ENGAGING YOUTH AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Event Report
September, 2020
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Event organizers

Digital Green

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

CGIAR RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Policies, Institutions, and Markets

Led by IFPRI

KeFAAS

Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services-Kenya

Eastern Africa Field School

Transformed Livelihoods

AFAAS

Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services

Global forum for rural advisory services. Forum mondial pour le conseils-rural
Executive summary

Agricultural extension and advisory services (AEAS) are indispensable for agricultural development, which correlates to economic growth of developing countries. To realize a dynamic and resilient extension system able to withstand the ecological, social and ecological risks, different efforts and initiatives have been established. They range from policy initiatives to programmatic interventions aimed at ensuring access to extension services. These initiatives have continued to recognize the opportunities presented by proliferation of affordable technology including ICT, a young population with unique abilities and competencies that could be tapped into and emergence of multiple private actors in extension sphere.

In this regard, Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project in collaboration with the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), Eastern Africa Farmer Field Schools Support Hub and Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services – Kenya (KeFAAS) organized an online community of practice event on ‘Engaging youth and the private sector in extension and agricultural advisory services.’ The event aimed at interrogating the state of extension systems in East Africa and devise mechanisms to take advantage of existing opportunities. This was through sharing experiences and drawing lessons for improved extension and advisory services in East Africa. The event was graced by 98 (M67, F31), 126 (M78,F48), 82(M53,F29) and 80 (M65,F15) AEAS experts and practitioners for theme 1,2,3 and 4 respectively. The experts were drawn from 38 countries across Africa, North America, Asia, Oceania and Europe representing government agencies, civil society, academia, private sector and development partners.

The event offered a platform for showcasing innovative extension approaches and models by youths and private sector actors across the region. It benefited from insightful presentations on innovative digitally-enabled extension models, private-sector approaches in extension, models for youth involvement in extension as well as innovative extension approaches that offer opportunities for youth and private sector actors in propelling extension service delivery.

Drawing from the presenters, panel of experts and participant’s engagements, the event outlined lessons and policy recommendations to create an enabling environment for youth and private sector engagement in extension. They acknowledged existent of diverse actors in extension with diverse strengths that if effectively coordinated could complement each other towards realization of effective extension services for the farming community. Moreover, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was identified as an opportune technology with potential of transforming extension delivery but with potential risks that should be mitigated. The youthful population was recognized as a major resource in development and up scaling extension innovations. Moreover, the event recognized the role of the government in facilitating access to extension services by smallholder farmers and other marginalized farming communities and in creating an enabling environment for the development of extension systems.

However, significant challenges were highlighted curtailing exploitation of these opportunities including: weak regulatory framework that lack enforcement mechanisms; poor coordination of extension service providers; inadequate financing to extension; inadequate human resource with limited competencies; limited and costly ICT infrastructure and; inadequate support towards youth in extension.

To address these challenges, the event recommended the following policy actions; strengthening and implementation of an effective regulatory framework to facilitate standardization and professionalization of extension service provision; fostering development of pluralistic extension services; addressing financial and infrastructural obstacles towards development and up scaling of innovative extension approaches; rethink extension education to support development of relevant competencies; enhance and facilitate youth involvement in extension service delivery and; address digital divide in ICT infrastructure and skills and knowledge development to facilitate harnessing of ICT in extension service delivery.
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<tr>
<td>AEAS</td>
<td>Agricultural extension and advisory services</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFAAS</td>
<td>African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFP</td>
<td>Country Focal Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLEC</td>
<td>Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>FFS</td>
<td>Farmer Field Schools</td>
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<td>GFRAS</td>
<td>Global Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFPRI</td>
<td>International Food Policy Research Institute</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>KeFAAS</td>
<td>Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services – Kenya</td>
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<td>SHEP</td>
<td>Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion</td>
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1. Introduction

This report provides experiences of the online East Africa Community of Practice Knowledge Sharing Event on ‘Engaging youth and the private sector in extension and agricultural advisory services.’ The event was convened on 5th, 19th and 26th August and 2nd September, 2020.

1.1. Background

Agricultural extension and advisory services (AEAS) are indispensable for agricultural development, which correlates to economic growth of developing countries. They are avenues for farmers’ human capital development fundamental for improved sustainable farming practices contributing to increased productivity, incomes and improved living standards. Indeed, farmers’ with access to extension services have better chance of engaging in more profitable agriculture. Moreover, it is the means towards supporting and enhancing agribusiness, social and ecological capacities of farmers to engage in highly competitive yet sustainable agricultural production practices.

Presently, multiple challenges face agriculture; shrinking land sizes, land degradation, increased demand for food, heightened competition, climate change impacts, clamor for sustainable production practices and highly regulated markets to safeguard consumers, among others. A dynamic and resilient extension system able to withstand the ecological, social and ecological risks is thus paramount.

