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### DOES PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE IMPROVE OUTPUT: AN EXPERIENCE FROM LIMPOPO'S BROADENING AGRICULTURAL SERVICES AND EXTENSION DELIVERY (BASED) PROGRAMME

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#### ABSTRACT

Participatory extension approaches have been adopted in Limpopo Province Department of Agriculture through Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) programme since 1998. However in 2006 when the project came to a close the programme struggled to continue due to different vision held by the leadership in the organization. The approach has the potential to improve extension delivery because of its framework which allows the involvement of different stakeholders. Since the past six years after the close of the project service delivery has not showed any significant improvements although some notable outputs have been observed in the two pilot districts namely Vhembe and Capricorn. Within the two districts there are number of sites that were identified into pilot, however only two sites are reported in this paper namely Spitzkop in Capricorn and Mbahela in Vhembe district. The objective of this paper is to share experience of Limpopo Province in terms of participatory strategies adopted and how institutions are linked within the framework of BASED. A total of 79 extension officers were interviewed in this study from a sample of 277. The study found that due to the implementation of the Participatory Programme it promoted inclusivity, increasing of maize production yield, fostered good working relationship among farmers, involvement of women in leadership role, involvement of more farmers in experimentation, local people became aware of the importance of agriculture.

**Keywords:** Participatory, Agricultural Extension Approaches.

#### INTRODUCTION

Participatory extension approaches have been adopted in Limpopo through Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) programme since 1998. However in 2006 when the project came to a close the programme struggled to continue due to different vision held by the leadership in the organization. The core problem identified by Limpopo Provincial Department of Agriculture was insufficient response to the developmental constraints and opportunities of the majority of small-scale farmers in former homelands. The initial strategy to reform the Departmental service delivery system was started in 1995 by searching for a suitable extension approach for the Department of Agriculture. The German Government was approached through German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) for funding

a pilot study. The Department named the pilot programme Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED). The objectives of based were as follows : to develop a participatory development approach (PDA) in pilot districts, to facilitate access to sources of innovations and identification of technologies suitable for the socio-economic conditions of small-scale farmers, to recommend organizational adaptation and capacity building of the districts for the operationalization of the approach (Ramaru, 2003). BASED was piloted in two districts of the province namely Capricorn and Vembe and it was formally launched in 1998 (Limpopo Department of Agriculture, 2011).

**Background:** The introduction of BASED in Limpopo signalled a gradual shift of the working style of extensionists and farmers. This include the renewal of their mandate in increasing the crop and livestock productivity, dissemination of technologies accessible and suitable to farmer's farming systems, decreasing the

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risk of crop losses due to insufficient rain, conserving soil fertility, working in partnership with farmers encouraging them to try out new ideas to improve farming in their own fields.

Eight core values were developed to guide the process of participatory Extension Approach (PEA) in BASED and they are: self-reliance, ownership and control, inclusivity and equal opportunities, sharing and cooperation, conserving natural resources, building on local experience and skills, addressing farmer's problems by mobilizing local human resources, experiences and self-organization (Ngwenya, 2002). These values provide a foundation for implementing a participatory approach to service delivery. Both the farming community and the extensionists should internalize these values if PEA has to be meaningful and sustainable. The reason for writing this paper is the fact that new programmes are being introduced in Limpopo Department of Agriculture with little prospect of being sustainable, one popular programme include Fetsa Tlala loosely translated, means poverty eradication through ploughing the fields with the support of the government.

The programme of Fetsa Tlala started in 2010 and the Departments of Agriculture in South Africa received a mandate to assist farmers through the provision of mechanization, seeds, fertilizers and crop protection materials. From a close perspective of this system one can see that the intention was genuine but the people who are purported to be helped by this system, found themselves abusing the system for their own selfish gains. Some farmers would demand for free inputs despite them being capable of fending themselves and this has been the cause of concern including the writer of this paper. The cherished programme which has been praised for its quick mobilizing effect among farmers have been left in a bad taste and one wonders whether it cannot still deliver what has proven capable of doing, therefore the purpose of this paper is to report on the positive effects which the BASED has achieved during its life period in the Department. The lesson learnt will be of help in not repeating the mistakes when it is revived in future.

