

AGRICULTURE EXTENSION SERVICES IN MADANG

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ABSTRACT

The provision of agricultural extension services to the rural farming communities in the Madang Province and how these could be improved are examined. The past extension services and the current practices in the province are briefly reviewed. Also discussed in the paper are the experiences of Madang in terms of problems and staff training. Future directions for extension services in the province are outlined.

Key words: Madang Province, extension services, future directions, staff training.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is an attempt to highlight experiences of the writer in the provision of agricultural extension services to the rural farming communities in the Madang Province and how these could be improved.

FACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

a. Methods of Extension

When we are trying to address the problems of ineffective extension services, we should reflect on what and how it has been done in the past, present and consider improvements for the future.

From experience since independence there is no standard extension methodology either for agriculture or for all other related agencies (Manual of Procedures & Extension Manual) so these agencies, officers have been going their own ways in delivering goods and services. Which means there could be no real co-ordination.

b. Past Extension Services

In the past majority of needs for agricultural developments were determined, planned and encouraged by the Government through its agencies (Agriculture, Health, Social Welfare

etc). That is to say all planning has been done unco-ordinated from top down even as far as the implementations of these.

c. Current Practices

As there are no standard extension procedures, every agency and individual extension staff are doing their bit their own ways and in most cases the people are often confused as to what they need to do.

However, for agricultural extension it is pleasing to see that some changes are being made in regards to planning and implementation of projects, through formal training and workshops for field staff.

Example of some of these would be SMAFSP RRA workshop, planning and management training offered in agricultural colleges or other institutions (Administrative College) and reviews. Also we are respeciallly working closely with the Department of Agriculture and Livestock.

d. Objectives

What should be our future directions/objectives. One most important objective as I see should be to identify problems and their underlying causes and then devise a system.

Some of these have been done through consultancy work (training needs, resource allocations and maintenance etc) which have been conducted in PNG and have been identi-

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fied. As a result of this In-Country Training Programme has been devised and funded through European Economic Community.

This was for practical applications of know how through agricultural extension and support activities. After all the courses, an evaluation of programme was completed in July 1993. This included activities such as:

- (a) Conduct regular monthly technical review workshops at both provincial and district levels.
- (b) Identify and contact farmers.
- (c) Establish demonstration plots for farmers.
- (d) Organise field days for contact farmers and farmer groups.

In the above process Madang has involved Lecturers from Highlands Agriculture College and Research personnel from Bubia during the course of Technical Assistance, whereby these staff have provided on the spot informations necessary to field staff (District Rural Development Officers and Subject matter Specialists) for dissemination of information to farmers.

During the last eight (8) months i.e until March 1994, the exercise of getting together on monthly basis to discuss and share ideas in problem solving and setting new objectives for the following month has been appreciated by all parties (District Rural Development Staff, Subject Matter Specialists, Highlands Agriculture College and Provincial Headquarters staff).

Getting together on regular basis has enabled us to have access to the information provided which has reached the farmers in ample time and also understood by field staff and farmers. This goes also for objectives set for the month.

Commitment by staff

It is most important that an officer must have commitment to his work. Therefore having regular workshops can indicate to supervisors whether the officer is really putting everything in implementing any planned programmes.

For Madang's case it is considered we have the most dedicated staff who try their very best to implement development programmes. So with this idea of getting together for reviews as well as considering support to be provided really does create high morale. The other factor is the co-

EXPERIENCES OF MADANG

a. Problems

Madang Province, like all other provinces, has its own problems. Some of these are communications, road access, financial resources, lack of staff and training of staff.

During last five (5) to ten (10) years, although faced with the above problems, Agriculture and Livestock Branch (DPI) has tried its best to effectively implement projects funded from both national and provincial levels, as well as maintenance of recurrent services.

b. Staff Training

Currently Madang Agriculture and Livestock Branch has a ceiling of 75 including clerical staff. And of these about 18% are based in Provincial Headquarters while 82% are distributed throughout the districts. When talking about how staff can be effective in providing services, I consider that such areas as most important for my staff are;

1. Training
2. Commitment
3. Co-operation
4. Morale of staff

For training I believe there is already a wealth of knowledge in existence among my staff therefore to really make use of these they need to be trained on how to effectively use or disseminate this knowledge to farmers.

Of course if there are specific training needs these should be identified and arranged for participation by interested people.

In-Country Training Programme (ICTP) funded through DAL by European Economic Community was conducted in 1991/92 for all field staff throughout the country and Madang was included in that.

This was then followed by second phase of the programme in 1993 which Madang was chosen as pilot province for implementation.

operation which the field staff have.

We believe that the staff in Madang are co-operative in assisting each other in any problem solving ventures.

The draw-back to this is the conditions of housing (deteriorating). This sometimes affects morale and willingness to accept challenges or added responsibilities.

With above remarks it is recommended that,

1. More support should be given financially to improve skills fo field staff in transferring technical knowledge to farmers.
2. More time should be given to such programme (ICTP) especially the second phase to really assess the success.