Different efforts and initiatives have been established in efforts to strengthen extension systems. They range from policy initiatives to programmatic interventions aimed at ensuring access to extension services. Moreover, there has been continued recognition of the constraints faced by public sector in extension service delivery characterized by limited financial and human resources. As a result, more pluralistic extension approaches have been adopted and continue to be advocated for. Further, innovative and effective extension approaches have been developed and are continually improved to remain relevant amidst emerging challenges and opportunities. Proliferation of affordable technology has presented immense opportunities to enhance AEAS provision. On the other hand, there is acknowledgement that the young population has unique abilities and competencies that could be tapped into in revitalizing extension systems. As such, youth and private sector engagement in extension service delivery are a vibrant duo for a stronger, effective and resilient extension system.

To interrogate the state of extension systems in East Africa and devise mechanisms to take advantage of existing opportunities, the Feed the Future Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC) Project in collaboration with the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), Eastern Africa Farmer Field Schools Support Hub and Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services – Kenya (KeFAAS) organized an online community of practice event on ‘Engaging youth and the private sector in extension and agricultural advisory services.’

1.2. Event objectives

The objectives of the event were:
- To share, discuss and learn about issues of extension and advisory services in East Africa and in particular on youth and private sector involvement in EAS.
- To document key messages and lessons into policy briefs to be shared with East Africa policymakers to inform the extension policy agenda.

The objectives were realized through experience sharing and discussions around four themes as follows:
- Role of private sector and youth in propelling digital disruption in invigorating extension and advisory services
- Effective private sector engagement in extension and advisory services
- Gainful youth participation in extension and advisory services
- Double benefits for youth and private actor participation in scaling up successful extension approaches: Opportunities and challenges.

1.3. Participation

The event brought together 98 (M67, F31), 126 (M78, F48), 82 (M53, F29) and 80 (M65, F15) AEAS experts and practitioners for theme 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The experts were from 38 countries across Africa, United States, Asia, Oceania and Europe as illustrated in figure 1 below. They represented government agencies, civil society, academia, private sector and development partners.

![Participants analysis by continent, gender and session](image)

**Figure 1:** Event participation by continent, gender and session

1.4. Outcomes and results

The event was one of its kind in East Africa region with a core focus of interrogating state of extension system and devising mechanisms to take advantage of existing opportunities on engaging youth and private sector actors. The ultimate objective was to share experiences, discuss and learn about youth and private sector actors’ engagement in extension and advisory services in East Africa. The event offered a platform for showcasing innovative extension approaches and models by youths and private sector actors across the region. Strategic speakers shared experiences on existing opportunities and challenges in extension service delivery.

Drawing from the presenters, panel of experts and participant’s engagements, the event outlined lessons and policy recommendations to create an enabling environment for youth and private sector engagement in extension. The recommendations acknowledged existence of diverse actors in extension with diverse strengths that if effectively coordinated could complement each other towards realization of effective extension services for the farming community. Moreover, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was identified as an opportune technology with potential of transforming extension delivery but with potential risks that should be mitigated. The youthful population was identified as a major resource in development and up scaling extension innovations. Moreover, the event recognized the role of the government in facilitating access to extension services by smallholder farmers and other marginalized farming communities and in creating an enabling environment for the development of extension systems.
In addition, the event noted the demonstrated ability of the AEAS private sector actors to quickly adopt innovative extension service delivery models to take advantage of emerging opportunities that bring value to both the producers and the service providers in AEAS. The event recognized that private sector extension models are driven by farmers’ needs and prioritize these needs to remain relevant. They are often integrated with other services ranging from input provision to market linkages hence making their services valuable.

However, significant challenges were highlighted curtailing exploitation of these opportunities including: weak regulatory framework that lack enforcement mechanisms; poor coordination of extension service providers; inadequate financing to extension; inadequate human resource with limited competencies; limited and costly ICT infrastructure and; inadequate support for youths and private sector-led extension which hinder upscaling and growth.

To address these challenges, the event recommended the following policy actions; strengthening and implementation of an effective regulatory framework to facilitate standardization and professionalization of extension service provision; fostering development of pluralistic extension services; addressing financial and infrastructural obstacles towards development and up scaling of innovative extension approaches; rethink extension education to support development of relevant competencies; enhance and facilitate youth and private sector involvement in extension service delivery; address digital divide in ICT infrastructure and skills and knowledge development to facilitate harnessing of ICT in extension service delivery; and the development of extension policies and regulations supportive of youth and private sector led extension services.
2. Opening

The event opening featured experts from organizing organizations including KeFAAS, AFAAS and DLEC. In their opening remarks, the speakers remarked the importance of the event, terming it relevant. They acknowledge the role of youth and private sector actors in extension hence the need to recognize their contribution and create an enabling environment for them to play their role. They also appreciated the role of ICT in supporting extension service delivery and called for integrating ICT into extension delivery. The speakers thanked the partners, Global Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (GFRAS), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and DLEC for their support in organizing the event and welcomed participants to participate actively.