**Theoretical dimensions of participatory concept:** The importance of participation in development is not new. Literature reveal that the thinking and practice about development is in the age of participation (Oakley, 1990). However observations made during the mid-1970s suggested that this thinking was mainly

influenced by three major types of strategies for development namely "community development", "integrated rural development" and "basic needs approach". It is argued that these received a wide spread support (Oakley, 1990).

The paradigm shift towards more participatory approaches in extension and rural development more than a decade ago, has re-enforced the original philosophy of extension which seeks "to help people to help themselves"( Duvel, 2002:104). Different scholars (Oakley and Garforth, 1985:7) are in agreement regarding the necessity of participation in development. A number of researchers have argued that participation is critical in tackling the problems of poor people in the Third World (Oakley,1990; Bhasin 1985; Pearse and Stiefel,1979).

Poor people are facing a lot of challenges. According to Oakley (1990) two main aspects of participation were identified. They include what is termed the ingredients and the obstacles of participation. Example of the ingredients of participation include; participation in decision making, participation in implementation, participation in benefit sharing, and participation in evaluation. Whereas as far as obstacles are concerned, they include structural, administrative and social. Of paramount importance is the mindset of the poor people which at times have been reinforced by handouts and actions which have not encouraged them to take initiatives themselves(Curtis,1982).

An increasing number of analysis of projects have shown that participation by local people is one of the critical component of success in various agricultural sectors. Ewang and Mtshali (2000:162-164) pointed out that participation can be understood to vary from minimal/passive participation to full participation or self-mobilization. It is believed that rural people are more prepared to participate when they feel the need to do so (Oakley, 1991:37).

This practice was validated through a programme implemented by agricultural innovation training (AIT) formerly referred to as the Agricultural Research for Development - (ARD). This programme consisted of knowledge acquisition phase and a subsequent field study phase which was conducted in Blouberg Municipality. The knowledge acquisition phase consisted of workshops to explore key concepts, techniques, methods and tools for conducting research with farmers and relevant stakeholders.

It is within this programme where farmers willingly participated because they saw a need (Ngcobo, 2011). The question is what kind of participation is acceptable since Table 1. A typology of participation.

there are many types for example Pretty and Vodouhe (1997:48) identified seven types of interpretations of the term participation. They are summarized in Table 1.

Typology	Characteristics
1. Passive participation	People participate by being told. The information being shared belongs only to the external professionals.
2. Participation in information giving	People participate by answering questions and they do not have opportunity to influence proceedings because answers are not shared or checked.
3. Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted. The external agent defines both problem and solution. And the external agent is in no obligation to take on board the views of the people.
4. Participation for material incentive	People participate by providing resource such as labour in return for food or cash. For example farmers may provide their fields yet not involved in the learning process.
5. Functional participation	People participate by forming group for predetermined objectives and may lead to self-dependent.
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plan and the formation of new institutions or the strengthening of the existing ones. People have stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice.

Source, Pretty, 1994.

Other scholars such as Oakley (1991) identified four categories of participation namely: collaboration, contribution, organisation and empowerment. A close analysis of the dynamics of participation shows that they complement Table 1. Participatory approaches need to be isolated and the true meaning be established. It might be confusing to speak of participation without clarifying the meaning. Oakley (1991) tried to shed light in this regard, he argued that there is no single definition of participation, because a number of literature since the 1970s have broadened our understanding of the concept. However he asserted that participation has become an umbrella term for a supposedly new style of development intervention. Ehret (1997) further contributed in this concept by indicating that participation is a concept which involve a number of methods and learning processes for example, GRAAP, LePSA4, and participatory extension approaches (PEA). Participatory approaches are central to effective extension in complex and diverse smallholder farming systems where the focus is on strengthening of rural peoples. The implementation of

participatory approach requires reorientation, a mind shift from top down approach mainly teaching people to facilitation of the learning process. Ehret, (1997:87) recommends the use of different codes such as training for transformation, river code, and the bus code as helpful in PEA process. These codes were used in BASED programme.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology covers the following aspects; research design, audiences/respondents, sampling population and technique, data collection instrument, and data analysis technique.

**Research design:** Both qualitative and quantitative strategies were used to gather information for the study from both the extension workers and the programme beneficiaries –the farmers. Quantitative design was used with the extension officers. The reason was to check their demographic characteristics as well as the knowledge of PEA. Whereas the qualitative design was used to check the outputs from the farmers. The reason was to ensure that farmer’s cross-check the answers and to validate it through group discussions.

