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**Empowering Smallholder Farmers' Organizations through
Non-public Extension Service Providers**

A case study and lessons from Mozambique

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INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

The role and impact of non-state extension services providers have not been studied adequately. In this paper, we assess the performance of the non-State extension service provision through farmers organization (FOs) in Mozambique. Using participating methods, focused group discussions, and key informant interviews, we provide an assessment of extension services provision to FOs. The result indicates only 3% of the 1264 surveyed FOs were categorized as "type A", the highest FOs rating scale used by services providers (SPs) in the three regions of the country. Effective monitoring and evaluation (regular, analytical, participatory) at field level and close working interaction between the Public Agricultural Extension Services (PAES) and the SPs were of paramount importance to track the progress made in empowering the FOs. SPs' pro-activeness and competence were critical factors to adequately address the various training needs of the different categories of FOs and local services providers. SPs' financial autonomy was key to compensate for the delays in the disbursements by the PAES. The selection criteria for the participating farmers (trainees) from targeted FOs makes a difference. Younger and more literate farmers (including women) have shown greater motivation and engagement in the training sessions. Outsourcing can be a valuable alternative for the provision of extension services if it targets specific intervention areas (for example, training for FOs), a limited number of activities, well-defined deliverables (including quality and sustainability issues) and timelines. Post-training (and post-project) actions at the policy level and extension services providers are required to contribute to the sustainability of the investment made. Based on these findings, the paper documents several operational lessons from the implementation of the program.

Keywords: non-state extension service providers, training, farmers organizations, outsourcing, Mozambique, Africa

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ACRONYMS

CLUSA	Cooperative League of the United States of America
DEAs	(Provincial) Departments of Agricultural Extension
DNEA	National Directorate of Agrarian Extension
EU	European Union
FAEF	Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry Engineering
FDD	District Development Fund
FICADER	Integrated Forum for Coordination of Rural Development Activities
FOs	Farmers Organizations
IAI	Integrated Agricultural Field Surveys
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LSP	Local Service Providers
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PAES	(Mozambique's) Public Agricultural Extension Services
PROAGRI	National Agricultural Development Programme
PMU	Project Management Unity
PRONEA	National Agrarian Extension Programme
PSP	PRONEA Support Project
SDAEs	District Directorate of Economic Services
SmF	Smallholder Farmers
SPs	Service Providers
TIA	Agricultural Field Surveys

I. INTRODUCTION

Farmers' organizations (FOs) have been suggested as a tool to improve the living conditions of farmers in poor countries, both by improving their market situation and enhancing the dissemination of information (Bachke, 2009). By working collectively through the various types of FOs, smallholders can better access formal markets, negotiate higher prices, gain favourable discounts on bulk purchases of agri-inputs and benefit from lowered interest rates on agricultural loans (Zhao, 2017). Therefore, promoting functioning FOs is crucial as part of the overall efforts by relevant stakeholders to pursue sustainable agricultural growth in countries where agriculture plays a substantial role in the economy, as in Mozambique.

Extension and advisory services through non-state providers have been recognized as a key approach to empowering smallholder farmers and strengthening their organizations (Babu and Joshi, 2019). In Mozambique, extension support to promote farmers' organizations (FOs) began in the first half of the 1990s by both public and non-public extension actors. Since then, the two categorized of extension providers have been engaged in providing technical, organizational, advocacy-based, market-oriented services aimed at strengthening FOs' role and performance in the agriculture sector. In 2016-17, with the funding from International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the government of Mozambique through its public agricultural extension services (PAES) promoted FOs' formation and training in 42 districts covering approximately 30percent of the rural districts in the country.

In this paper, we assess this intervention on the performance of the farmer organizations and draw lessons for the implementation of similar interventions in other developing countries. In this context, favourable policies for strengthening the role of FOs in agriculture are needed. As noted by Ochieng, Knerr, Owuor, and Ouma (2018)," for farmers to maximize the benefits of collective action, supportive policies are necessary to encourage the formation of groups and to transform existing ones into business entities to access high-value markets and perhaps even

export markets". In Mozambique, a key policy that has been adopted is to ensure wide support from the PAES aimed to help FOs to reach the multiple purposes for which they are formed and to operate collectively.