Peter Mwangi, Country Focal Person (CFP) at KeFAAS acknowledged youth as integral part in KeFAAS intervention delivery, referring to them as the future of extension. He noted that different countries had initiated strategies towards realizing robust agricultural extension service system. As such, the event on ‘the role of youth and private sector in disrupting agricultural extension and advisory service delivery’ was not only relevant but timely.

George Chemining’wa, Chairman of Board at KeFAAS expressed his delight for KeFAAS involvement in the event, as it resonated well with the organization’s mandate. He recognized Africa as a youthful continent and hence instrumental in extension delivery. In reiterating the relevance of the event, he appreciated the role of extension in agricultural and rural development. He identified Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) and Farmer Field Schools (FFS), among other extension approaches as being appropriate in the endeavor of strengthening extension systems. However, he was keen to highlight some challenges facing extension including limited up scaling and institutionalization of innovative extension approaches and development of supportive infrastructure, calling for appropriate policy actions to address these challenges. In this regard, he noted that the event discussions and recommendations would go a long way in ensuring appropriate policies are in place supportive of youth and private sector actors involvement in extension.

Mary Kamau, Board Member at KeFAAS drew insights from her 36 years’ of experience in extension in acknowledging the important role of extension. She appreciated the contribution of private sector actors and youth in the same. Youth play a fundamental role in propagating and shaping the future of agricultural development in Africa and thus present an opportunity to address the existing gaps in the extension and advisory services. In this regard, KeFAAS has made efforts to engage youth in the country by empowering them to effectively participate in extension. It is thus necessary to create an enabling policy environment for youth and private sector actors’ involvement in extension. This is in addition to empowering them to perform that role. Moreover, extension education should be market driven and thus focused on imparting relevant skills and knowledge that the agriculture sector demands. Therefore, capacity building of trainers should be prioritized to enable them subsequently build the capacity of their students and prepare them to be active players in extension service delivery. On the other hand, ICT presents opportunities to rejuvenate AEAS provision. Pluralistic extension system has opened space for multiple actors and hence, to realize the benefits it presents, coordination in extension delivery is critical. She therefore urged private sector actors to forge partnerships and complement each other in their role in extension service delivery.

In his remarks, Max Olupot, East Africa FFS Hub Coordinator and Partnership, Planning and Learning Specialist at AFAAS, expressed his expectations to gain insights from the DLEC study on youth engagement in extension. Youth play an important role in extension services as both clientele and providers. It is thus imperative to pro-actively engage them in extension as the most appropriate drivers of agricultural revitalization. He further underscored the strengths of different approaches including farmer empowerment and linkages to markets by SHEP and enhancing practical expertise of producers by FFS. He thus emphasized the need to institutionalize these approaches to facilitate their up scaling and wide scale adoption for the farming community to benefit from them. However, there are other extension approaches including farmer-farmer method, village-based advisors and village agent’s model that have also enormously contributed to improving farmers’ livelihoods. To reap optimal benefits from these approaches, they should be adapted to their context for them to be effective and achieve their intended goals.
The Executive Director at AFAAS, Silim Nahdy, in his welcoming remarks appreciated participants’ diversity hence termed the event as being inclusive and participatory. Private sector is very important in the whole value chain in agricultural sector and are therefore indispensable in agriculture extension and advisory services. The involvement of private sector is beyond extension and advisory provision, as they play a significant role in funding, profiling and dissemination of agricultural technologies, offering ICT – based agricultural solutions among other roles. Moreover, they are resourced and have more stake in technology development.

On the other hand, youth are the majority in Africa, technology savvy and more connected than the older generation. Equally, they are engaged in agriculture extensively and learning processes including use of digital systems in learning from each other. These characteristics make youth and private sector important target for digital extension and advisory service delivery and in propelling digital extension and advisory services. This could be enhanced further through partnerships to leverage on each others’ strengths. As such, it is fundamental for the private sector and all the other actors and players in extension and advisory to work together since working in isolation results to poor service delivery. He called for collective action in extension service delivery to ensure harmonization of efforts by actors and national fora.

