WOMEN AND AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, HAS IT BY PASSED THEM? EXPERIENCES FROM MOROGORO REGION

E.G. Rwambali

INTRODUCTION

Extension is one of the major components of the agricultural development system. It disseminates knowledge, skills and technology for transforming agriculture. Despite Tanzanian women providing sixty percent of all required farm labour (Wiley, 1984), agricultural and developmental information has largely by passed them (Rafferty, 1988, p.129), Women lack information and opportunities for further training. Even agricultural extension programmes have traditionally concentrated more on educating male farmers and hence women still largely depend on their husbands for access to agricultural information (Fortmann, 1978, p.14).

Women are still working with rudimentary tools while the new labour-saving devices and equipment have been benefiting men (Lamming 1983, p.8). The introduction of modern or improved technology in developing countries basically had the intentions of reducing drudgery in farm operations as well as improving production. Despite these good intentions, it has been observed that modern technology has done little to improve the welfare of women (Lamming, 1983, Lewis, 1984; Trenchard 1987). Fortmann (1978) observed the same trend in Tanzania where women have little access to technology as compared to men. The following discussion will explore the extent to which extension services are accessible to women. It examines women's role in agricultural production and their involvement in agricultural cooperatives. Data for the study were based on a stratified sample of cooperative and non-cooperative members from Kilosa and Morogoro districts and were collected in 1989.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS USED TO REACH WOMEN

Home and Farm Visits

This study established that 45% of female farmers were getting extension contact through various channels, such as their husbands, women organisations (groups) and cooperatives. Just over 48% had no contact despite their awareness of the existence of the extension worker. Although all villages sampled were served by an extension worker, about 5% of the respondent did not know that an extension worker existed in the village. Thus 53% of the respondents had no extension contact (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent by Their Extension Contact

Number of Visits per Year	No. of respondents	Percentage
0	52	53.6
1-3	36	37.1
over 3	9	9.3
Total	97	100.0

The average number of visits for only those who received extension visits was 2.6 visits per year. Abou 21% percent of the respondents had direct contact with the extension worker and these were mainly single women, while in 11.3% of the cases the extension worker talked to both husband and wife. Abou 15% relied on their husbands and the rest obtained information through women groups and cooperatives.

The analysis showed that there was no statistical difference between younger and older female farmers in terms of their contact with the extension service.

Demonstrations, Field Days and Agricultural Classes

Even other extension methods like demonstration and field days reach only a few women. However, it is interesting to note that demonstrations have reached more women than men (Table 2).

Table 2. Percent Distribution of Respondents by their Attendance at Farm Demonstrations, Field Days and Agricultural Classes (N = 97).

Activity	Person Attending					
	Women (Wife)	Husband	Both	Other family attending	Not attending	Total
Farm Demonstration	13.4	4.1	6.2	3.1	73.2	100.0
Field days	3.1	4.1	1.0	1.0	90.7	100.0
Agricultural classes	4.1	7.2	1.0	1.0	86.6	100.0

Adding up the column for women only and the one for half "both" you will find that only 16.5% of women had attended farm demonstrations, 3.6% had attended field days and 4.6% had attended agricultural classes. Thus even these methods of extension have not reached most of the women.

Other Agricultural Information Sources

We saw earlier that extension visits were directly made to 31.9% of the female respondents while 15% of women relied on their husbands for agriculture information. Lack of direct information to women does not end with extension visits alone, but with input and crop price information as well. Women continue to rely mostly on other people like husbands and neighbours for such information. Nevertheless cooperative leaders have played a key role in disseminating that information (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Source of Information on Inputs and Prices.

	Input Information		Price Information	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Extension worker	12	12.4	1	1.0
Village leaders	5	5.2	3	8.2
Cooperative leaders	22	22.7	29	29.9
Businessmen	-	-	1	1.0
Husband	6	6.2	10	10.3
Neighbours	3	3.1	22	22.7
Radio	2	2.1	4	4.1
Relatives	2	2.1	4	4.1
Coop leaders + radio	-	-	2	2.1
Coop leaders + neighbours	1	1.0	4	4.1
No information	44	45.4	12	12.4
Total	97	100.0	97	100.0

Mass Media

Lack of education is a handicap to women in developing themselves and in adopting new innovations. Most respondents had low levels of education (Table 4) and there was a high percentage of women who could not read or write despite their attendance at adult literacy classes and primary school. For example, only 53.6% of women could read and 51.5% could write. These figures are below the national average, where it was estimated in 1986 that 83% of women were literate (Min. of community Development, 1988. p.26). Their lack of confidence, awareness, skills and information makes it difficult for them to play important roles in village activities.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by Levels of Education.

Category	Number	Percent
No formal education	20	20.7
Adult literacy	24	24.7
Standard I to IV	26	26.8
Standard V to VII/VIII	27	27.8
Total	97	100.0

As a result of their low levels of education and literacy very few read newspapers which c help to broaden their levels of knowledge. Very few of the respondents read newspapers and then on an infrequent basis (Table 5). Unfortunately the farmers magazine "Ukulima wa Kisasa" w carries mainly agricultural information was not read by anybody and also not easily accessible to farm

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Their Rate of Reading Different Newspapers (N=37)

	Newspapers				
Rate	Uhuru	Mzalendo	Mfanyakazi	W/Kisasa	Others
Do not read	70.1	75.3	82.5	100.0	99.0
Once a month	4.1	13.4	8.2	-	-
2 times a month	-	7.2	7.2	-	-
3 times a month	1.0	2.0	-	-	-
4 times a month	18.6	2.1	2.1	-	1.0
Above 4 times a month	6.2	-	-	-	-

Lack of access to radios also is a barrier to increased knowledge and information which c help women in their day to day living and work. This study found that 41.2% of respondents listene

the radio and they did so for only a few hours, either in the afternoon or in the evenings, hence missing much of the agricultural related information.

This lack of information and knowledge is reflected through limited use of improved technology like improved seeds, fertilizers and insecticides by women (Table 6)

Table 6. Distribution of ?Respondents by use of Selected Inputs (N=97)

Inputs	% who Apply/use	% who do not Apply/use	Total %
Improved Seeds	33	67	100
Fertilizers	1	99	100
Insecticides	35	65	100
Storage Pesticides	30	70	100

Only 33% of respondents indicated to have had used improved seeds and 35% and 30% have used farm insecticides and storage pesticides respectively. It is disappointing to note that only 1% used fertilizers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although rural development policies in Tanzania are egalitarian and have recognised the role of agriculture in transforming rural areas and the nation as a whole, the agricultural policy has not specifically recognised and appreciated women as key elements in rural production. Overholt et al (1984) noted that despite women being key contributors to the economic system they have been constantly marginalised by development planners. But, as Lewis (1984) reminded us, failure to recognise the important role of women will undermine their status, their well being, and government efforts to increase agricultural production through small farmers.

In the light of the above the following recommendations are made.

- The agricultural policy should clearly state women' position and the scope of women participation in agricultural development programmes.
- There should be deliberate efforts by the extension service to reach more women through dialogue with the involved parties.
- Since demonstrations proved to be attended more by women than men; then this method should be applied whenever appropriate in order to reach more women.

Extension programmes should take into consideration the low levels of educatior and the work load of women so that they can make use of those programmes. Fo example by specifically establishing the appropriate time which can be used in order to reach women. This applies to both local and national radio programmes.

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