African Highlands Initiative

Acacia II: Improved Access to Information for Development - Research component



Documentation of the needs assessment phase

Process design, facilitation and documentation is by Win26- Action Research Peer Learning Group, Makerere University

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The Win26 Action Research Peer Learning Group (Makerere University) is carrying out this work. This is one of the peer-learning group that underwent a 2 – years training in Personal Mastery and Institutional Change Management (2002 – 2004). The group consists of lecturers in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the Faculty of Agriculture. The team that carried out the needs assessment included members from the Win26 group together with the client organisation, African Highland Initiative (AHI).

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This document is meant to serve as a point of reference for all stakeholders in the agricultural sector in Kabale district and probably others. Priority is to organisations that participated in the focus group discussions and the workshop in which the different stakeholders exchanged ideas. It is intended to provide details of the process as well as the outcome/content of the focus group discussions and workshop on information sharing strategy. All presentations, outcome from working groups as well as plenary sessions are documented. Direct phrasings of individuals and photographs have been inserted for originality of the work

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1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction

Farmers have been heavily involved in the production of Irish potatoes, beans, sorghum, and vegetables, wheat and livestock production in addition to some other farm enterprises. The farmers' perception is that to-date, there is adequate production of the enterprises they are engaged in, what they have produced is in storage and wasting away and they have produced more than the current existing market can consume. This has been attributed to the intensive work the development workers have been engaged in with the farmers.

However, the reality on the ground is that there is inadequate information about better markets in terms of prices offered for the produce and existing market demands in quality (size, taste, clean, etc) and quantities required. Where this is available, there are challenges in sustaining the qualities and quantities required by the markets especially beyond the local market in the district. There exists a gap between what farmers can offer and what the market demands.

In effort to help farmers' bridge the gap and meet the current market demands, various players, both private and public have come in to teach farmers better agronomic practices among others. However, these organizations have ended up unfairly competing against each other, providing the same messages and services to the same target groups that has often led to contradictions in messages delivered and wrong messages to the same farming community. There have also been situations where some NGOs have claimed ownership of other institutions' demonstration sites / work. The implication of such scenarios is tendency of farmers to be reluctant in taking up the messages and hence determent in the rate of development.

There is need to consolidate these diverse efforts of the different development workers. This project therefore seeks to establish a system that will consolidate all information available from the different development workers in Kabale district. The objective of this effort is to have all the information collected and deposited in one central point where all stakeholders can access and use it. This will help minimize duplication of services, contradictions and conflicts in service delivery among the all institutions contributing towards development of the district in general.

1.2 The situation of Information as a critical factor in development processes

The AHI-Acacia information needs assessment, various surveys and institutional analyses completed in Kabale during phase I revealed that access to information by various actors is and continues to be a challenge and a deficit area. Although some level of ad-hoc coordination among R&D actors exist, a coherent development communications strategy for the district is lacking. Critical information is deficit for: on market prices, seasonality and traders, location of expert farmers and service providers, health, enterprise production, among a number of topics. Given limited coordination, the act of seeking and providing information by R&D practitioners in usable forms to stakeholders is inefficiently handled on a case-by-case basis, as each entity is doing its own thing in its own location and according to its own sectoral interests. Furthermore,

proactive behavior to share, seek and use information is limited, as seen from the findings of AHI-Acacia phase I.

The AHI-Acacia project seeks to find avenues through which communities in Kabale district can be in a better position to contribute more effectively to their own development and enhance the development process. An improved system and strategy in communication and information flow is one of the avenues. Provision and availability of communication and links with information sources will assist communities in operationalzing their plans related to enterprise development and NRM.

The hypothesis is that improved communication and information will step up use of available technologies, decision making and hence improve the livelihoods of the communities. People will be vigilant in looking for and using information provided they know what to get from where when needed. Improving on the efficiency of information management through a "portal" where various actors can readily deposit and access information, and providing a "clearing house" for well-organized "best" practices and information, will enhance efficient search and use of information. The challenge then becomes the 'what' and 'how' that could be done, hence the research question and objectives below.

1.3 The Research Objectives

The key and broad question that the study seeks to answer is, '***What system and strategies would lead to improved communication and information flow that support enterprise development, natural resource management and therefore well-being of rural communities***?'

The different phases of the research study have different specific objectives and sub questions that will contribute to the achievement of the set broad objective.

Specific objectives of phase I

This phase focused on identification of existing gaps with respect to information flow and development of the planning framework that will be used for the rest of the project. During this phase, 3 specific questions were addressed:

1. What methods do key stakeholders in NRM use in generating and disseminating information?
2. What are the existing information flow mechanisms used in Kabale district?
3. What capacities are needed for improved information management?

2.0 Methodology used in the needs assessment phase

Reflecting on the research questions above more than one method was used: a review of reports from previous studies, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and a stakeholder workshop.