Kristin Davis, the Co-Director of the Feed the Future DLEC project, remarked on the work of Feed the future DLEC project in improving agriculture advisory extension services through evidence action and advocacy. The initiative is undertaken in collaboration with Digital green (as the technical partner in digital extension expertise), IFPRI in undertaking extension impact evaluations (with the current focus being Uganda and Ethiopia) and GFRAS which is focused on Conference of Parties (CoPs) (through national country forums on extension and agricultural services such as AFAAS). DLEC works on diagnostic reports of country extension services (with a focus on youth), action research at country level and CoPs, with a focus of generating evidence to improve advisory services.
3. Role of private sector and youth in propelling digital disruption in invigorating extension and advisory services

3.1. Evidence of impact of ICT-mediated extension

The event highlighted evidence from research on ICT-based interventions in extension. This provided was paramount in setting the pace for the discussion on the need for exploitation of ICT in support of extension. Several parameters distinguish ICT as avenue for propelling extension service provision. To start with, ICT is an impactful medium for realization of agricultural and rural development. Moreover, it is flexible providing opportunity for modification to suit different contexts hence easily replicable. It offers opportunity to attract youth into agriculture, as it is fashionable and creates youth-innovation ecosystem. However, it must be backed by capable technical and infrastructural support to perform its roles.

Through research by IFPRI and CGIAR in Ethiopia and Uganda focusing on the question “Can ICT-mediated extension accelerate technical change among smallholders?”, more evidence on what works and what does not in ICT propelled extension was presented. The study findings revealed that video-based extension service delivery significantly increases farmer knowledge and adoption of recommended practices, and yields of target crops. Such evidence is critical in guiding investments in extension.

![Graph showing findings on ICT-mediated extension in Ethiopia and Uganda](image)

*Figure 2: Findings on ICT-mediated extension in Ethiopia and Uganda*

*Note: *** denotes significance at the 1% level; ** at 5%; and * at 10%.*

*Source: Abate et al. (2019) and Van Campenhout et al. (2020)*
3.2. Innovative digital extension approaches

Innovative digitally propelled extension approaches including DigiCow, Performeter and digital extension services by private sector in Sudan were presented. This provided the opportunity to understand how such approaches work, challenges the promoters face and opportunities.

Performeter is a dairy advisory center that offers dairy management services. It has integrated digital applications such as COWPRO and DairyWorld in efforts to enhance dairy management service delivery through ICT enabled platforms. Farmers are able to get data per cow on different aspects including fertility, health and milk production which enables them to easily monitor their animals, make timely decisions and effectively manage their dairy farms. On the other hand, they are effectively able to source for various dairy inputs, service providers and markets.

Digicow is an online digital application working with dairy farmers to enable them effectively manage their dairy herds. Through the App, farmers are able to access data in herd management, track their herd health and make timely decisions, avoiding delays that can be costly in dairy management. Moreover, farmers are linked to the nearest available service provider based on their needs such as artificial insemination. The App is also embedded with a Tegea service that offer farmers, voice recorded trainings in their local dialect. These applications offer farmers data supported decision making ability which enable farmers to exploit opportunities in enhancing their profits.
Seed companies in Sudan have leveraged on potential of digital extension to attract youth and offer effective services to the farmers. The companies are availing technical trainings on video documentary production including scripting, videography and video editing. In addition, they support youth with video equipment to document different agricultural practices for wider dissemination to farmers. This has seen the companies provide digitally-enabled advice to rural farmers on crop varieties, agronomic practices, weather conditions and adaptation measures and on pest and disease management.

3.3. Key messages
Integrating ICT into extension offer immense opportunities in propelling extension service provision. Evidence indicate that ICT mediated extension services have greater impact at farmer level indicators such as productivity. It is also evident that ICT can be a tool for data enabled decision making and in facilitating timely decision making. It thus offers opportunities for farmers to make better decisions and enhance their profits.

The extension concept, model or approach is often NOT the problem; implementation, follow-up, and monitoring are

David Spielman, IFPRI

This notwithstanding, ICT in itself is not a silver bullet but should be complemented with appropriate content and effective delivery techniques for it to yield desired impact. In addition, it requires technical and infrastructural support for effective functionality and hence the need to build capacity and improve ICT infrastructures.
4. Effective private sector engagement in extension and advisory services

4.1. Successful private sector led extension models

Under this theme, the event featured successful private sector led extension services with the aim of sharing their experiences, drawing lessons and identifying bottlenecks they are faced with. The private extension service providers have devised innovative approaches including inputs embedded extension approach by Sidai, Machinery Ring Concept as advanced by Hello Tractor, Market Systems Approach Model by BRiTEN and Village Agent Model.

Sidai is a vertically-integrated company supplying quality livestock and crop inputs and training through a dedicated team of qualified and competent personnel delivering to the ‘last mile’. The company supplies over 300,000 farmers with quality assured inputs including animal feeds, crop inputs, and veterinary vaccines through its 250,000 stockists. In addition, Sidai offers veterinary services and among its supplies are its 25 branded Sidai products. The company enjoys 90% net promoter score from its customers and a wide distribution network across Kenya.