**Population and sampling techniques:** The study focussed into both the extension officers in the two districts as well as the farmers that were participating in the pilot sites. The two pilot areas had each three sites of 335 farmers, however only 112 farmers, 65 from Mbahela and 47 from Spitzkop were randomly selected Table 2. Distribution of the sample in Pilot areas of BASED

District	Pilot areas	Total Farmers	Sample farmers	Total Extensionists	Sample of extensionists
Vembe	Hagondo, Mbahela, Tshikonelo	195	65	169	35
Capricorn	Ga-Mogano, Ga-Thaba, Spitzkop	140	47	108	44
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>335</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>79</b>

and invited for the group interview. As far as the extension officers are concerned, the two pilot areas had 277. They were randomly selected from both pilot sites and pilot areas. Only 79 took part in the study namely 35 from Mbahela and 44 from Spitzkop. The sample is reflected in Table 2.

**Choice of the area:** Broadening Agricultural Services and Extension Delivery (BASED) identified 6 pilot areas that is 3 per participating district. However due to time

constraints, the paper is focussing on two namely Mbahela in Vembe and Spitzkop in Capricorn. The two districts are depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Limpopo map, depicting Vhembe and Capricorn Districts Pilot sites.

**Data collection:** The researcher developed two questionnaires, one was used for quantitative and the other one for qualitative among extension officers who served the pilot and those who did not were randomly selected. Two types of questionnaires were developed to gather information from two separate occasions through interviews. Farmers were randomly selected including both those who benefited from the BASED programme and those from outside the pilot sites were interviewed. Six workshops were organised in pilot sites to assess the impact of BASED in relation to service delivery, however only results from the two pilots are reported in this paper. The data for the study was analyzed qualitatively as well as through a computer programme called Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The importance of BASED programme can be understood by first looking at the quality of role players namely the extensionists as change agents and farmers as beneficiaries. The success of the programme depended more on the influence, commitment, experience, willingness to learn and the positive attitude of both the extensionists and the farmers (Duvel, 2002).

**Age of extensionists:** The nature of the extension work carries independency on the part of the extensionist therefore he must be matured to manage himself (Bembridge 1990).

Respondents were asked to indicate their age level. The majority of the sample show agricultural technicians with an age of above 30 years. One can conclude that the



large percentage (96%), of the extensionists have the necessary age to command respect in their work environment.

**Gender:** Swanson (1983:16) acknowledges that a significant proportion of small farmers and farm workers in the Third World are women, although women make a major contribution to world food production, they seldom benefit from agricultural extension services. Seventy Seven and two percent (77.2) of the sample are male (61), and (18) or 23 percent are women. This reflects gender

imbalance and the Department need to correct this if more women have to be reached because 80 percent of the farmers in the province are women (Limpopo Department of Agriculture, 1995).

**Work experience:** Less than five years in extension employment is reckoned as inexperienced because it is believed one spent the first two years in his new place trying to acquaint himself before doing something meaningful (Bembridge, 1988:46). Respondent’s years of experience are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of years in service of agricultural technicians.

Category of years	Frequency	Percent
0	1	1.3
Less than 10years	7	8.9
11-20 years	55	69.6
21-25 yrs	10	12.7
26-30yrs	5	6.3
More than 30yrs	1	1.3
Total	79	100.0

There are more experienced agricultural technicians in the Department of Agriculture in Limpopo. The majority of the respondents (55) fall into the 11-20 years category of experience. The situation of Limpopo and the country has changed from 2004 to 2014, there are more technicians 60 percent, who are about to exit the service as compared in 2003 (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), 2014).

**Knowledge of PEA pillars:** There are four pillars that provide guidance in implementing PEA in BASED namely: village as an organization, Experimentation as a way to provide a wide range of choices, linkages and cooperation and learning through self-reflection (Ficarelli, 1997). The majority of the agricultural technicians implementing BASED, 34.2 percent had no idea at all about the pillars of PEA. Only 25.3 percent showed that they have knowledge of 1-2 elements of the components of PEA process while only 3 out of 79 had full knowledge. Different knowledge set are indicated in Figure 2.

