

# PEOPLE PARTICIPATION IN LIMPOPO FARMER MECHANISATION SUPPORT PROGRAM IN SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SCHOONOORD AND MORIPANE CASES<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The study assessed the impact realised from the participation of farmers in the implementation of government's farmer mechanisation support program through interviews of randomly and purposively selected farmers and traditional leaders respectively, and all available tractor operators using semi-structured interview schedule. Personal observation and experience realised by extension workers during program implementation was used in the interpretation of findings and formulation of conclusions. The study was conducted in Makhuduthamaga Sub-district in Sekhukhune District of Limpopo Province in South Africa. The study conducted a comparative analysis of two cases: Schoonoord and Moripane sorghum and maize belt respectively. The study found that when farmers play a leading role in implementation of agricultural development programs, such programs become successful and sustainable than when extension workers are in the lead. The study recommends active farmer participation approach in farmer development programs for sustainability through acquisition of sense of responsibility, ownership and self-reliance.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Limpopo Government Department of Agriculture (LDA) was supplied with 72 tractors by Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) as an input injection for Limpopo provincial farmer mechanisation support program, meant specifically for subsistence farmers in the province. The program was officially launched on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2012. The tractors were distributed among the five districts. Sekhukhune district received eighteen, four of which were allocated to Makhuduthamaga sub-district (Head Office & Sekhukhune Reporters, 2012).

A directive was then issued top-down to extension service that the program operations should be based in traditional authorities. Extension service didn't have program policy framework for guidance on approaches to apply during implementation of the program. Only operational framework was in place for administrative directives. In essence, the program was implemented without a clear extension route map, and Monitoring and Evaluation system. This omission might have impacted on the choice of appropriate implementation approach on the one hand, and monitoring of the implementation and evaluation of the output of the program on the other. The program's implementation in the Makhuduthamaga sub-district was then focused onto two separate areas of production, namely Schoonoord sorghum belt and Moripane maize belt. The areas were provided with ten tractors seven of which were loaned from other sub-districts and one tractor respectively.

According to Department of Agriculture (2005)'s Norms and Standard for Extension and Advisory

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Services in Agriculture, extension and advisory service should have clearly defined objectives, action plans, timelines, and deliverables. On the same note Palmer (2006) notes that a project must have five phases namely conceptual, planning, designing, implementation, and operation and support phases. It is during planning phase wherein budget allocation is defined. It is also during implementation phases that buying-in from participants is obtained. The main purpose of the exercise is to ensure commitment of the participants on the project implementation processes. The implementation teams' understanding of the project dynamics is tested during the implementation phase. This is complemented by operation and support phase through which all other supporting resources are engaged into the system.

Survey, analysis, planning, execution and evaluation are part of extension programme planning *Nine Spokes of the Wheel* (Murton, 1965) through which extension services identify and analyse areas and farmers' needs that need extension service's attention, plan for the program execution, and evaluate the outcomes of the operations. Novafrica (2005) agrees from participatory point of view that survey and participatory need analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation are major steps of Participatory Development Approach (PDA) which emphasises participation of the role players as of critical importance. Kusek and Rist (2004) argue that the need to conduct a readiness assessment is very paramount for implementation of any public program. According to the authors' argument, need and readiness assessments are two different concepts. Need assessment assumes that there is fundamental and underlying question about the program. Readiness assessment on the other hand assumes that the program is needed, and addresses whether or not the implementing agent is ready. Furthermore, Hart, Burgers and Hart (2004) argue that many agricultural development projects are implemented without clearly defined plan of action and/or management framework, and as a result, they seldom achieve their intended objectives. The question that remains is whether the extension service was ready for the implementation of the mechanisation program in respect of analysis and planning on the one hand, and the beneficiaries of such a program from participation point of view, on the other.

## **2 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

*Evaluation* is the eighth spoke of the *Nine Spokes of the Wheel* and the last step of PDA through which extension service assesses its performance in addressing the areas of need identified during the survey, the first step of both approaches. The study therefore conducted evaluation to assess how or whether the extension service allowed active participation of farmers in the implementation of farmers support mechanisation program in the concerned area of study. They also seek to look into the magnitude of farmers' participation in the program in relation to the implementation thereof by extension workers. The purpose of the paper is therefore to highlight the impact of people participation in public programs for ownership, self-reliance and sustainability. The findings may assist in identifying appropriate extension approaches in implementation of such agricultural programs in future.