A day in the life of Sidai

Sidai offers a unique combination of quality products combined with reliable technical knowledge. Sidai offers on-farm practical farmer training, technical services and on-going support.
Hello Tractor is anchored on human and equipment infrastructure to transform agriculture to the last mile. The company offers tractor services to the farmers which has been considered 40 times faster than manual labour, 2.5 times cheaper and contributes to yield increase 3 times through uniform growth and height.
BRiTEN is one of the private sector extension providers based in Tanzania which is utilizing Market Systems Approach in linking small holder farmers to the market. This approach involves creating linkages between market actors and farmers through a collaborative approach. This involves mapping out market actors along the targeted value chain to understand their needs and interests. Together with the local government and other stakeholders, BRiTEN works towards addressing envisaged challenges with the farmers in meeting the needs and requirements of the market actors.

Figure 7: BRiTEN market systems extension model
The Village Agent Model, is a relatively new extension approach with prospects in countries where it has been implemented such as Uganda where it is being piloted. The model consists of Village Agents (VAs) who are often aggregators recruited by large buyers or exporters into their supply chains. Since the VAs are integrated into buyer supply chains and have regular interaction with the farmers, they offer an opportunity for realization of extension service provision to the last mile. They can thus offer extension services and also link farmers to markets and other value chain actors including input suppliers. Due to their structured and formalized relations with market players, VAs, bring these strengths into extension service provision. This is important owing to the disproportionate relationships between smallholder farmers and market actors which often leaves farmers disadvantaged.

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4.2. Key messages
Private sector extension models are innovative in many aspects. They are need driven and have identified farmers’ needs as the focal point of their services. Further, they have embedded other services within their approaches to remain relevant and serve their clients making their services valuable. These services range from input provision to market linkages. On the other hand, they have adopted the last mile approach to extension service delivery where they target the farmer at the local level. In addition, they have adopted the last mile approach to extension service delivery where they target the farmer at the local level. In addition, they have integrated enabling technologies into their service provision including ICT which enhances their service delivery. On the other hand, they have leveraged on economies of scale in enhancing their efficiency in operations hence reduced costs of operations for gainful services not only to the farmers but also to them.

However, proliferation of multiple actors requires coordination and regulation of extension service provision to address quality concerns and ensure professional delivery of extension services. On the other hand, requisite support mechanisms is required including appropriate financial products to facilitate their growth and development. Notably, there is a growing concern of smallholder and marginalized farmers being disproportionately disadvantaged by increased presence of private sector extension service providers. This is because, most often, the private actors focus on high value enterprises that are able to pay back for services rendered and as such smallholder farmers and other who are marginalized are left out.

“There is need to change from buy and go approach common in farming to building long-term trade relationships that support private sector extension provision”

John Ariko, Sidai Kenya
5. Gainful youth participation in extension and advisory services

5.1. DLEC study on youth engagement in private sector extension and advisory services in Uganda and Rwanda

Under this theme, the event featured findings from DLEC study on youth engagement in private sector extension and advisory services in Uganda and Rwanda. The study focused on identifying how private sector engages youth in extension and highlighted opportunities for continued and enhancing youth engagement in extension. The study was qualitative in design and reviewed 39 models of youth engagement categorized under seven engagement approaches. These approaches included: Training youth to become entrepreneurs, Village agents, Youth-led and other fee-based extension providers, Internships, Other fee-based extension providers with solely youth extension workers, Paraprofessional extension workers, Credit and financial services and, Youth awards.

The study findings revealed presence of an enabling policy environment for youth involvement in extension. However, countries differ in approaches and hence cross-learning would be beneficial. In addition, it was evident that there exists diverse extension service providers who should be recognized as such for targeted interventions in strengthening their capacities. They differ in gender, age, education background, context of operations and hence strategies to strengthen them should be specific to each of them and not bundled together. The seven youth engagement approaches differed in strengths and weakness in terms of outreach, which is, youths benefiting and farmers reached; women involvement; provision of extension services and; integration of other services. Notably, youth involvement was mainly influenced by their level of education and incentives received from participating in the models. Effective models were characterized with providing market-oriented solutions and embracing partnerships.

On the flipside, inadequate financial support derail sustainability of these models especially when they are project-based. Moreover, there is need for efforts towards generating empirical evidence detailing youth contribution to extension service provision to support planning and policy development.

5.2. Opportunities and challenges for youth involvement in extension service provision and what could be done to address some of the challenges

Several opportunities exist for youth involvement in extension service provision. They include: Pluralistic extension service provision opening the space for youth involvement; Vast knowledge and information on agricultural extension and advisory services for youth to learn from and; Multiple challenges facing agriculture hence an opportunity for youth to offer innovative solutions in form of services.