- Review of existing reports on studies conducted in Kabale helped the research team (Win26) in: identifying had been done or what was available, what was missing, what to put on more emphasis, and how to collect the missing data with regard to communication and information flow in Kabale district. Review of existing literature together with going to the field gave the research team a better understanding of the context for the study.

- The fieldwork for needs assessment phase involved use of: focus group discussions, key informant interviews/discussions and a stakeholder workshop Emphasis was laid on:
    - getting to know the current state of needs in information and communication given that social systems are dynamic and that (situations) needs and actions keep changing
    - laying a foundation of involving the community right from the on set for ownership and participation for sustainability
    - getting insights in the perceptions and behaviour of community towards the information, source, methods used etc
    - identifying some indicators that would be used later during the implementation

2.1 Focus Group Discussions

The Team and participants present for FGDs introduced themselves to each other to ease free interaction and sharing of information between the group members and the research team. The team leader then gave a brief background of why the team had invited the groups (more focus was laid on the need to develop a communication/information flow strategy for all stakeholders in the district).

FGDs were held with four categories of stakeholders

a. Farmers in Rubaya
b. Parish Farmer Councils and Sub-county local leaders in Rubaya
c. District Local Council – Production sectoral committee members
d. Private Service Providers

Although a focus group discussion could not be held with NGOs and traders as formerly planned due to, inadequate mobilisation, tight NGO's schedules, prior commitment for other duties, and late information delivery, the team, however, made appointments and held discussions and conversations with individual members of some NGOs informally during the evenings. This was very useful in getting their views about communication and information sharing among stakeholders in Kabale district. Discussions with key informants was held with CARITAS, Africa 2000 network (A2N), Prime West, Kachwekano ARDC, some traders from Kabale Central Market and United Nations Seed Potato Producers Association (UNSPPA) While talking to the informants in the above categories of stakeholders, the team invited them to the 2-day workshop.

A checklist (**Appendix 1**) guided the discussions that led to generation of knowledge of the information needs of the farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector of Kabale. Focus group discussions were held for three days (Monday 7th-Wed 9th February, 2005). On Wednesday evening, the research team planned for the workshop (which was held 10th-11th February, 2005). The discussion enabled the team to develop a clear plan for the workshop, which gave some insights for the next coming 2 years of the project.

2.2 Mobilisation of stakeholders for the workshop

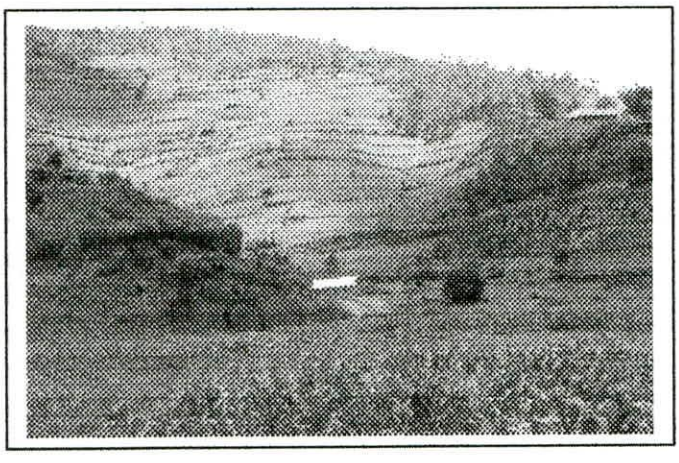
This was done by Richard Kamugisha (AHI) through invitation letters. However, given the time and coverage, it was not adequate enough. The day prior to the workshop, the team split up into two: while one sub-group continued with FGDs, the other moved between key stakeholders. The objectives of moving to the different stakeholders included (1) following up whether the invitation letters were received, (2) getting their commitment to participate in the workshop, (3) inviting those who had not received the invitation letters. The sub-team provided a background to the cause of the workshop and involved the people into some dialogue. This activity played a very important role in getting a good number of participants from the different institutions that included NGOs, CBOs, Universities (Baraham), National Teachers college of Kabale, Local radio Stations and UCC Kabale.

3.0 Information status as generated from FGDs with the different categories of stakeholders

3.1 Farmers at Mugandu

3.1.1 Exploring activities of the farming community in Rubaya

Farmers in Rubaya were involved in a variety of farm and off-farm activities for both food and income. On-farm activities included crop cultivation and animal rearing. Crops cultivated were Irish potatoes, sorghum, beans (climbing and common), peas, fruits (passion fruits, pineapple), vegetables (tomatoes, cabbage) and tobacco Livestock keeping was also done. Off-farm activities included service provision (under NAADS), working for local defence, and petty trading (hotel business, retailers shops, selling livestock).



Sorghum growing as one of the on-farm activities

3.1.2 Exploring farmers' information needs

Information provided/available and the source

Farmers in Mugandu revealed that they received information mainly on improved production of Irish potatoes. The sources of information included NAADS, CARE, Africare, AHI, NARO, and Farmer Innovators. Currently, it is AHI and NAADS that are still working in Rubaya. The rest of the NGOs had pulled out by the time this study was undertaken. The rest of the NGOs had a relatively smaller coverage. "It is difficult to the information sources because we are from different areas and different organizations operate in the different areas we come from. Only NAADS has wide coverage".