The conclusion is that the majority of the respondents 54.5 percent lacked knowledge of PEA. It is important that the Department should ensure that all extensionists are conversant about the pillars of BASED. The new cohorts will need to be grounded in the knowledge of PEA in order to promote it better in future.

**Achievements of BASED programme:** There are notable achievements that BASED has made since 1998, however not all achievements are reported; only some of

the important ones are highlighted from the perspective of the extensionists and farmers who participated in the programme.

**Extensionists implementing BASED:** PEA approach has been developed and adapted to South African conditions. A learning cycle borrowed from Chivi in Zimbabwe formed the basis for the South African version.

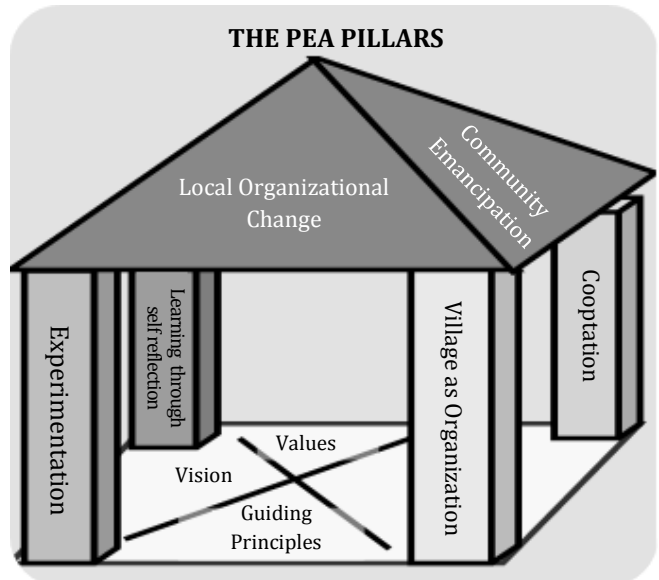


Figure 2. Pillars of PEA. The steps of this new “PEA cycle” is presented in Figure 3. The new PEA learning cycle is different from the Chivi learning cycle because it has identified 6 steps as opposed to the so called “Chivi PEA Cycle which has only

four loops. The six loops are: Initiating change, searching for new ways, Planning and strengthening local organizational capacity, Experimentation while implementing action, sharing of experiences and reflecting on the lessons learnt and re-planning. Extensionists have realized the importance of farmers to work as a group and facilitated the establishment of an inter-group unit called umbrella organization (UO). The

duty of the UO has provided a good link and cooperation with the various leadership structures such as the headman, chief and the councillors in the community. The UO serve as a linkage mechanism with external service providers for example the fertilizer dealers, sources of organic manure and millers. The UO made it possible for farmers to take advantage of bulk buying with the negotiations of discount.

**Learning Together for Renewal in Community Development:**  
 Community Emancipation through Fostering Innovation and Local Organizational Capacity