However, youths face stiff competition from seasoned extension service providers making it hard for them to penetrate extension service provision system. Moreover, majority lack requisite skills and knowledge to offer professional services making it difficult for farmers to trust in their capacity to provide beneficial extension services. On the other hand, youth needs in their involvement in extension service provision, have continued to be relegated with youths being categorized as cross-cutting in extension system. As such, there is no deliberate efforts to effectively strengthen them as long as strategies and policy frameworks continue to categorize youths as cross-cutting. Further, while there may exist enabling frameworks, implementation of these frameworks remain a challenge. Even if they were to be implemented, inadequate and lack of supportive infrastructures and services including financial support, would make it difficult for youths to effectively engage in extension service provision.

To adequately prepare youth to offer extension services, it is important that their competencies are built and enhanced. This would involve relooking at extension education curriculums to ensure there are aligned to the industry’s extension needs and demands. Moreover, extension education institutions require requisite facilities to offer experiential, cooperative and practical learning. This can be leveraged through public-private partnerships with industry actors who can offer platforms and opportunities to collaborate with these institutions in providing need-based, experiential and practical learning for the upcoming extension service providers.

―Most youths are born and brought up in farming communities and they see and listen from their parents to identify missed opportunities as they grow up and using this information, youths develop tech to help their communities which blend very well with the communities. They are also well connected, fully understand the challenges being faced by their communities to offer solutions‖
Peninah Wanja- Digicow
5.3. Key messages
Multiple opportunities exist for youth to engage in extension service delivery. These opportunities range from an enabling policy environment and development of models targeting youths in extension. It is clear that countries across East Africa have adopted different approaches offering opportunities for cross-country learning. Models evaluated presented different lessons including the need for having market oriented solutions with incentives and the potential for engaging youth in enhancing extension service delivery.

However, efforts towards supporting youth participation in extension have always been bundled up failing to recognize youth diversity, with female youth participation levels remaining low across the different models. Moreover, evidence on their contributions towards enhancing youth involvement has been inadequate. Worse still, youths have always been categorized under cross-cutting issues. In addition, skills and knowledge development has been weak. This has made it difficult for youth to effectively participate in extension.

Therefore, youth engagement in extension should be evidenced based supported by rigorous empirical studies to ascertain best approaches for youth involvement in extension. Moreover, youths should be appropriately recognized and diversity within the youth cohort clearly outlined and considered in devising strategies. It is also important to empower females for their effective participation in extension. Empowerment for youth to effectively in extension should be guided by industry needs facilitated by experiential and practical learning. Partnerships with industry players offer opportunities for education institutions to realize this.
6. Double benefits for youth and private actors participation in scaling up successful extension approaches: Opportunities and challenges.

Presentation of SHEP and FFS approach were made outlining lessons for up scaling, youth and private sector involvement and institutionalization that could be integrated within extension approaches.

6.1. SHEP approach

Developed in 2006 through collaborative efforts between Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Government of Kenya through Ministry of Agriculture, SHEP has realized significant impact and thus highly demanded across the globe. It has so far reached 24 African countries, countries in Asia and Latin America.

The approach is focused on empowering farmers and shifting their mindset from grow and sell to grow to sell. It utilizes a systematic approach anchored on self-determination theory that seeks to build intrinsic motivation for farmers’ continuous engagement in their farming activities. It addresses asymmetric market information that farmers are faced with and hence exploited by market agents.

It builds farmer capacity to conduct market survey and hence gain access to crucial market information and use the same to plan their cropping and farm management to their advantage. Moreover, it addresses the three psychological needs for motivation, that is, autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Farmers are given the autonomy to make decisions regarding their farming enterprises including what crop to grow, when and how. They are trained on different production aspects so as to enhance their decision making ability so as to make appropriate decisions.

Further, the approach promotes working through groups to enhance people’s relations as well as take advantage of economies of scale that groups present. Further, through family budgeting, family relations are enhanced allowing farmers to gain support from their family members and effectively concentrate on their farming practice. Moreover, through stakeholders’ forum, farmers get the opportunity to interact with other value chain actors who are important in their agribusiness enterprise.

SHEP has had great impacts among youths including youth employment creation, enhanced access to production resources and factors of production, reversal of rural-urban migration and increased literacy. On the other hand, it has bolstered private sector businesses in many ways through inputs and market provision amongst participating farmers.

Figure 9: SHEP concept
6.2. FFS approach

Having begun in 1989 in Asia, FFS approach has continued to evolve and grow reaching over 90 countries across the world impacting agro, agro-pastoral and pastoral communities. FFS promotes learning by doing through experimentation and hence highly context specific. Moreover, it enable farmers to undertake critical analysis regarding their production practices and hence able to make informed decisions. FFS finds its strength in its transformative discovery learning as well as in increasing productivity, natural resource management, social capital empowerment and ability to integrate the marginalized people in their community.