Focus group discussion with farmers in Rubaya

Under the general agronomy of Irish potato production farmers were taught aspects of site selection, land preparation, use and source of good/clean seed, appropriate planting method and time, maturity period and harvesting, weed control, fertilizer application, pest and disease (blight and wilt) control. Information on the storage and profitability of the Irish potato was also available to the farmers. They mentioned that they had knowledge on soil fertility management, soil conservation through use of trenches. Farmers were in position to cultivate and harvest Irish potatoes three times a year, which ensured food security and generation of income.

Availability and adequacy of availed Information

According to the farmers who participated in the FGD, the above information was always available and they felt what they had was enough, "We don't need any more of that information" they mentioned. Farmers mentioned that they knew how to select the right sites for crop production, where to get and select good seed and the general agronomy. On the other hand, there were areas were they felt that information availed was not adequate.

Areas that had inadequate or lacked information

- Market information – where to sell
- Potato processing, "We only use potatoes in one form; we need to know how to process them in other forms- value adding"
- Soil fertility and use of fertilizers (recommended types and rates of application), "Can we grow potatoes on one piece of land without fertilizing the land for ever?"
- Knowledge of other inorganic (and organic) fertilizers other than NPK, "We only know about NPK fertilizers, are there no any other types of fertilizers?"
- Soil analysis for different crops "We know we should not plant in water-logged areas. We need information on the appropriate soil fertility the different crops" Soil analysis. Farmers also requested to get information on why some soils were recommended for cultivation of potatoes for food (consumption) but said not to be good for cultivation of potatoes for seed
- Pests and diseases and other crop management issues

Information most frequently sought

- Market information
- Crop stages for fertilizer application – when to apply fertilizers

Information that farmers have sought and failed to get

Farmers mentioned that the type of information that they had made attempts to seek but frequently failed to get was about market systems (specifically the price and where to sell). However, from the discussions with them, it was evident that farmers had a very good understanding of market information. What appeared to be lacking was information about market linkages – they kept referring to the farmers' group that supplies potatoes to Nandos (A famous 'Take-Away' in the city, Kampala).They felt the Nandos group could have connected them too to a better market in Kampala.

3.1.3 Methods of acquiring and sharing information amongst farmers

Methods through which farmers mentioned to acquire information in ascending order of frequency included on farm demonstrations where they learnt by doing, exchange visits where

they learnt by seeing, training sessions inform of workshops and seminars where they assemble, local language information paper scripts, radios and posters. However, Foodnet used to provide agricultural related information through radio.) talks on market prices but was no longer doing so (phased out). Posters were mainly on agrochemicals from stockists. According to the farmers in Mugandu the available posters carried information that they did not need. Some farmers in Karambi and Muguli village watched some video on NRM some time back

Farmers shared information every time they converged between villages and with neighbours. The type of information determined who and how to share it. Meetings, making announcements in churches/posters and use of groups' publicity secretaries. Most of the announcements however were targeted at inviting people to attend some meeting (farmer mobilizations). Farmers expressed concern about people who take their information for selfish purposes. For instance they have never got any feedback from NARO about the soil analysis that they (NARO) said they were to do sometime, yet they took some soil samples from farmers' fields. Farmers report to NARO pest and disease problems but get no feedback.

Before taking up the information or technology farmers tried it (experimented) out on a small scale although there were some who took it up without questioning or doubting. "Before I take up a (new) chemical, I first apply it to a small area of my field and observe the effects," narrated one of the farmers. He used the effects to make a decision of whether to go ahead to not. The experimentation is either carried out by individuals or farmers in a group. .

3.1.4 Challenges to information sources as perceived by farmers

- Do not get feedback after we get visited
- No reference materials
- Documentation process is lacking
- Availability of relevant information at a wrong time. "We mainly get information when it s off season, which we easily forget during the season"
- Transport is also a challenge – the terrain and distance to move to attend workshops and seminars.
- Farmer fatigue and failure to see expected results in the short time. "We do not see impact especially when it comes to market information and crop enterprises like Pyrethrum"

3.2 Parish Farmer Councils (PFC)

The PFCs serve as a voice that could articulate farmers' concerns with regard service provision under NAADS. The roles of the PFC included:



Focus group discussion with PFC members-Rubaya

- Check on the work plan of farmer groups
- Monitoring demonstrations made by farmers
- To identify and forward needs of the farmers to the responsible personnel
- Manage conflicts within farmer groups
- Ensure equal/fair distribution of inputs
- Mobilizing and sensitizing farmers in soil conservation activities and make follow-ups up to the farmer fields
- Provide links between farmer to farmers
- Lobbying for quality services from NGOs (service providers) to farmers
- To bring farmers together

3.2.1 Information sources of/for the parish farmer councils

Sources of information included NAADS, NGOs (AHI, CARE, AFRICARE), churches, radio, KADIFA, NARO, A2N, farmer groups/individuals, local leaders, visiting demonstration sites, and reading newspapers (*Orumuri*). Service providers under NAADS were mentioned to be the major sources of information. NGOs on the other hand were mentioned to be well facilitated, made good follow ups on whatever they facilitated and readily disseminate information to farmers.