## **3 METHODS**

The paper studied two cases, Schoonoord and Moripane sorghum and maize belt respectively. Sets of qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview schedule from 69 simple-randomly selected farmers, five purposively selected traditional leaders for their pilot status and active participation in the program, four of which responded, and all eight available tractor operators. The questionnaire was structured to address the participant's role in and contribution to the implementation processes, and to highlight the impediments encountered and successes realised, as well as to solicit suggestions for future program implementation. The questionnaire also provided for any general burning issue that participants deemed noting. The qualitative coding analytic

method was applied to generate categories of narrative themes. Document review was also conducted on the program reports to complement the comparative analysis between the two cases. Personal observation of the extension workers that participated in the program implementation was used through unstructured interviews to clarify issues on the raw data, enhance interpretation of the findings, and to complement the drawing of conclusions of the study.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Farmers Participation

Farmers were expected to clean their respective lands off trees and shrubs as well as to hand broadcast seeds where planter operation was limited, as part of their contribution to the implementation of the program. The study found that farmers were not made to participate in the planning processes of the program's implementation. As a result, the cleaning had not yet been done at the time of ploughing. The study found from farmers that traditional leaders dominated the program. As they were tasked to draw beneficiary lists, the lists were topped by their relatives. As a result, the majority of the traditional leaders' clan including those that had not been ploughing their fields for sometime topped the beneficiary lists. The majority of the regular producers were excluded from the lists. The study found that farmers were not updated of changes, anticipated delays and/or breakdowns in time. Extension workers supplied inputs to farmers without advices about such inputs. Men were reported to have dominated and intimidated women in the field in fight for tractor services. Table 1 depicts the comparative analysis of farmers' participation in the two cases.

**Table 1: Comparative analysis of the two cases: Farmers Participation**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>SCHOONOORD</b>	<b>MORIPANE</b>
<b>Role in the field</b>	Wait for tractors	Measure lands
	Direct tractors to own land	Direct tractors to own land
	Broadcast seeds	Broadcast seeds
	Individual work	Team work
<b>Contribution</b>	Fuel purchase in 1 out of 4 villages	Transportation of fuel
		Supply of minor implement spares
<b>Role of Extension Workers</b>	Delivery of inputs	Delivery of inputs
	Address meetings	Address meetings
<b>Impediments</b>	Tractor breakdowns	Tractor breakdowns
	Insufficient & late input supply	Insufficient & late input supply
	Insufficient number of tractors	Insufficient number of tractors
	Traditional leaders unfairness	
	Traditional leaders dominance	
	Extension workers' absence	
<b>Successes</b>	Many farmers benefited	All farmers benefited
<b>Advice for future operations</b>	Engage all role players	Increase fleet size
	Mobilise farmers groups/coops	Empower the farmers group
	Improve plough depth	Improve plough depth
<b>Any burning issue</b>	Men dominate/intimidate women in the field	Men dominate/intimidate women in the field

## 4.2 Traditional Leaders Participation

Traditional Leaders were tasked by the directives of the program to develop community beneficiary lists that were to be followed and monitored by their delegates in the fields. The Traditional Leaders' plots were supposed to be the first on the lists. Traditional leaders also facilitated and monitored contribution of funds by farmers towards assisting the program with fuel purchase and transportation where the program had deficiencies. They were instrumental in community mobilisation for dissemination of extension information. Table 2 displays the comparative analysis of participation of traditional leaders in the two cases.

**Table 2: Comparative analysis of the two cases: Traditional Leaders Participation**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>SCHONOORD</b>	<b>MORIPANE</b>
<b>Role</b>	Mobilise farmers	Motivate farmers
	Disseminate information	Disseminate information
	Draw beneficiary lists	Draw beneficiary lists
	1 out of 4 traditional leaders facilitated collection of money for fuel purchase	1 out of 1 Traditional leader monitored money for fuel transportation
<b>Contribution</b>	Tribal leadership support	Tribal leadership support
	Tribal councils' infrastructure for meetings	Accommodation & security for tractor & operators
<b>Role of extension workers</b>	Delivery of messages to and fro LDA	Delivery of messages to and fro LDA
<b>Impediments</b>	Tractors' breakdowns	Tractor breakdowns
	Insufficient & late input supply	Insufficient & late input supply
<b>Successes</b>	Yield	Yield
<b>Advice for future operations</b>	Address livestock damage on crops	Increase fleet size
<b>Any other burning issue</b>	Illegal squatters on arable land	

## 4.3 Tractor Operators Participation

Tractor operators were hired through Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) and trained a short while prior the launch of the program. No mechanical equipment or service for minor in-field repairs was supplied to tractor operators for any unexpected breakdowns. One of the operators used his own private tools to fix some minor repairs on the implements of all the tractors. All these limitations compromised their productivity. Table 3 depicts the comparative analysis of tractor operators' participation in the two cases.

**Table 3: Comparative analysis of the two cases: Tractor Operators Participation**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>SCHOONOORD</b>	<b>MORIPANE</b>
<b>Role</b>	Plough and plant for farmers	Plough and plant for farmers
<b>Contribution</b>	Fix implements	Fix implements
	Tools by 1/8	
<b>Impediments</b>	Tractor breakdowns	Tractor breakdowns
	Lack of mechanical support	Lack of mechanical support
	Lack of minor spares supply	Lack of minor spares supply
	Lack of tools	Lack of tools
	Lack of night security	Lack of night security
	Operators started ploughing at 08h30-9h00 because store officer reported to work at 07h30 for fuel refill	Operators started ploughing at 6h00 because fuel was readily available in community's storage facility
<b>Success</b>	85.2% service	100% service
<b>Advice for future operations</b>	Prioritise mechanical support	Prioritise mechanical support
<b>Any other burning issue</b>	Unprotected conditions in remote areas	Unprotected conditions in remote areas