There have been efforts towards institutionalization of FFS approach and some lessons in terms of opportunities and challenges are already emerging. It is important to note that institutionalization is a process that can occur at different levels right from the local, national, regional to the international levels.

This process involves:
(i) Appropriation where communities takes ownership of their innovations and decisions as a group;
(ii) Harmonization through shared learning and exchange of FFS activities that can be mainstreamed in regional bodies such as GFRAS and;
(iii) Institutionalization where local and national level actors create a common understanding of FFS and integrate it into policy and rural development programs.

Institutionalization has been driven by the continued demand for the FFS approach due to its positive impact on smallholder farmers and all AEAS providers involved in its implementation. Further, integration of FFS within a country’s agricultural and agricultural education policy frameworks would enable successful implementation. This would be through continued recognition of FFS within extension system, its adoption, ownership and thus outscaled.

![Principles of FFS](image-url)
6.3. Key messages

Different extension approaches present diverse strengths and limitations. It is thus important for integration of the different approaches borrowing on their different strengths. Further, context specific application of different approaches is crucial as there is no one size fit all approach. The extension approaches should be continually adapted to evolving farming community needs.

Further, while either of the approaches have had impact of great extent, they are faced with challenges of up scaling and institutionalization. To address these challenges and realize greater benefits from these approaches, it is important that these approaches are embedded within the policy frameworks and supporting institutional frameworks established to facilitate their promotion.
7. Policy recommendations

a. Improving the regulatory environment for agricultural extension and advisory services

The introduction of pluralistic extension system while beneficial has had its challenges including deterioration of quality of extension services. Moreover, there is lack of a regulatory mechanism to govern the multiple actors in the current pluralistic extension system. Further, existing guidelines remain as such, with weak enforcement mechanism making them ineffective. Worse still, implementation of existing policy frameworks remains a big challenge owing to inadequate resourcing to extension. In addition, existing policies fail to explicitly provide for strengthening of innovative extension approaches curtailing their growth.

**Action:** There is need for development of enforceable regulatory frameworks to govern extension provision, coordination and standards under pluralistic and integrated extension systems that is cognizant of diverse nature of AEAS providers. Moreover, resourcing for extension policies development and implementation is important for such polices to be effective. It is crucial for policy frameworks to recognize and work towards strengthening innovative extension approaches by integrating them within extension service delivery systems. These should be backed with service delivery standards and indicators to facilitate monitoring of their implementation and results.

b. Enabling partnerships and coordination of diverse actors in extension service delivery

Existence of multiple actors in extension space without proper coordination has weakened service delivery. While there is strength in numbers, this strength is only valuable through a coordination mechanism that allows the multiple providers to learn from each other, share experiences, innovate together to solve extension challenges and complement each other.

**Action:** Strengthening of existing extension service providers’ coordination mechanisms that exist in different countries. With proper coordination, the public extension system will play a facilitative role of capacity development and provision of enabling policy environment for the multiple extension service providers to play their roles.

c. Sustainably financing development and up-scaling of extension services

While immense opportunities exist through private sectors, youths, ICT and innovative extension approaches, financing remains a big challenge for their up-scaling and continued promotion. To start with, agriculture extension financing has remained low over the years affecting public sector extension service delivery despite its importance. On the other hand, existing financial products are inaccessible to emerging private sector actors in extension and youths. This is because they are either costly or access requirements are restrictive shunning many away. As such, the growth, expansion of private sector actors and youths innovations in extension is hindered. Further, requisite infrastructural support to aid extension service delivery including access roads, access to information among others are poorly developed.

**Action:** Development of innovative financial products and services that are friendly to the youth and private sector actors is crucial. It is important for the government to incentivize private sector and youth involvement in extension due to the role they play in complementing public extension service provision. This could be through tax holidays or government led subsidized financial products targeting them as well as derisking such services through subsidized insurance packages. Further, by targeting public extension system to farmer categories not adequately reached by private extension system would liberate extension resources for utilization by other actors in extension including (private sector, youth, and farmers’ organizations among others. It is thus imperative for the government to adopt and upscale innovative PPP extension approaches through collaboration with other extension service providers. Integrating ICT and other innovative approaches would further enhance extension service delivery efficiency.

d. Providing training and skills development for extension service personnel

The skills and knowledge of extension service provider correlates with the services advanced to farmers. It is thus important to ensure extension service providers have appropriate skills that match the needs of the farmers. Despite this, education access remains a hindrance for youth involvement in extension after graduating. Further, they are not properly and
adequately equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge that align to the current extension demands. Moreover, they lack opportunities for practical and experiential leaning which is important in enhancing their skills. In addition, they have inadequate entrepreneurial skills limiting their ability to innovatively develop private sector led extension models. Beyond education institutions, trainings to enhance the capacity of extension service providers fail to appreciate the diversity, capacity and needs of the diverse actors. Further, while there exists other non-formal extension education systems, they have not been recognized hence making it difficult for such opportunities to be exploited yet important in bridging the human resource gap.

