

TOWARDS GENDER SENSITIVE EXTENSION MEDIA: SOME CHALLENGES

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INTRODUCTION

Extension has been defined as availing educational opportunities to people who would otherwise have no access to them. Extension systems typically constitute communication and education, aimed at changing the behaviour of clientele (Swanson and Claar, 1984:1).

Communication is considered a key instrument for extension and generally involves extensive use of extension media. According to Roling (1990:41): communication requires shared meaning otherwise the encoding of a message by the sender and its decoding by the receiver would not lead to the intended effect on the receiver.

Thus, the strategic use of communication to induce change in clientele is dependent, foremost, on the extent to which meaning is shared between the change agent and clientele. Whereas clientele behaviours have generally influenced the choice of communication strategies and media, experience in extension has increasingly demonstrated that gender considerations have not been adequately addressed.

THE GENDER QUESTION IN EXTENSION

Gender and sex are related although they are not similar. Female sex is usually related with feminine gender while male sex is related with masculine gender. Sex refers to the permanent characteristics of individuals, derived biologically from the chromosomic composition during the early stages of human development. Gender, on the other hand, constitutes learned behaviour. One is not born with gender but rather becomes "engendered" through the process of socialization. Gender is thus a cultural and mental interpretation of sex differences and male-female relations.

A major role of extension is to influence change in human behaviour. Since society continuously reinforces gender roles, extension's contribution to this process of socialization cannot be overemphasized. Given that gender roles vary with time, place, class, culture and other changing circumstances, it is important that extension messages, media and methods are gender sensitized if extension is to remain relevant and dependable for its diverse clientele. Take, for example, the following observation by Alberti about diversity in gender roles:

In many parts of Latin America, particularly indigenous regions of the Andes, women work side by side with men in the fields. In other areas such as Honduras, women are seldom seen working in the field beneath the direct rays of the sun and may well be embarrassed if they are seen. Asian women such as those from Bangladesh are rarely field workers while their Indian counterparts assume the major role in most if not all phases of rice production. (Alberti, 1989:65 emphasis added).

The African situation poses its own diversity. However, it is generally acknowledged that until recently, Africa has demonstrated what can probably be described as the most consistent association between crops and gender. Food crops have typically been grown by women. However some women, especially those near urban areas, have now increasingly delved into cash cropping as well. However, as revealed by the World Survey on the role of women in development, change-seeking initiatives have

generally operated under male domination. For example, science and technology has been a male domain for centuries, in the same way as the church and the military. The exclusion of women may be part of the reason why the applications of scientific innovations have been much in favour of men. (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990:22).

Thus, it is becoming increasingly apparent that society's acceptance of male domination has also pervaded development work. Although much lip-service has been paid to the equal participation of women in the hitherto male-dominated development activities, there has not been much practical attempt towards genuine involvement of women. Eide laments that although women are indeed economically relevant; they make a contribution, but their participation is overlooked and their base is inadequate. No wonder they end up perpetually disadvantaged and seriously constrained in productivity (Eide, 1991:22).

Research, which has been traditionally considered as the basis for extension innovations and messages, has not escaped the entrapments of gender insensitivity. Alberti observes that bRecommendation domains sensitive to gender issues are difficult to develop due to scant documentation of women's participation in agricultural and farm-related activities in local areas, and... if developed, they are difficult to implement (Alberti, 1989:61).

Alberti notes that facts on the involvement and contribution of women in secondary data reviews have been generally underrepresented and that secondary sources such as census data and local agricultural reports continue to ignore or underestimate female contributions. He further observes that informal interviews and exploratory surveys do not reach out well to womenfolk. The observations made by Alberti have also been echoed by Wotowiec *et al* (1989:89).

Conventional methods of data collection are based on an inadequate conceptualization of the role of women that underrepresents their contributions to agriculture. Conceptually, the identification of the farm as the unit of observation is problematic because it isolates crops and livestock decisions and activities from other productive and social activities. Operationally it leads to gathering information from the farmer, typically the man with social authority over the household (emphasis ours).