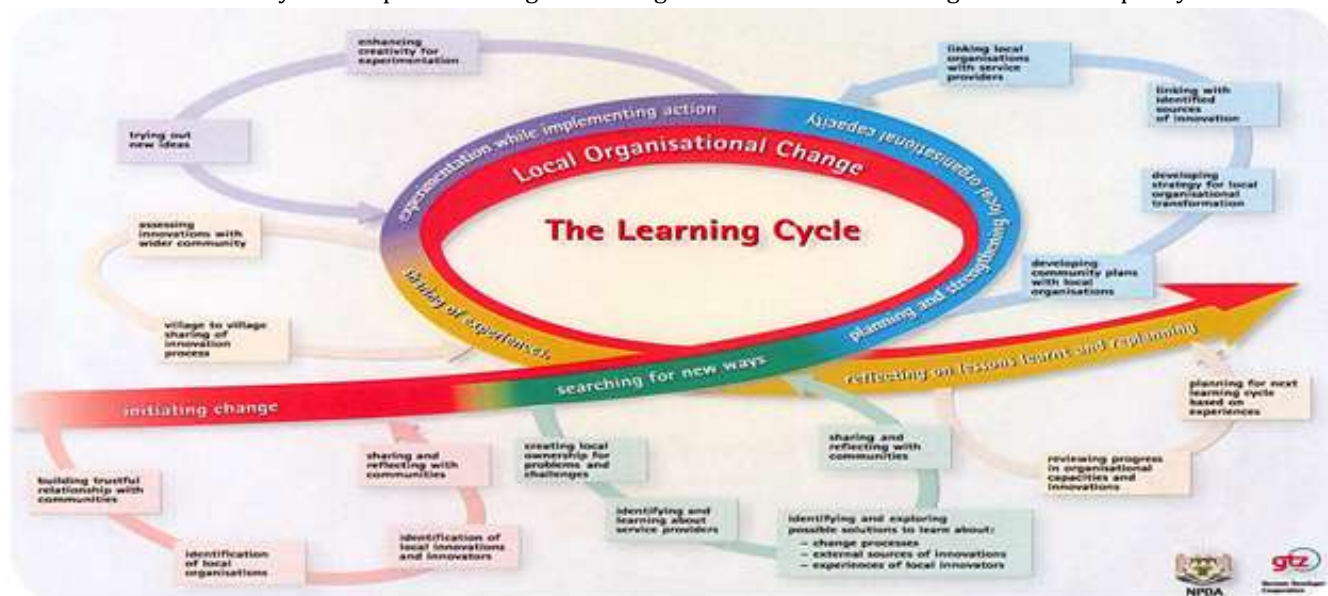


Figure 3 PEA learning Cycle.

Extensionists are able to expose farmers to technology tested on a small scale through field trials carried on the farmer's fields by the farmers. The trials are being encouraged as part of experimentation, which is one of the learning loops of PEA. Some of the trials conducted include small scale seed production which has gained recognition by commercial seed production experts, the testing of sweet potato varieties and the breeding of new castle free indigenous poultry. One can see this as part of new technology and have been adopted within and outside the pilot villages. The results are shared during the mid-term season evaluation which is a form of a feedback to the entire community. Whenever the members of the project undertake any exposure tour or visits, they organize feedback meetings and this has become a culture of reporting in the pilot sites. The influence of this practice has encouraged the development of farmer- to- farmer sharing of information in all pilot sites. The extensionists have

facilitated the scaling out of the PEA process to 51 other villages and have encouraged the development of micro enterprise such as peanut butter making. The process of mentorship of trainees in initiating changes at community level is well on course although there is shortage of sufficient back stoppers.

**Achievement of farmers implementing BASED:** The assessment process was organised into 5 critical questions aimed at getting information qualitatively with regard to the changes brought by the programme. The first question wanted to know the changes observed with regard to the relationship between the UO and the different groups (Inclusivity, leadership role of women, relationship between men and women, relationship between PEA participants and non-members. The second question expected farmers to report on the changes observed with regard to the relationship between the UO and the local authority (Tribal & Councillor). The third question wanted to know the

influence of this approach, PEA in addressing non-agricultural community issues such as water, crime, health issues, and electricity etc. The fourth question wanted to know changes observed with regard to the community's ability to solve its own problems. The last question explored the influence of this change process in increasing the awareness on the importance of agriculture in the community. Each question was accompanied by quantifiable indicators and evidence. The evidences were convincing and were proof that such a question was well handled.

**Inclusivity of people participating in the process:** In the pilot district of Capricorn farmers have agreed that PEA approach has achieved inclusivity of people participating in the process. The evidence cited in this regard is that both rich, poor and non-members benefited from the programme.

**Fostering of a good working relationship:** The second achievement is the fostering of a good working

relationship between the Umbrella organization (UO) and other non-agricultural committees and the chiefs. The evidence cited is that some of the members of the UO also served in other village committees (Ngwenya, 2002).

**Involvement of women in leadership role and decision making:** The third achievement is the involvement of women in leadership role and decision making; one woman testified during the assessment workshop that she was empowered to speak at the Chief's kraal. As a spill over of the empowerment nature of PEA, farmers reported that they were able to resolve their own problems and comply with the constitution of their organizations, for example they were able to administer disciplinary measures to those who violated their bylaws. The achievements experienced at Vhembe pilot site is similar to some extent the reason being that similar questions were asked Table 3, provides some evidence of other achievements related to experimentation and production.

Table 3. Achievements of two pilot sites of BASED in Capricorn and Vhembe district based on evidence.