3.2.2 Problems faced by PFCs in sourcing information

- Limited number of farmers with radio
- Facilitation skills to gather information in a participatory way are lacking
- No coordination among the different NGOs yet they address the same issue. This has led to boredom and resentment by farmers due to repetitive information provided by service providers. There is a tendency of NGOs to bypassing the sub county and move straight to the parishes and end up operating with same groups, same issue leading to farmer fatigue
- Service providers bought the same seed (potato and beans) cheaply form farmers but sold the same to the vary farmers at a higher price
- Inadequate resources and their use in realising high production
- Training of farmers is pre-determined by service providers without consulting with the affected farmers. No proper needs assessment done. According to the farmers, NGOs under NAADS provided information that some farmers regarded redundant e.g. group

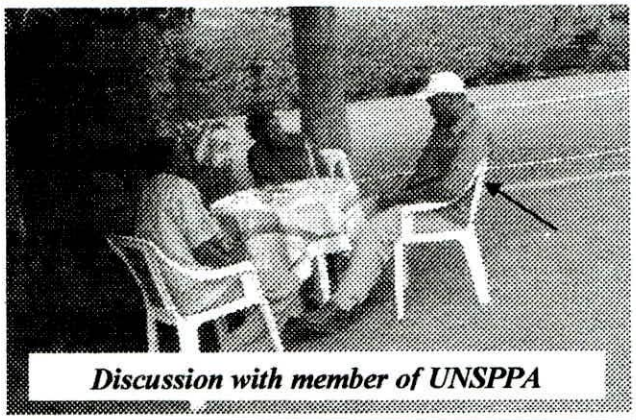
formation and enterprise selection. Farmers felt well established groups and enterprises existed

3.3 Private Service Providers

Individuals and well-established groups/associations provide advisory and technical services. This included AHI, CARE, AFRICARE, CEED, UNSPPA and individual knowledgeable and experienced farmers.

Uganda National Seed Potato Producers Association (UNSPPA)

UNSPPA produces and sells potato seed. The association is limited to one member per sub-county. Under the NAADS program UNSPPA offered training services to farmers' groups on wheat and Irish potatoes in aspects ranging from seed procurement to post harvest handling (establishing stores). UNSPPA deals with farmers as the major source of information and is apparently the only source of information on wheat. Wheat is an up-coming crop that seems not to have as much information sources/materials as compared to other crops. UNSPPA avails information freely to farmers/groups being trained by the association. UNSSPA avails information on potatoes to interested non-members at a fee. The association does not give information on soil analysis and market.



Discussion with member of UNSPPA

Current information on seed availability is through farmer to farmer. UNSPPA offers credit to its members in terms of seed, fertilizer, pesticides and fungicides. Every month UNSPPA farmers hold meetings to consolidate orders, returns of outputs and repayment for inputs taken on credit. For each potato seed bag sold, 1000 Shs was put back to the association for administration. There are other members of the association all over the country especially in Kapchorwa and Mbale. Communication among members was through telephone, fax, email, and quarterly reports to link with other farmers in other districts. The UNSPPA has a website but farmers cannot access it[1]. It was mentioned that there was increasing demand for potato seed from Congo. Major challenge faced by UNSPPA is the overwhelming demand for seed potato within and outside the district. There is limited capacity to supply potato seed to meet the demand because there are few farmers producing seed. UNSPPA plans to step up the number of members at sub-county level from one to five and also make use of the radio to create awareness about their existence.

3.3.1 Services offered by service provides

Services were provided on improved or better method of growing Irish potato, apples and wheat. The nature of services was both advisory and technical. This was done by private companies

[1] A quick internet search did not reveal existence of UNSPPA website. It is mentioned in Internet reports of USAID, ASARECA, CIP and CIAT

both as individuals (especially for apples and wheat) and as groups (UNSPPA) under the NAADS program. Other services on beans, Irish potato and land management were also provided by one of the service provides while still working with CARE. Information is given on areas right from seed procurement to harvesting, storage and marketing.

3.3.2 Approach used by service providers in needs assessment

Individual service providers carried out training needs assessment from the farmers' groups prior to training the farmers. They asked farmers in groups what they knew and what they did not know to find out knowledge gaps related to the topics of interest. After, farmers were then mobilized for the training sessions in given crops. UNSPPA avails information to farmers/groups being trained by the association. There is no library where information could be stored for access. The association gets information from NARO and Farmer field school alumni.