This paper analytically describes a major recent effort embarked upon by Mozambique's PAES to strengthen FOs through comprehensive and needs-assessment based training relevant to agriculture and which benefited 1264 FOs and approximately 200 local service providers. The training was conducted in 42 districts (out of 154 rural districts) in 2016-2017 through outsourced non-public services providers, within the scope of PRONEA Support Project (PSP) implementation. The PSP was co-funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) between 2012 and 2017 (IFAD, 2012) and it was aimed to contribute to providing financial support to the National Agrarian Extension Programme (PRONEA) (MINAG, 2007), which was implemented from 2007 until 2016.

The paper intends to respond the following research question: *which factors proved relevant in contributing to the good performance of services providers engaged to train FOs?* Responding to this question is important because this outsourcing approach to extension that envisaged a needs-assessment based training to at least 1200 FOs was a learning-by-doing experience at Mozambique's PAES, and at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security as whole. The objective of this approach is to contribute with relevant information for similar stakeholders' efforts aimed to strengthen FOs through training actions, in particular if involving of non-public service providers, in Mozambique and beyond the country, where applicable.

The methods used in this paper consisted of field level participating observation of trained FOs and local services providers in 18 districts, group focused interviews with representatives of 43 randomly selected FOs in the visited districts, interviews with relevant technical and managerial PAES staff at district (78) and provincial levels (14 in four provinces) and various informal interviews with eight managers and three senior technical staff of the

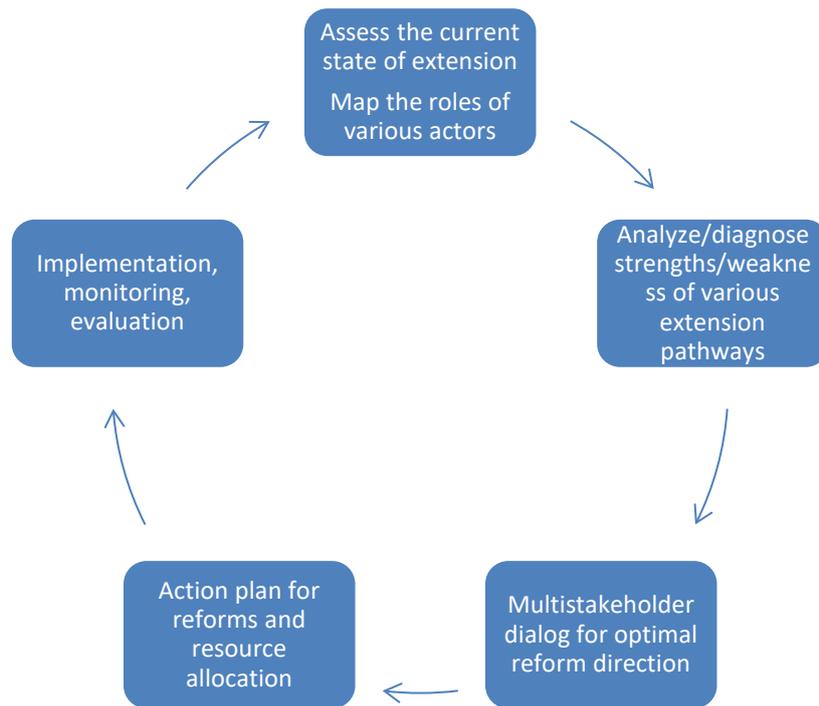
three entities hired by the Mozambique's PAES to provide training to FOs and to local services providers. This work is relevant as studies on FOs support activities through agricultural extension (public and non-public) are few, despite the crucial importance of this intervention area in contributing to build strong FOs.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: next section presents a conceptual framework for studying the performance of the interventions that help in empowering the farmers' organizations. The Case study of the Mozambique is given in section three. Broad lessons from the study are documented in section four. The last section concludes.

II. A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF NON-STATE EXTENSION SERVICES PROVIDERS

Several paradigms have been proposed in the literature to study the performance of extension services in developing countries. Depending on the approach to extension and depending on the reforms and innovation proposed for improving the extension service the approach to accessing have and also differed (Davies, et al, 2019 forthcoming). For example, Babu et al (2015) develop a conceptual framework which breaks down the changes in the extension approaches. It involves assessing the current state of extension by mapping the role of various actors and players. This is followed by assessing the strength and weakness of the extension service provision. They also consider multi-stakeholder consultations as a key part of understanding and assigning the need for reforming the extension system. Evaluating the action plans that provide guidance for implementation and resources allocation is another major area of investigation. Finally taking implementation and monitoring and evaluation systems are also key for collecting needed information for accessing extension services provision. This process could be depicted as a cyclical process as shown in figure 1

Figure 1: Operational Framework for Assessing Extension Service



Source: Babu et al. (2015b)

In this paper we use the above framework to assess the performance of the extension provision by the non-state actors in the form of farmer organizations.