Name of Pilot	Achievement	Evidence
Spitskop	More people were getting involved in experimentation	Soil testing increased from 4-27 groups Non-group members also farm at their backyard Seed multiplication were 33 people
	Increased production	1-5 bags of maize increased to 15-20 bags on 30x180
Mbahela	The community was able to resolve their own problems	The UO initiated the contribution of R50.00 per household to repair the water canal damaged by flood. UO managed to help farmers who are involved in seed multiplication to plant first
	People are becoming more aware of the importance of agriculture	Through the UO's initiative, the surpluses of the produce were stored at NTK
	More people were getting more involved in experimentation	Poultry increased from 6-67 people Maize 8- 89 people Involvement of youth

**Challenges experienced in implementing based:** While BASED has made some breakthrough in the implementation of PEA, targeting both the extensionists and farmers, there are challenges that they were facing and they are discussed next.

**Challenges of extensionists in pilot sites:** Extensionists identified a number of challenges out of self-assessment process. One of the first challenges was the sustainability of the programme. The reason is because observations pointed to the fact that communities have not yet deepened the ownership of the process. This was evidenced by the fact that other members of the UO were not actively participating while other groups did not even

attend important events. There was also a feeling that some of the meetings were not well planned, because they were called on short notices. There were long village meetings of BASED this resulted in members of community leaving before the end of the program while others were hesitant to come (Ngwenya, 2002).

The second important constraint was that the local organizations (LOD's) have not yet strengthened. This was evidenced by two facts namely poor flow of information and poor relationship between the UOs and groups. Once this state of affairs was dominant it was difficult to implement feedback. The third challenge was the fact that communities have not yet reached the stage

of addressing development using this method especially non-agricultural activities an example cited was Hagondo pilot site. The fourth challenge was lack of backstopping by the ward managers and this had negative effect in holding of meeting such as in Mbahela and Tshikonelo. The last important challenge was lack of proper facilitation and follow-up by ward managers. This was evidenced by their unwillingness to own the PEA process and to facilitate process of bringing changes in the communities. The Department should deal with the attitude of inferiority complex by some of the ward managers as a result of insufficient exposure to PEA (Ngwenya, 2002).

**Challenges experienced by farmers in BASED:** The members of the communities participating within BASED experienced a number of challenges. The first challenge was failure to come in time for meetings and work. For example, out of a group of 27 members, 10 members had defaulted in one pilot site. The second challenge was created by people who passed through the fields of farmers when cultivated and steal their produce. The third challenge was lack of clarity on the project constitution like in the case of utilization of ploughing units and members who received fines for not ploughing their land but did not pay.

To resolve the matter, project constitution needed to be scrutinized in terms of what happens when the members were not able to continue with the project or reluctant to obey the group resolutions. The fourth challenge was created by those farmers who did not cultivate their fields. Neglecting to invite important stakeholder might have created a challenge such as a local councilor who was needed to support the programme. The sixth challenge was the location of some of the service providers who were far away and it was costly to have business with them.

The seventh challenge was the fact that some farmers were reluctant to participate, they adopted a wait and see attitude. The eighth challenge related to where seed was provided it was reported that seed was limited and it was provided very late. When conducting experiments some farmers did not make use of the indigenous knowledge. The last challenge which had far reaching influence that could break the sustainability of the programme was non-participation by the youth who are the leaders of the future.

**Building linkages between small-holder farmers and service providers:** Various models were used in the

past such as the “cooperative model” and the “project approach”. These models have collapsed as soon as the external assistance was withdrawn (Ewang, 1999). With the introduction of the BASED program there has been a shift from “project approach” to “community approach”. The PEA learning cycle consist of six phases. Each phase consists of a number of aspects to be facilitated, but local organizational change is the backbone that cut across all the phases and has to be understood as a continuous process (Ramaru *et al.*, 2004). Farming groups organize themselves under the umbrella organization (UO).

The UO was part of the local development organization which encouraged that the farmers and the community should be able to have access to farming inputs. The local organizational development process has been the foundation in building linkages with service providers. Once farmers were made aware of the need for inputs, for example the nutritional status of their soil, they embarked on the process of organizing themselves, choosing a negotiator who was fully supported by the group in terms of how to negotiate as well as contributing funds for traveling to the relevant service providers.

