

**Agricultural Extension
Transforming ICTs!
Championing Universal Access**

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“In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists”

Eric Hoffer (dishwasher, lumberjack, stevedore & social philosopher)

Overview

- Transforming ICTs
- Factors affecting the delivery of agricultural extension – where does telecommunications access fit?
- Telecommunications policy –universal access
- How can CTA assist?

User Demand

- For effective and appropriate extension
- Failure of T&V
- Demand-driven extension – shift to a negotiated system and non-government delivery
- Opens the door for examination of how agricultural extension can transform ICTs

Dwindling Government Budgets

- Structural adjustment and pressure to reduce extension expenditure
- New decentralization paradigm
- Decentralization as a “patchwork quilt”
- Coordination of decentralization is poor
- Coordination requires communication and tools for communication

Other changes

- Globalization and liberalization of agricultural markets
- Privatization of agriculture and agricultural services
- Increased presence of agri-business and commercialized farming
- Environmental imperatives
- Climate change
- Food insecurity
- Increased use of biotechnologies
- HIV/AIDS
- Calls for “good governance” and stakeholder participation
- Gradually improving access to ICTs

Responses to change include

- Client-focused extension
- Decentralization of extension
- Privatization of extension
- Pluralistic extension delivery
- Broadening the role of extension
- Participatory extension
- Farmer-to-Farmer extension
- Unified delivery of rural and agricultural development services
- Adoption of information and communication technologies

New actors who need to communicate

- Farmer as both extension client and extension provider
- Linkage, learning and knowledge management facilitators
- Private sector players
- Market players and market information providers
- NGOs, CBOs, and private sector providers
- Health, education, environment, and other sector players
- Telecommunication players

Telecommunication players

- Service Providers
- Regulators and Policy-makers
- Telecommunications Policy Reform Advocates
- Rural Clients (Current and Potential)
- “Last Mile” entrepreneurs – phone shop operators and cybercafe Operators

“The individual who sublets his or her phone line or sets up a phone shop or telecentre does more to close the development gap than the great corporations and businesses of the world.”

ITU Secretary General Pekka Tarjanne

The Telephone – the basic building block

- Policies and programs in support of rural telephony support other ICT initiatives
- Telephones provide the overwhelming source of revenue to support rural ICTs
- Supporting rural telephony policy and regulatory reform will enable extension stakeholders to transform ICTs

Universal Access: Reform = Fertile Soil

- Beneficiaries of policy and regulatory reform **MUST** participate in decision-making
- Therefore we must work to build rural/agricultural stakeholder capacity to participate in universal access policy and regulatory reform

What you measure is what you get

- What is Universal Access?
- Teledensity vs. Teleaccessibility
- No. of lines per 100 people?
- Length of time to walk to a working telephone?
- Who determines the targets?

The myth of unprofitable rural service

- Bad benevolence
- Careful optimization of policy variables and financial instruments can yield profitable rural service in even the most unpromising locations
- Policy maker and regulator ignorance of evidence
- Stakeholders are not involved in policy making and regulatory reform!!!!

Competition, Liberalization, Regulation

- Private sector participation and competition significantly increases the number of telecommunication access lines
- Competition lowers prices and improves service
- Increased competition and liberalization of telecommunications encourages infrastructure development and draws inbound investment

Universal Access Policy Approaches

- Rural Universal Access Subsidy Funds
- Micro-credit programs
- Cooperatives & community owned systems
- “Serve it or lose it”

Understand the rural universe

- Calls tend to terminate in rural areas
- Rural stakeholders may not live in rural areas!
- Remittance economies
- Calling for market information and prices
- Family decision-making
- Small number of lines serving many people
- Involve potential users in shaping policies and programs

How can CTA assist?

- Create, nurture and support universal access champions
- Support learning and advocacy at the national level
- Advocate for universal access based on the evidence
- Support initiatives

Support initiatives

- Universal access tool kit – evidence based best practices
- Convene a conference on universal access success stories and impact on extension delivery
- Support sensitization and education on universal access through a simple newsletter

Research initiatives

- Tactics to overcome policy and regulatory obstacles
- Case studies on champions and their achievements
- Successful private sector innovations
- Tactics to attract new telecom entrants
- Impacts of universal access on extension
- Effective methods for assisting champions
- Gender and universal access