovernmental organizations and government staff at the ward level. Improved communication on the role of each in supporting vulnerable households can ensure that resources are not wasted on duplicative efforts, and that each actor operates according to its strengths.

More Information

For more information, please visit <http://www.dai.com> and our Facebook page at Tanzania—Economic Strengthening for Vulnerable Households.

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