III. A CASE STUDY OF EMPOWERING FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE

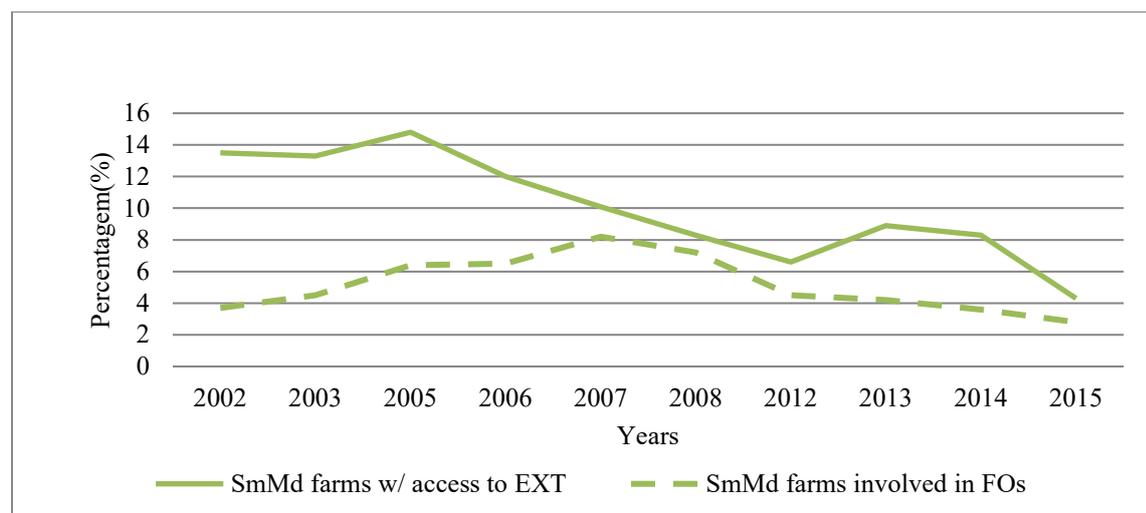
In this section we use the above conceptual framework to analyse the role of non-state extension provider in strengthening farmers organizations in Mozambique.

In Mozambique, efforts aimed at promoting FOs through both public and non-public extension actors started in the first half of the 1990s. For instance, in 1992, five years after its establishment in 1987, Mozambique's PAES shifted the "contact farmers" as a "modus operandi" target under the Training and Visit (T&V) system to "farmers groups" (or FOs) (See Gêmo, Eicher and Teclemariam, 2005). Since then PAES has been making efforts to provide

support to FOs throughout the country. NGOs, since their "boom" in agricultural extension in the first half of the 1990s, have also been engaging with FOs, including to help with legalization issues. For example, the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA) launched its Rural Group Enterprise Development Program in Mozambique in the mid-90s, when the country was still recovering from the armed conflict and settling into a market economy. The program organized 26,000 impoverished, isolated farmers in the northern provinces into associations that could market crops to commodity traders. These efforts led to higher farm gate prices and an 85 percent (inflation-adjusted) reported increase in average annual farm revenues (Pearce and Reinsch, 2005).

Despite the long-term involvement of PAES and non-public extension actors in promoting FOs, it seems that this is a challenging task that requires the continuation of joint effort for years to come. Figure 2 shows a declining proportion (%) of total small and medium farms accessing agricultural extension services at national level as well as those engaged in FOs, in particular associations.