**An analysis of service delivery in BASED:** The experience of BASED in Limpopo has shown that although it has been implemented in the past 8 years, the impact has not been wide spread, although efforts were made to spread it to Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture and the Local Government in Eastern Cape, results were not satisfactory. Achievements has been localised in the pilot areas of Limpopo Province. Where innovations have been tested, the clients have benefited. For example the use of vertiver grass to conserve soil, the use of manure to improve soil fertility, the strengthening of adaptive trial such as Obatamba (ZM51) maize variety which performed better than the local varieties, the breeding of local sweet potato which has a better taste, the zero grazing in goats, all these points to the right direction. Empowering farmers to do things by themselves has also emerged as an important lesson.

**Government must help people with ideas not necessarily with hand-outs:** Umbrella organizations have proved useful in linking the various farming groups with the service providers. They have also become helpful on two accounts, first as an instrument for resolving conflicts among various farming groups and secondly as a vehicle to bring unity in the village to tackle non-agricultural activities such as mobilizing for



electricity and creating awareness to HIV/AIDS especially the most vulnerable groups of the community at Ga-Mogano.

Although some efforts were taken to scale up the process success is limited. Some of the contributing factors could be insufficient training. For example out of 852 extensionists that were recorded in 2004, BASED had only trained 200 extensionists at that time and there was a backlog of 600 who had not yet been exposed to the PEA methodology (Mamabolo, 2005). Those who have been exposed were still struggling with the implementation of the programme. Lack of motivation was often cited as one reason, this lack of motivation was attributed by the stagnation in the ranks of chief extensionists, and for example forty extensionists were supervising colleagues who were in the same rank (Chief Agricultural Extensionists), which made the maintenance of respect difficult. However the situation has changed in 2014, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) came up with the measure to stabilize the naming of the extension ranks, for example some ranks were abolished and the following ranks came into being namely; Development advisor – at the entry level, Advisor, Senior Advisor, and specialist (Mkhize, 2013). In this way the so called Chief agricultural advisor no longer exist. As far as the managerial rank is concerned there is a Deputy Manager rank which bridges the gap of the former Chief Agricultural Extensionist rank. There is no empirical evidence to justify the use of the village as a point of entry. There are some limitations attached to this strategy. On the other hand the use of a ward as a point of entry has dominated the extension systems in the past yet the rate of adoption was not so dramatic in terms of spreading the practice quicker to other farmers.

Mobilization has not reached the highest level because more farmers would be trying more crop varieties and livestock experiments. A justified question is why the situation is like that? The introduction of BASED programme in new districts (Sekhukhune, Mopani and Bohlabela has exposed the challenge of insufficient back-stoppers. The districts that were used as pilots were looked up for guiding the newly districts. As back-stoppers left their districts to go and provide back-stopping services in other districts within the Province, their own districts lagged behind (Mamabolo, 2005).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it should be noted that there are two dimensions which is brought to the fore from the study, one is the achievement of BASED as a programme and the application of the concept of participation. Based in the findings of the study it became apparent that BASED as a programme has both made notable achievements as well as unearthed some challenges. However the benefits seem to outweigh the challenges by far as it is reflected in Table 3. As far as the application of the concept of participation is concerned there are few issues that the writer would like to highlight:

- Participation has been used to improve the mind-set of the farmers in terms of helping them to be self-mobilized. Farmers in the pilot sites were able to group themselves and use their founded muscle power to negotiate bulk buying of farming inputs.
- Farmers were empowered through participation that they managed to gain electricity which otherwise would have taken 4 years to come to their area e.g. Ga- Mogano pilot side of Capricorn district.
- Women became part of the leadership which it was not so in the past.
- Through participation farmers were empowered in different ways such as becoming innovators, conducting experimentations, testing new varieties to an extent that they have increased the yield from 1-5 bags of maize increased to 15-20 bags on 30x180m, size of land, and the reader is referred to Table 3 for more examples.

Looking at BASED programme, and having highlighted the challenges experienced in the real application of this programme one can conclude that PEA should not be seen as a solution to responding to the following questions: how to make people innovate and explore options for change, how to get the disadvantaged groups benefit from development initiatives, how to co-ordinate provision of services at community level and how to establish linkages with service providers. While participation can make a contribution one must not neglect other options to engage with the various stakeholders including farmers, because in essence PEA has potential to create sustainability in projects aimed at helping small holder farmers. It is suggested that more work need to be done in relation to understanding PEA approach deeper, whether it is the village or the ward that is the right point of entry or not and to further find out how the linkage process will run without the

continued facilitation support of the extensionists.

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