The omission or trivialization of women has had far-reaching consequences. Their status, as summarized during the UN Decade for the Advancement of Women, reflects the experiences of women worldwide:

Women constitute one-half of the population; perform two-thirds of the houses worked, perform two-thirds of the hours worked, are registered as performing only one-third of these hours, receive 10 percent of the world's income, and have 1 percent of the world's property registered in their names (Eide, 1991:221 - 222).

EXTENSION MEDIA AND GENDER SENSITIVITY

The situation is not any different for extension. Given that science and technology are not value free and neutral, extension cannot claim gender neutrality. Eventhough women, visibly or invisibly, engage in farming operations in larger proportions than men in Developing Countries, fewer women extension staff exist. According to Spring:

Worldwide, including North America and Europe, only 19 percent of the

agricultural extension staff members are women. The average number of female extensionists for Africa is 3 percent; for Latin America and the Caribbean it is 14% and for Asia and Oceanic the figure is 23 percent. Only in the Philippines are 40 percent of the staff members are female (Spring, 1989:409).

In most extension situations, even the term "farmer" has become gender stereotypic. Extension practitioners frequently refer to a male farmer operator as the farmer and to a female counterpart as the farmer's wife or relative. In this context, therefore, women exist simply as invisible farmers. It has been observed that this status of women is brought about by the practice of upholding men as heads of households regardless of who actually contributes more to the family. This state of affairs has serious implications for extension media:

Frequently, information about new technologies developed in agricultural programmes tends to be communicated only through male information networks. In some societies information about technologies is diffused only slowly, if at all, from men to women even within a household. Female farmers are clearly disadvantaged in learning about new technologies if they cannot participate in male-oriented dissemination programmes (Wotowiec *et al.*, 1989:80).

Extension media play a key role in the design and execution of extension activities. The concept "media" has been variously defined. This paper confines its meaning to that put forward by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1990) as means of mass communication, with such examples as television, radio and newspapers. This definition is also shared by The Longman Active Study Dictionary of English (1989) which describes media as a method for giving information.

Extension media are part and parcel of instructional media. According to Ferlach and Ely, "media" derives from "medium" which can be broadly conceived as "any person, material, or event that establishes conditions which enable the learner to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Gerlach and Ely, 1980:241). Gerlach and Ely conceptualize media as constituting materials and equipment. A still picture is, in this context, an example of materials and a projector with which to show it is the equipment. In more modern jargon, the materials and equipment which store and/or transmit stimuli or content constitute "hardware" while the stimuli or contents which are stored and transmitted are referred to as "software". A related dimension is that of techniques. These are procedures for utilizing materials and equipment to transmit stimuli or messages.

Experience has revealed that the polarization of extension services by gender has also, in turn, influenced extension media. That is, the assumptions and premises generally held concerning gender and extension pose serious challenges to the manner in which extension messages and innovations are packaged and disseminated as well as the choice and use of extension materials and equipment. The results of a recent preliminary survey of selected extension media, as discussed below, point to this general observation.

PRELIMINARY STUDY OF EXTENSION MEDIA

A preliminary study of selected extension media was recently conducted, with a view to analyzing the extension contents or messages in the context of gender role stereotyping. Four media were selected for study. The selection of media for the study was based on their immediate availability for

analysis at the time of the study. These media were:

1. **Ukulima wa Kisasa** - a newspaper produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Cooperatives. Only 13 issues covering the period September, 1985 to August, 1990 were obtained and analyzed.
2. **Daily News** - the Saturday edition that has a section on Veterinary and Agriculture was selected. Some 20 issues were analyzed, covering the period July 6 to November 16, 1991.
3. **FAO filmstrips** - only seven were available in the collection of the Institute of Continuing Education at Sokoine University of Agriculture and all of them were analyzed for content.
4. Selected extension programmes aired by **Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam** were examined in relation to the time during which they are broadcast.

Preliminary Findings

A number of preliminary observations can be made at this point.