3.3.3 Source and packaging of information by the service providers

The different service providers looked for information that they used to train the farmer groups from the following sources

- Kachwekano research station (NARO)
- Friends with more experience in the same work e.g. can get technical information from technical people dealing with Apple management, information on socio- economic activities, how to write reports and proposals etc.
- ICRAF
- NGO staff
- Farmers, UNSPPA uses farmers who were once trained in farmer field schools
- Literature from UNFA, UNFFE, research station and tele-centre in Rubaya.

The different service providers attached different importance to the sources above. ICRAF was the major source of information on apple production, while Kachwekano was the major information source for potato production as shown in table below.

Table 1: Important information sources for service providers on apples and potato

Rank provided to the source	Information sources for service providers	
	Apples	**Irish potatoes**
1	ICRAF (technical information)	Kachwekano
2	Friends (fellow service providers)	Friends
3	NGOs	Farmers
4	Farmers	NGOs
5	Literature from UNFA and the Tele-centre	Literature

Farmers were a major source of information to all service providers. The training sessions were participatory and farmers' experiences enriched the learning.

Packaging: Information collected was provided to farmers in form of demonstration fields and simple manuals in the local language (Rukiga). UNSPPA provide brochure and booklets to farmers

3.3.4 Challenges/constraints faced by service providers

- Service providers under NAADS program deliver inputs to farmers late due to late imbursement of funds Farmers expect to be provided with inputs in time
- Farmers are not willing to reveal some information especially with regard to yields attained. While others are just proud, some farmers are afraid of being bewitched in case they declared what they harvested. Revelation of yields was very sensitive in Kabale. Thus in order to get the correct information from farmers, one had to be very close to the farmer
- Absence of a central point or library where information could be stored for access.
- Difficulty in acquiring information from an organization if you did not know any one in person. Service providers had to build rapport with the staff in ICRAF and Kachwekano. "Before provided with the sought information, the staff in the organizations above, the staff has to first know you and the programme you are dealing with".
- Difficult to access information on soil qualities. Farmers continuously complain about failure of crops yet they carryout all the necessary measures but do not seem to see any change
- Failure to incorporate market related issues in service provision
- Information available at the research station is written in a language that is too technical to be easily understood by the service providers and farmers (not written in a simpler format) and in big volumes yet service providers need little information. However, there was information availed in small booklets
- Although there are informal linkages, there are no formal linkage between service providers and Kachwekano. Service providers get information through informal contacts with their friends in the organisations. Sometimes they pay some money for consultation although this is not an official
- Lack of awareness about information available at Kachwekano e.g. on potato. The station has not disseminated information about its new innovations

- Farmers need tangible incentives (logistics) to attend any training. However, they get more motivated after benefiting from the knowledge acquired during the training sessions. This motivates them to attend more training when called upon
- There is a new radio station in Kachwekano tele-centre that had just started. However, it had a smaller radius of coverage and information delivered on agriculture related aspects was perceived by service providers as unsatisfactory. The radio has very limited covereage (about 5km radius), its equipment is old and it is suspect that equipment could have been second hand. The technical capacity of the people managing the centre in terms of programming and servicing is questionable (the equipment frequently breaks down).
- It is not easy to access the tele-centre both in terms of distance and the staff. "When we go to look for information, the staff ask us so many questions that make it un easy to return and/or search for information there"
- When awarding contracts, it is assumed that service providers know everything but actually, they do not know everything. There is no forum for sharing information among service providers
- Inability of local government extension service to adequately build farmers' capacities
- Inadequate capacity to monitor and evaluation of NAADS activities. There is no participatory system for monitoring NAADS. The current system is just by enforcement where 'non-performing' service providers are arrested by law enforcing officers in Kabale. The Kabale district council mandated the RDC to over see the implementation of NAADS implementation
- Lack of the capacity of some service providers in participatory methodologies. Most service providers just sit down and decide on what to do other than involving the farmers
- Lack of information on quality assurance on wheat – what qualities to maintain
- No market information – there is no organization doing marketing
- Inadequate knowledge and information about pests and diseases, especially those that were once secondary and are becoming primary
- Centres confined in a few areas. The centre is a business because people use it for their own use. People should not only go to the centre to get information but should also take there information e.g. on production and market. People perceive the tele-centre as a body of secretarial services i.e. telephones, email. People do not know that it has a library
- People do not search for information proactively but expect information to look for them
- Inability of people to know what type of information to seek from the district information office

3.3.5 Suggestions to address the challenges

In order to access information from the different sources, the service providers made the suggestions below

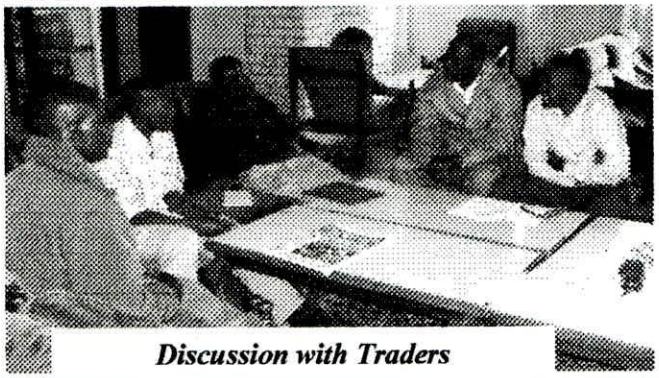
- Establishment of an information sharing forum among service providers that could be in form of workshops held after every six (6) months to share. The workshops that service providers had were mainly aimed at 'policing' apportion blame and criticisms to what and how service providers did their work, other than strengthening service provision.
- Establishment of a clear strategy for information dissemination linkage between researcher and other players like the service providers