Figure 2: Small and medium farms with access to extension and those involved in farmers organizations



Source: Agricultural surveys (TIA from "Trabalho de Inquérito Agrícola" (2002-2008); and IAI: Integrated Agricultural Surveys from "Inquérito Agrícola Integrado" (2012-2015)

Over time access to extension seems to play a role on FOs trends. The slight growth from 2002 to 2006 can be in part associated to some investments made at local level within the scope of the former National Agricultural Development Program (PROAGRI), phase 1 (1999-2004/06). The highest proportion of FOs reached in 2007-2008 (and eventually in subsequent years) might be related to the District Development Fund (FDD, from "Fundo de Desenvolvimento Distrital"), which was oriented to contribute to boost access to credit by smallholder FOs and by individual farmers.

Available data on FOs at Mozambique's PAES do not address qualitative issues such as the main characteristics, performance and sustainability issues of such organizations. Studies addressing these issues are also few. As noted by Bachke (2009), "it is difficult to assess all FOs in Mozambique generally as there are many different types". In fact, collective reasons behind the formation of smallholders FOs are various and includes access to extension services, output markets, input supply schemes, micro-credit for farming, small-scale facilities such warehouses and milling equipment; as well as access to support from relevant stakeholders on land delimitation and legalization, and others pursued benefits.

With a potential to perform well, FOs can play a vital role in contributing to reach desired results from stakeholders' multi-disciplinary efforts aimed to boost agricultural growth and income. However, FOs in Mozambique are still constrained by various internal and external factors. For instance, Libombo, Ferrante, Duval and De Lorenzo (2017) noted that "the problem of financial dependence makes associations vulnerable to external decisions, which, in turn, impose their conditions, not always according to the objectives initially drawn by associations. From this point of view, it is difficult for them to define their objectives and goals." They also noted, "and they are guided by the agendas and programs of external partners. This jeopardizes their autonomy and the importance of the associativism for local development in Mozambique". It should be noted that weak financial capacity of smallholders FOs is also a

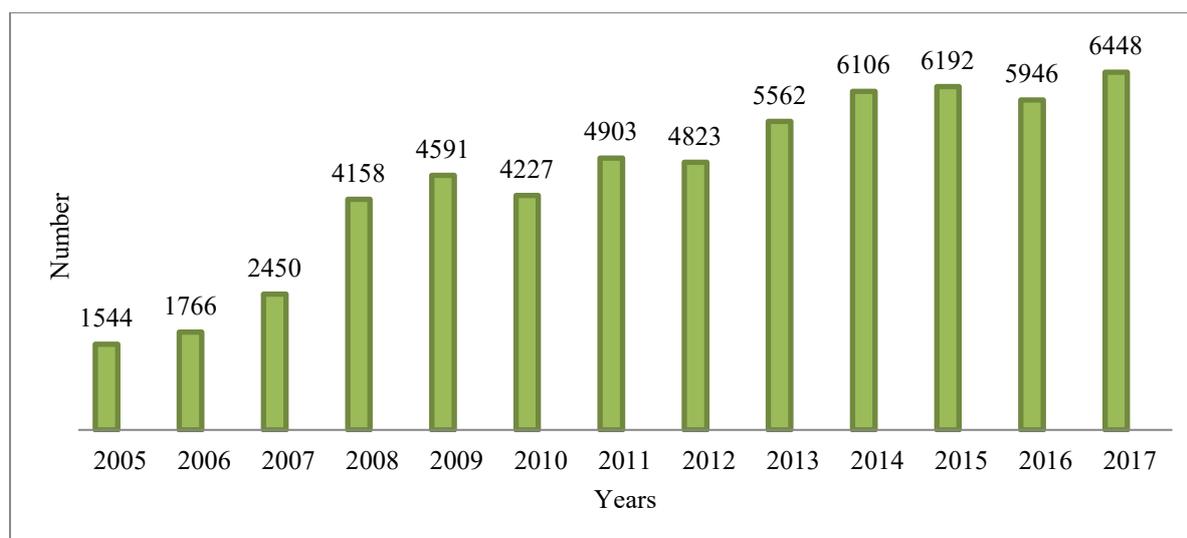
constraining factor in other African countries. For example, in a study conducted among 30 FOs in Rwanda and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ochieng et al (2018) found that "most of the group members are poor (67%) and few are considered as rich (2%) or middle class (28%), while the rest are destitute. The destitute community members are often excluded from the groups due to their own passivity and inability to contribute financial resources for joint activities".