1. **Portrayal of Women as Major Producers**

The Daily News portrayed women as major producers in only 10 percent of the topics studied while **Ukulima wa Kisasa** portrayed them likewise in 31 percent of the topics. This frequency is quite low and at variance with the reality that agricultural production in the Third World has largely been the task of women. In Africa and Asia, women are said to contribute 60 - 80 percent of the agricultural labour force and in Tanzania as much as 97 percent of the rural female workforce is engaged in agriculture.

2. **Polarization of Activities in the Community**

The Daily News and **Ukulima wa Kisasa** portrayed the following as female-oriented topics or activities: collecting fuelwood; cleaning latrines; health, nutrition and childcare; weeding; harvesting; and reduction of workload. Activities portrayed were exenization; exposure to new technologies and cleaning the yard.

Most messages on new technologies were addressed to male clientele. Interestingly, efforts to reduce workload for women were largely focused on the introduction of new technologies for men. It was considered that in this way men would ultimately be drawn into carrying out so-called traditionally female-oriented roles. Consequently, the frequency with which topics on technology addressed male-oriented activities was about 130 percent.

3. **Stereotyping of Extension Messages**

The filmstrips observed demonstrated gender stereotyping of extension activities and extension clientele. Table 1 summarises the key observations. In general, the content of the filmstrips studied reveals the following:

- i) Extension work is perceived as male's responsibility. Only the cases where traditionally female-oriented messages are being disseminated is one often likely to see an extension worker portrayed as female.

- ii) Responsibility for matters related to nutrition, health, childcare, family and food production is perceived as almost exclusively for female clientele.
- iii) Such responsibilities as leading, organizing, decision-making and innovating tend to be attributed to male clientele.

Table 1. Gender Stereotyping of Extension Messages

Title of Filmstrip	Observations
Soybeans Part II: "Lets Eat Them"	The only man in the filmstrip is shown as "father" in a family of five. The rest of the strip shows women alone preparing soybean products. Preparation of soybean products is perceived as a female's task.
Extension Agent	Extension worker is male while the extension messages is intended for female recipients.
"Vyakula vya Kuvutia"	Message is focused on women, food and children. No mention of men. The topic on foodstuffs is considered female domain.
Focus on the Family	Mostly women appear. Message is about food, water, market, hospital and gardening, all of which are considered women's domain. Two men appear in only 2 out of 45 shots and are portrayed as "advisers" to the women.
Pest Control-Grain Storage Part II.	Men appear at planning stage and during construction of grain storage structure. A woman appears sewing a storage bag, winnowing and finally a table eating with the family.
Nutrition	Dady and mother are at the core of the message. Message is directed to women.
Testing New Ideas: New Maize	Only men participate in planning and instruction. Planning is perceived as male domain. New ideas are directed to male clientele.

4. Access to Extension Messages

Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam can be cited as a very important extension medium. Some of its key rural development programmes with potential extension impact are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Selected programmes on Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam

Name of Programme	Day Aired	Time Aired
Misitu ni Uhai	Monday	2.45 - 3.00 p.m.
Mkulima wa Kisasa I	Monday	5.45 - 6.00 p.m.
Pamba	Monday	7.15 - 7.30 p.m.
Chakula na Lishe	Monday	9.45 - 10.00 p.m.
Mkulima wa Kisasa II	Tuesday	3.15 - 7.30 p.m.
Elimu ya Watu Wazima	Tuesday	4.15 - 4.30 p.m.
Jiendeleze	Tuesday	5.02 - 5.25 p.m.
Jifunze Ushirika	Tuesday	5.25 - 5.30 p.m.
Chakula Bora	Wednesday	6.15 - 6.30 p.m.
Tija na Maendeleo	Wednesday	6.30 - 6.45 p.m.
Afya ya Jamii	Wednesday	6.45 - 7.00 p.m.
Jiendeleze (M)	Thursday	2.15 - 2.30 p.m.
Siri ya Afya Bora	Thursday	5.15 - 5.30 p.m.
Korosho	Thursday	6.45 - 5.30 p.m.
Maji Asili	Thursday	10.45 - 11.00 p.m.
Elimu ya Watu Wazima	Friday	3.15 - 3.30 p.m.
Shambani Juma Hili	Friday	6.12 - 6.45 p.m.
Pareto Tanzania	Friday	6.45 - 7.00 p.m.
Maendeleo ya Jamii	Friday	10.30 - 11.00 p.m.
Washirika	Saturday	6.15 - 6.30 p.m.
Wanawake na Maendeleo	Saturday	11.00 - 11.30 p.m.