**Action:** Rethink extension education curriculum to make them more aligned to industry needs and demands as well as integrate experiential and practical learning. This could be through public-private partnerships with industry players. Further, there needs to be a mechanism of recognizing and certifying extension service providers trained through non-formal education systems. Capacity development initiatives for extension service providers should take cognizance of their diversity, different needs and circumstances, to make them more appropriate and focused.

e. **Tackling the digital divide to enable development and up scaling of innovative extension approaches**

ICT present immense opportunities as well as risks in revitalizing extension service provision. Some of the emerging ICT technologies include mobile apps, portable smart sensors, drones and imaging software, weather forecasting, pest warning systems, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, blockchain technology, big data analytics, and biotechnologies that could be exploited for the enhanced access to extension services. However, ICT application is faced with detrimental risks such as data privacy that could jeopardize an entire ICT application. On the other hand, requisite ICT infrastructural development to pave way for exploitation of ICT in extension remains underdeveloped especially in rural areas where farmers are based. Other hindrances include high costs and poor internet connectivity.

**Action:** ICT infrastructural development is crucial to help take advantage of the potential it presents. Measures put in place should address challenges of access including availability and affordability. Other measures could be incentivizing ICT-based private sector led extension approaches, innovations and models through reduced taxation among others.

f. **Engaging youth and private sector to intensify extension innovations development and foster rural agribusiness development**

Youth and private sector play a critical role in extension in complementing the public extension service providers. However, their contribution remains undocumented and hence their contribution and role remains unrecognized. They are equally faced with unconducive business environment as well as lack of mentorship and networking opportunities.

**Action:** It is important that private sector actors and youths contribution to extension service provision is quantified. Moreover, innovative models for their engagement should be strengthened and supported technically and financially. On the other hand, it is important to build a community of extension experts through which up-coming private sector and youth in extension can be linked to for learning, mentorship, co-creation and co-investment in extension. It is thus imperative that country level fora for agriculture advisory services have a critical role to play in this regard as they facilitate mentorship, networking, co-learning and co-creation for improved extension delivery.

g. **Ecosystem for exploitation of extension innovations and utilization of extension products and services**

Extension services are interlinked to other services that extension clients need or require to effectively manage their farming practices. These services range from financial services, innovations, knowledge products and services, research and inputs among others. Treating extension as a standalone service defeats its purpose since on its own it cannot address these other needs. Therefore, to realize agricultural transformation these services and products should be interlinked seamlessly.

**Action:** Creating interlinkages for holistic extension service delivery is important. This involves close collaboration and coordination with all service and product providers. As such a national agricultural innovation system as well as country level fora agriculture advisory services are critical. These platforms create important consultation mechanisms with extension actors and facilitate multi-stakeholder linkages and dialogue. It is thus important that the government create an enabling policy environment for their existence, function and strengthening.
8. Conclusion

The East Africa Knowledge Sharing Event presented opportunity for sharing experiences and learning from diverse experts in extension. The event benefited from insightful presentations on innovative digitally-enabled extension models, private-sector approaches in extension, models for youth involvement in extension as well as innovative extension approaches that offer opportunities for youth and private sector actors in propelling extension service delivery.

The event highlighted opportunities in revitalizing extension including existence of multiple innovate extension approaches and models; diversity and strength of youth and private sector in extension and; ICT as a major resource in invigorating extension. Some of the challenges hindering exploitation of these opportunities outlined included: weak regulatory framework to facilitate coordination and professionalization of extension service delivery; skills, knowledge gap amongst youth and private sector extension service providers to meet the extension needs and demands; inadequate and limited financing to deliver extension services and promote growth of emerging approaches; multiple and uncoordinated extension service providers and; poor ICT infrastructural development coupled with high costs and poor connectivity and access.

To address these challenges, the event proposed several recommendations including financing towards extension service delivery; creating an enabling policy environment to facilitate professionalization of extension services; ICT infrastructural development; Incentives for youth and private sector involvement in extension; strengthening extension actors coordination mechanisms and; appropriate skills and knowledge development for extension service provision.
Engaging Youth and Private Sector in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
Engaging Youth and Private Sector in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
Engaging youth and private sector to intensify extension innovations development and foster rural agribusiness development.