- Provision of identity cards to service providers: it was suggested that respective districts provide identity cards to the respective service providers who have won the contracts. The cards would be used to access free information from the different sources
- Simplification of the information: there was need for research (or scientists) to summarize and simplify the information in a way that would be easily understood and used by the targeted farmers. Sorting and packaging critical information needed by farmers and service providers was important
- Establish a system where weak points of service providers could be identified and worked on for improvement
- The NAADS selection committee needs a clear and well thought through criteria against which select appropriate service providers.
- People should be allowed to access and use the tele-centres freely.
- For sustainability in service provision, community based extension should be established

3.4 Agro-input Dealers

3.4.1 Background

The input dealers traded in improved seed, fertilizers, pesticides and some equipment. The reasons why the traders dealt in agro in-puts mainly convenience and demand from the farmers. Farmers frequently requested one extension worker about reliable types and sources of inputs. The extension worker took this up as an opportunity to provide such a service to the farmers. He used fellow traders to ensure quality of the services offered. Inputs were stocked based on farmers' needs. Traders got agro inputs from Kampala (like the East African seed company) and from the shops with in Kabale town. Very few of the input dealers are registered traders.



Discussion with Traders

In Kabale, all traders in agro-inputs agreed and used one selling price per input category. Selling price was fixed based on the transport and buying price. According to the agro input dealers, the prices did not affect farmers given that demand for the inputs was high and that there were no situations where stocks stayed in the shops to expiry. The most frequently demanded commodity was cabbage seed. There are traders who sell fake seeds.

Agro input traders rarely advised farmers on how to use the chemicals and other inputs although they helped the few who asked for the advisory service on choice and application rates. Advice was mostly provided to farmers on fertilizers quantities or rates to use. Agro input dealers also guide farmers on pests/disease control pesticides and application rates. Market for produce was readily available.

3.4.2 Sources of information

- Fellow traders within and outside Kabale – main stockists and the container village
- Uganda National Input Dealers' Association (UNIDA)
- Advertisements over the radio
- Posters or charts from big/main agro-input dealers. However, the charts need to be written or translated into the local language (Lukiga).

Traders did not have a forum or platform in which to share information with farmers apart from the informal ones they established on a one to one basis with buyers who needed their help at the shops. It was mentioned that farmers acquired information on new innovations form extension workers. There was no formal no linkage between extension workers and traders to share information. The apparent informal linkage was loose and limited to very few people.

3.4.3 Information lacking

Agro input dealers lacked adequate information on varieties and needed to be trained in identification and general agronomy of the new varieties. They would in turn use the same knowledge to provide proper guidance to the buyers (farmers) of the inputs. They also lack information on how to market or advertise their business.

Use of microfinance: Most, if not all, agro input dealers in Kabale used their own generated capital to buy their stocks. One of the traders once used pride Africa but was forced to leave due to high rates and quick repayment periods.

3.5 The LCV production committee

3.5.1 Perceived role of the committee in providing information to farmers

The roles perceived to be played by the production committee at district level included:

- Mobilising farmers to attend various meetings at the district and other levels.
- Offering support in the initiation, acceptance, legitimization and involvement of the communities in upcoming or introduced development initiatives or programs.
- Sometimes offers financial support for activities like demonstration materials to groups with insufficient resources.
- Provide land for demonstration,
- Distribution of some inputs from some government programs other



Focus group discussion with LCV production committee

than NAADS
- Lobbying for supportive environment for production department in general

3.5.2 Method used to get information from the farmers

The committee collects information through holding discussions with the farming community at village level. The ideas generated by the farmers are then reflected upon by the committee with the aim of identifying existing and potential gaps.

3.5.3 Information sought for by farmers

- Farmers mainly ask for inputs although the more able category asks for information about the reliable sources of the required inputs. The practice of asking for inputs is however discouraged. They are advised and encouraged to form or join groups, mobilise resources and buy inputs collectively. It was mentioned that farmers may not know the sources of inputs but were at least informed about where or from whom to seek such information.
- Farmers also ask for trainers (resource persons) in specific areas as well as handouts to refer to or read while at home (service providers and reference material).
- Ask for exposure trips within and outside the district or sub county. Individual groups however, arrange for their own visits/tours

3.5.4 Perceived needs of farmers

According to the production committee of Kabale district, farmers needed continuous and regular training to build capacity in the various technical, managerial and social related fields. However, follow up of NAADS activities is limited by funding. For example under NAADS, there is no continuity in certain enterprises with regard to service delivery. Different enterprises come in every financial year and in case training in one enterprise was not complete, it is left incomplete.