Table 2 shows that extension programmes are generally aired everyday, including weekends. The programmes are mostly broadcast during the afternoons and evenings. Usually, afternoons and evening are considered as convenient and suitable for airing such programmes. The assumption usually made is that most people would be at home and, therefore, likely to tune in and listen to their radio sets. While it is true that both men and women are likely to be at home during such times, their preoccupations would seem to differ. Men are likely to be resting and listening to the radio. Women, on the other hand, are likely to be preoccupied with various activities in the household and therefore not being actively present and available to listen to the radio.

Table 3. Rural Women's Time Spent on Daily Activities

Activity	Average time (Hours)
Food preparation	3.59
Working on farm	3.32
Fetching water	0.46
Collecting firewood	0.26
Childcare	0.14
Washing and cleaning	0.59
Other chores	2.40
Resting between activities	2.20
Total	12.96

Source: Tanzania/DANIDA Water Masterplans, 1983.

It has been established that in addition to the normal day-to-day productive responsibilities, women, especially those in rural areas, play a vital role in biological and social reproduction responsibilities. Consequently, as can be seen from Tables 3 and 4, a woman's preoccupations tend to be in conflict with the broadcasting schedule for extension programmes (Table 2).

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, a woman's day has a workload of about 10 - 16 hours. The activities typically carried out by women are those that are traditionally perceived as female-oriented and include food preparation, fetching water, collecting firewood, childcare, washing and cleaning. In addition, they also work on the farm.

According to Table 3, biological and social reproduction responsibilities take almost 75 percent of a woman's day. Whereas rural males can afford a continuous block of time to rest, and perhaps listen more actively to the radio, females rest in between activities for very brief moments. Therefore, whereas female clientele might appear, from Table 3, to have about 2 hours of rest daily, this time period is only cumulative and does not provide conducive opportunity for active listening to radio programmes.

Table 4. Women's Daily Workload.

Task	Average Time (hours)
(Waking up at 5.00 a.m.)	
Preparing for farm work	0.05
Tethering goats and walking to the field (with child on the back)	0.75
Harvesting (until 3.00 p.m.)	8.75
Collecting fuelwood	1.00
Fetching water and bathing children and self	2.00
Washing utensils used during previous night	0.50
Meal preparation	1.50
Serving food and eating (going to bed at 9.00 p.m.)	1.00
Total	16.00

Source: Adopted from Kahurananga (1980).

As can be seen in Table 4, the activities in which women engage are diverse and variable from season to season. Generally, women begin their day at around 5.00 a.m. which is when Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam goes on their air. They engage in various tasks and retire late in the day. Ironically, some programmes, such as "Chakula and Lisho", "Mali Asili" and "Maendeleo ya Jamii" are aired after most women have retired to bed. At this time most of them are too exhausted to benefit from any of these important programmes.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Agricultural extension constitutes communication and education. It requires extensive use of media. Philosophical considerations, socio-cultural factors and economic forces are among the elements that have influenced the tendency to marginalize female clientele and to the preferential treatment of male clientele in the extension process.

Preliminary analysis of the content of extension messages being communicated through selected media has shown that these messages are not sufficiently gender sensitized. The major actors are usually male and the messages portray substantial sex role stereotyping in favour of male clientele. This is regardless of whether or not the actual and intended recipients of the messages are males.

Consequently, the need for gender sensitive extension media cannot be overemphasized. Given that extension information is power, the production and use of gender sensitive extension media is a useful starting point towards empowerment of women in agriculture. Available extension media — newspapers, filmstrips and radio — are yet to be adequately gender sensitive. This is, in part, a reflection of the basic assumptions on which extension work in Tanzania is based. These assumption pose a great challenge towards the production and use of gender sensitive extension media.

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