



**IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION NETWORKS AND AN  
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AS PREREQUISITES FOR THE  
SUCCESS OF RURAL BASED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND  
PROGRAMS.**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no material described herein has been previously published or written by another person except when due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the university libraries being available for photocopying and loan.

Emmy. K. Beraho.

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## ABSTRACT

Small scale peasant farmers play a pivotal role in the Ugandan agricultural economy. Despite their contribution, they seem not to have benefited from their efforts and they are still disadvantaged in accessing vital services needed to better manage their farming enterprises. Low literacy levels, poverty, highly scattered settlement pattern, and a poorly developed physical and social infrastructure in rural areas combine to lock low access farmers into a state of perpetual underdevelopment. In addition, these attributes make them an unattractive client sector to most commercial service providers. Low agricultural productivity and fast population growth have also contributed to rural poverty and unacceptable levels of malnutrition, notwithstanding the fact that Uganda is agriculturally well endowed by nature. Excessive bureaucratic procedures in the extension agency, lack of targeting of low access farmers, and inefficient utilisation of locally available resources have further aggravated rural poverty and widened the information gap between the low access (poor) and high access (rich) farmers.

Development projects and programs established to address rural underdevelopment and to serve all farmers equitably seem to have not reached the low access farmers. Most of these projects also never survive beyond the cessation of external intervention. There is a need to address these development anomalies and identify strategies necessary to ensure that low access farmers are served and grassroots development projects are sustained without continuous external support.

To consider further development options for these societies, a study that included a case study of the Australian Community Landcare program and a survey in Uganda between February 1994 and June 1994 that targeted both farmers and extension agents was undertaken. The survey sought to determine the problems of the Ugandan agricultural extension system. It also solicited practical solutions to the problems identified with a view of developing general recommendations from the perspective of both farmers and extension agents.

The survey showed that both farmers and extension staff structurally belong to the same system - the agricultural extension system, and their problems should be solved together.

Farmers indicated that they realise that the problems faced by extension agents affect the quality of their service. Similarly, extension agents indicated that the problems experienced by farmers influenced the utilisation and demand for their messages.

The survey further showed that agriculture is a broader concept than farming, embracing a range of factors necessary to make farming successful. It is not good enough to focus on only provision of farming information and ignore other factors such as farming inputs. It was shown that the performance of farmers, particularly low access farmers, is limited by lack of production inputs, credit and markets for farm products. The performance of extension agents was determined by their motivation and professionalism particularly knowledge, communication skills, work ethics, leadership and management skills and a range of other personal attributes.

To address the problems faced by the extension system, there is a need to employ a holistic approach that addresses the needs of the farmers (extension messages users), the needs of the extension agent (the messengers), the needs of the extension agency as a whole (which is the channel of the messages and the medium in which the other components of the extension system operate) and have the messages well targeted to the end users.

It was shown that developing grassroots institutions has a number of advantages including the potential of linking low access farmers to traditional service providers that mainly operate in urban centers and developing the local capacity necessary to initiate and sustain grassroots development projects.

The general conclusion from the entire study is that there is a need to develop a sound agricultural information system. Such a system recognises the value of: indigenous knowledge and institutions; participation by farmers in development activities regardless

of their social status; government-intermediate body cooperation in the delivery of extension services; networking within the extension system and with other systems; accountability within the system; the monitoring and evaluation function of management in the system; developing professionalism within the system and facilitation of farmers activities as they develop a local capacity. The study provides some guidelines as to how such goals might be achieved and integrated into a national extension effort.