However, regardless of the financial and other constraints faced by FOs in Mozambique, some evidence-based studies on FOs' performance issues show encouraging results. Bachke (2009), employing unique panel data from Mozambique, found positive and strong effect of membership in FOs with agricultural profits, but none on the value of production. This may be explained by the market orientation of the FOs. The authors supported the notion that FOs can benefit farmers. Therefore, available evidence on benefits from FOs and the general stakeholders' recognition suggestion that FOs can help improve the agricultural performance and growth, may justify continuation of the Mozambique's PAES support to FOs. However additional research is needed to gain better understanding of the role of FOs in inspiring access to extension services and hereby on production levels and income of the farmers.

3.1. Public Agricultural Extension Support to Farmers' Organizations

Mozambique's PAES promotes FOs. FOs have been their favourite target audience over time. Figure 3 shows the number of smallholders' associations (both legalized and not legalized) annually assisted by the PAES at national level.

Figure 3: Number of smallholders associations assisted by PAES at national level

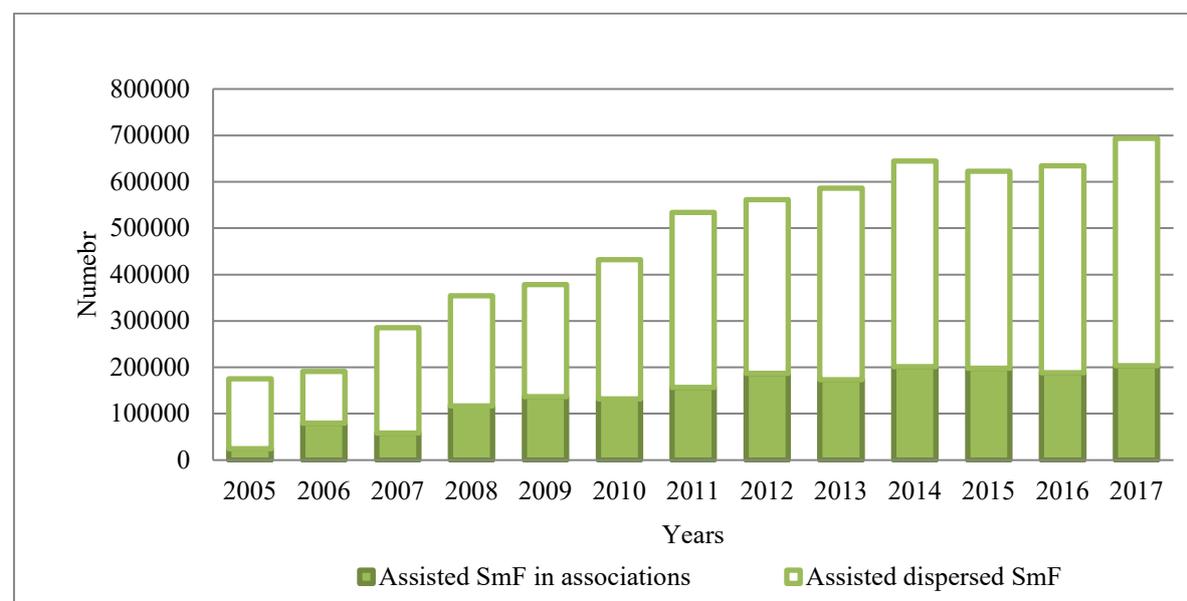


Source: National Directorate of Agrarian Extension (DNEA)

It should be noted that, despite the PAES emphasis on supporting FOs as a priority, the number (and the proportion) of the annually assisted producers that are engaged in FOs has been few.

Figure 3 shows total assisted smallholders and those engaged in farmers associations over time.

Figure 4: Assisted smallholders farmers involved in associations and those dispersed



Source: Estimated from DNEA (2005-2017)

Key: SmF (smallholder farmers)