On the other hand, farmers have a chance to air out their views/interests with regard to continuity of such enterprises. This can be achieved through the farmer forum at the sub county level. However, farmers have not utilized this opportunity especially in the farmer forum because of inadequate skills in lobbying. Farmer forum is constituted of farmers with limited capacity to lobby. They need the support of local leaders' initiatives. Farmers face a challenge in ensuring effective service delivery at the expense of friendship or relationship with some service providers. In order to build or enhance the capacity of farmers to use the right methods, there is need for technical people to engage in training farmers

The committee is supposed to advice but councillors are never invited to such meetings formally although they hear about the meetings as announcements on radios. They attributed the fear for farmers to invite them to non performance and politicising the exercise/process. "They think we are politicians". Politicians have sides. A politician may or may not be in line with ideas from the chairman farmer forum. The concern mainly lie in the fear of the members of the farmer for a to be challenged. Sometimes it is used as a way of deriving personal interests in the name of forum

with no checks and balances. According to the production committee, farmers marginalized the councillors.

3.5.5 Delineation of politics from development programs

Change of attitude plays the major role across all stakeholders to each other. The production committee finds it a challenge to detach politics from development program much as they make efforts to. There are people who are too critical and difficult change. For instance if ones (former) opponent is still on ground and does not want to interact with you, then he/she can not involve you but often sabotage .

In search of a neutral forum, the production committee involves the civil servants. Civil servants, specifically the agricultural extension staffs tend to have no side and are in position to inform the production committee about the status. However, the interaction between production committee and technical people is thin. They tend to resent invitations from the political wing. The technical people on the ground need adequate facilitation (transport and lunch). "Even when mobilised to offer some technical services extension workers demand for 'something' quench their thirst. There is no link between politicians and civil servants.

3.5.6 Linking farmers to information sources

It was mentioned to be difficult to target the poor as deserved because their limitations in resources automatically eliminated them often. It's those with resources who benefit and most projects work with such farmers for any initiative including staging demonstration sites on the farmer's land. However, the production committee had suggestions to this effect.

- Agricultural extension workers were best suited but blamed for failing to deliver or provide information to the farmers. "Farmers have to move to different areas to look for information and in the process some get lost" said one member of the production committee at district level
- Service providers should be more active to help farmers
- Build capacity within the community. Some NGOs train community facilitators to take up after them (NGOs). The trainees are active, willing to work voluntarily and do not engaged in many other activities
- Make a policy where in coming NGOs report to the district for allocation within the sub-counties in Kabale district. This will minimise congestion and unfair distribution of NGOs across the district. However, this venture needs support from the local leaders. The district executive could champion as a coordination unit given that the stakeholders are numerous
- Establish a functional link between the Farmer Forum (FF), district executive and agricultural extension service (public)
- Since in most meetings it is women who turn up, use of radios, posters, pictures, face to face (preferably by a fellow woman) using the local language will help reach more farmers

4.0 Status of Information sharing forum among stakeholders in Kabala

4.1 Information sharing forum in Kabale

At district level, an NGO forum was formed but is not active. The challenge faced was in activeness of the executive committee who were representatives from the different NGOs in the district. A2N has taken an initiative to establish a number of small community based resource centres (about 20) with computers, video and other literature. Because most farmers could not read English, A2N translates and simplifies the information to suit the consumption of the farmers. There are stakeholders who have picked interest in depositing some information in the small resource centres at the moment. The objective of having community based resource centres was to provide opportunity to the farmers at the grass root levels to access information.. However, the challenge that A2N is currently facing is inadequate information dissemination tools and/or methods to the different stakeholders and audiences. A2N has a regular news letter whose publishing is to be managed by a network or committee. In the news letter, farmers voice their views and ideas. There are 10 community centres in Kabale. Strategy to scale up is to join hands with the up-coming AHI idea. "The idea AHI is coming up with is very much welcome and has many opportunities ahead". Kabale local government has a website where people can access information. However, many people do not know how to use it.

According to one respondent from UGADEN, many people (individuals and institutions) carried out research in Kabale district but never left any information behind. The issue of information sharing is still patent. "It is the way you organize which matters". People are very hungry for information both at individual and institutional level. There exists an information centre in Nakaseke but farmers rarely went to or used it because of illiteracy level, inferiority/fear of themselves, location of the information centre, and lack of awareness or knowledge about what type of information to seek from the centre. There is therefore need for more sensitization about the existence and services offered by the centre. It's a challenge for farmers to go in there and seek that information.

Neutral forum where people can share their views

It was mentioned that the community responded positively to the calls from NGOs than government (technical or political). The will of the community to respond to NGOs was mainly attributed to provision of incentives like transport refund and meals as opposed to the other players. Farmer forum reviews were also neutral. Almost only farmers in the progressive category responded to calls from CBOs.