#### 4.4 Document Review

The study conducted a document review on program documents such as *Operational Framework Version 2012/1*, *Tariffs for mechanisation*, *Monthly reporting template Annexure 2*, and *Overview Report*. The documents reflected the level of readiness of extension service at the time of implementation, tariffs for government mechanisation service, as well as the operational and production statistics. The service was rendered to farmers free of charge contrary to the spirit of the Limpopo Government Department of Agriculture (2011) that *“Ploughing and other mechanised products are offered to farmers on fee basis. ...The objective of the department is to develop farmers to become independent”*. The study found that at the time of the launch the program had not yet been provided with the required human resource support. For example, by the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 when the operational framework was approved and issued, prior the launch on the 13<sup>th</sup> November, additional operators required for the program had not yet been procured. By the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012 the operational framework read: *“Departmental tractor drivers/operators have been identified and their services will be utilised. Appointment of additional tractor operators to complement the internal capacity will be done in consultation”* (Limpopo Government Department of Agriculture, 2012).

For the kick start of the program in Makhuduthamaga, additional seven tractors were borrowed from other adjacent sub-districts. Ten tractors were allocated to Schoonoord sorghum production belt and one tractor to Moripane maize production area for ploughing and planting. Each tractor was operated by two operators. The productivity of services in the respective areas varied (Limpopo Government Department of Agriculture, 2013). Table 4 depicts the document review findings from both cases.

**Table 4: Comparative analysis of the two cases: Document review**

CATEGORY	SCHOONOORD	MORIPANE
Number of farmers involved	350	43
Number of tractors provided	10	1
Number of operators	20	2
Tractor : Farmer ratio	1:35	1:43
Fuel supplier	LDA	LDA
Hectares ploughed	384	81
Hectares planted	327	81
Deficit (hectares not planted)	57	None
Reason for deficit	Broken implements	

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The extension service implemented Limpopo farmer mechanisation support program without having conducted survey and need analysis to determine areas of need, relevant role players, and beneficiaries, as well as to determine the appropriate approaches per each area of operations as recommended by the principles of extension's *Nine Spokes of the Wheel* and PDA. The program was also implemented without a readiness assessment as recommended by Kusek and Rist (2004). The extension service did not assess its readiness as well as the readiness of the prospective beneficiaries thereof. As a result, the program was then implemented without the necessary mechanical, administrative and human resource support, and timely input supplies.

The program was also implemented without properly defined extension route map, and monitoring and evaluation system. Farmers were not engaged in the planning of the implementation and operational phases of the program. They therefore eventually played a passive beneficiary role than participatory. The local administrative support system was not made to adjust their routine processes to accommodate extension service's seasonal responsibilities. The extension service therefore suffered the impact of such discrepancies. When Traditional Leaders are tasked to draw beneficiary lists, names of their close relatives top the lists. As a result almost only the clan benefit first while the season still lasts.

The extension service applied two different approaches in two separate adjacent areas of production. One approach was applied in the Schoonoord sorghum belt and the other in Moripane maize production area. Management of the ploughing and planting processes in the sorghum production area were led and managed hands-on by extension workers while in the maize area the processes were led and managed hands-on by farmers themselves. The two different approaches produced different outcomes between the two cases. Table 5 depicts the variants between the cases.

**Table 5: Comparative analysis of the two cases: Developmental Outcomes**

CATEGORY	SCHOONOORD	MORIPANE
Leadership	Extension workers led the processes	Farmers led the processes
Ownership	Extension workers owned up	Farmers owned up
Responsibility	More responsibility on extension workers	More responsibility on farmers
Dependency	More dependency on extension workers ( <i>No extension worker, no work</i> )	Less dependency on extension workers ( <i>No extension worker, no difference</i> )
Self reliance	Less self reliance in farmers	More self reliance in farmers

## 6 EXTENSION IMPLICATIONS

6.1 When agricultural development program is implemented without proper extension approach or extension route map, participation of farmers becomes fragmented and disintegrated. As a result, extension workers work hard rather than smart.

6.2 Exclusion of farmers' participation in the planning process of a program meant for their advancement renders them passive participants and less committed beneficiaries thereof. As a result, extension workers carry much of the responsibilities.

6.3 When the existing internal administration support service is not properly integrated with the seasonal extension processes, extension service fails to deliver services within targeted and suitable timeframes.

6.4 In the absence of a clear program plan with human development outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation framework, extension service becomes developmentally fruitless.

6.5 When farmers actively participate in the day to day operations of the program, they own and take lead of the processes. As they own, they take responsibility of eventualities towards sustaining the program (Diale, 2013).

6.6 Farmers' less dependency on extension workers may suggest that extension workers achieve their "empower and let go" (Diale, 2011) development objective.

6.7 When extension service works towards developing farmers into independent self-reliant participants, and top-down directives dictate the contrary, extension service becomes frustrated. As a result, the quality of agricultural service delivery gets compromised.

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