4.1.1 Perception on issues that limit stakeholders in sharing information

- Lack of initiative – none had come up with an idea of all stakeholders coming together
- The small differences in the ways the different organizations work: variation in operating systems, objectives and visioning. Getting organizations closer and sharing their experiences could be difficult if they do not see information sharing as necessary and important
- Information is a very big tool required for development

4.1.2 Suggested strategy to develop an information centre

- A team to manage information and allocate assignments. The management committee could be probably constituted by volunteers picked from different institutions as long as they understand the objectives of centres
- Need coordinators
- To have a stake at the community
- To access information from the centre there should be substitution by different stakeholders
- Need to develop information dissemination strategy that can be present to local government or NAADS. They can subscribe and service providers be able to access the centres
- Need to look at the organization structure of AHI to know how to interact with different people.
- Situation analysis to see what other institutions offer.
- Need to design a very good strategy were people know the objective of the information centre

4.2 Reflection on Strengths and weaknesses on Information Status in Kabale

Strengths	Weaknesses
• There are a variety information sources	• No re-orientation on specific technical areas e.g. how NAADS operates, report writing, what is required of service providers etc
• Technical competence among the service providers on what to deliver	• Poor feedback mechanism
• Willingness to avail information to service providers e.g. tele-centre and research stations	• Inadequately short contracting periods for service provision under NAADS
• Existence of structures under the NAADS like farmer groups, farmer forum	• Lack of formal coordination amongst service providers
• Capacity to get information from other farmers • Get information on radio programs • Capacity to demand booklets from KARI, ASERECA • Capacity to attend meetings and workshops to share our experiences countrywide • There are refresher courses e.g. stem cutting	• Corruption and high level of beauracracy • Low culture to proactively seek for information • Lack of information – not to capacity to get everything e.g soil analysis, market, chemical application • Mechanism to disseminate information
	• Being minimized in the programme e.g

	when one talks, s/he will be eliminated. In meetings, service providers are not given an opportunity to air out their views or offer an explanation.
	• Displaced roles especially the RDC monitoring and over seeing crop production, yet not technically competent
	• Delayed payment (service delivery is done because service providers do not have other things to do as it is not a profitable adventure)

4.3 The Tele-centre in Kabale

4.3.1 Background of the Tele-centre

The Tele-centre was an initiative of AHI aimed at providing a resource centre that could be accessed and used by farmers and other service providers in Kabale. The tele-centre was located at Rubaya sub-county. It was noted that the reading culture among most Ugandans was low and that one sought literature only if other sources failed. Service providers started with inquiring from a close friend who had done the same work and had a clue. They rarely visited the tele-centre mainly because they were not aware of its distance and service provision. Others tried and received a cold welcome. There was need for the tele-centre to be advertised to the masses. It was suggested by service providers that the tele-centre should go out and disseminate information since people did not proactively seek information on the internet, the tele-centre could avail information in forms of leaflets, bulletins, simplify training manuals to those who needed it.

Publicity about the centre The tele-centre was known to few people although many did not seem to know its exact roles. There was minimal publicity about the tele-centre and therefore need for more vigorous effort to disseminate the services probably through outreach programs among other methods. "We need to raise awareness so that people know where to get information and link them". Type of information provided by the tele-centre will determine its access and use by the different stakeholders. We need to zero down to information that favour people. Most of the information presently at the tele-centre, if any, does not interest farmers. Councillors see the sign post but are less bothered and feel less concerned because they have reportedly never been involved in issues to deal with the tele-centre. Councillors did not know much about it. It is thus, not surprising that the specific roles of the telecentre were misperceived and misinterpreted. The following were, for example, some of the perceived roles of the telecentre by the different stakeholders (see also section 5.3 Summary of findings from Focus Group Discussions):

- A place which provides phone service
- A computer Training centre
- Provides photocopying and faxing services

- A place to go to when look for information
- Provides internet connection and email services
- Documents/books in local language
- Shows videos for those who can not read and write

4.3.2 Sustainability of tele-centre

Suggested ideas include the following

- Provide information at a fee
- Enhance capacity of the stakeholders to manage information
- Attach the tele-centre to the agenda of the council
- Regular presentations on radio (talk time on radio)
- Have another name for the tele-centre
- Well established feedback mechanism

4.3.3 Feedback mechanism to the tele-centre

- Reports provided to the tele-centre by all organisations and vice versa
- There is no feedback mechanism to the tele-centre because; service providers feel there is no need, they can always get information from other sources which they can modify to suit the prevailing conditions.
- There should be a forum were people share information and experiences e.g. on technologies that have worked in some areas but failed in others. For example CEED forms a forum for information sharing on NAADS programme. Organizations under this umbrella include CARE, AHI, AFRICARE, KADIFA, and A2N. There is little known on how service providers are part of NAADS. They have a very minor linkage with NAADS which can easily break off. They are under looked in the programme yet they are at the forefront of implementing the programme.