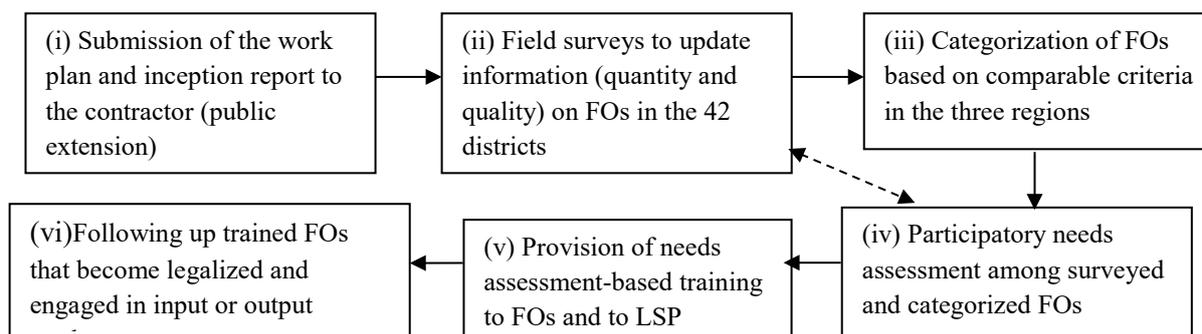
Assisted smallholders engaged in associations corresponds to an average of approximately 30% of the total annually covered producers at national level. This shows that the associative movement among small producers is still limited. Therefore, the PAES (and other extension actors) interventions aimed at strengthening FOs must be as much possible assertive and effective in addressing the main constraints hampering a robust and consistent growth of FOs.

3.2. The Role of Pronea Support Project in Supporting Farmers' Organizations

The PRONEA Support Project (PSP) (2012-2017) was aimed at strengthening the implementation of the National Agricultural Extension Programme (PRONEA) in 42 rural districts (IFAD, 2018) out of 154 districts where Mozambique's PAES is currently operating (DNEA, 2018). With a total estimated budget of USD 23.6 million, the PSP comprised three components: (i) development of supply-driven extension; (ii) development of demand-driven extension; and (iii) provision of extension services.

In particular, the Component 2 sought to contribute to build the capacity of FOs on technical, methodological and market access issues. To implement this component, PAES/ PSP hired three large service providers, each assigned to one of the three regions of the country. The main goal was to provide comprehensive training to at least 1200 FOs in 42 districts, from 10 provinces. The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the task highlighted the need to survey and categorize the existing FOs in all 42 districts, and to ensure needs-assessment based training to targeted FOs. Figure 5 illustrates different steps that should be taken by the hired services providers for the wide-scope training of FOs and local services providers.

Figure 5: Designed/agreed steps between the contracting entity (MASA/PAES) and contractors (SPs)



Source: Authors compilation from TORs (DNEA /PSP)

The survey of FOs (and LSP) was also used for the identification of training needs by at least one of the three "regional" SPs. Only 3% of the 1264 surveyed FOs were categorized as "type A", the highest FOs rating scale used by the SPs in the three regions of the country. This was somehow surprising as many of the surveyed FOs have been benefiting from varied technical support from PAES and NGOs in the past 10-15 years.

In summary, the characteristics of the SPs and main contractual targets in each region can be summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Selected "regional" service providers, goals, districts and implementation period

Regions/ Items	Type of service provider	Training goals	Number of districts and implementation period
South	Local private consultancy enterprise (*)	210 FOs, existing and eligible local services providers (LSP) and public EWs (close to 100)	Districts: 09 Period: 2016-2017
Central	International NGO	480 FOs, existing and eligible LSP and public EWs (close to 160)	Districts: 16 Period: mid- 2016-2017
North	International NGO (**)	510 FOs, existing and eligible LSP and public EWs (close to 160)	Districts: 17 Period: 2016-2017

Source: Compiled from relevant DNEA/PSP reports

Key: (*) In a partnership with a Knowledge Centre of the Faculty of Agronomy and Forestry Engineering (FAEF)/ University Eduardo Mondlane; (**) in partnership with a local NGO

Implementing the three regional contracts was challenging for the PAES in general, and for the project management unit (PMU), in particular because there was no institutional experience on large outsourced contracts to train FOs at PAES. In this regard, the PMU proposed to PAES

leadership and facilitate short-term training on "outsourcing contracts management" for selected relevant staff. Eight (8) staff members, including four (4) provincial heads of the PAES were trained by a hired organization. Three of the trained staff members were appointed as "regional focal points" to follow up more closely the contracts implementation at provincial and district level. At the provincial level, PAES staff members responsible for FOs support within the Provincial Department of PAES were also appointed to follow up the field work from hired "regional" services providers.

Main M&E Mechanisms and Training Subjects

Main M&E mechanisms used by PAES for the three "regional" SPs included:

- Regular M&E missions from DNEA/PSP central level to provinces and targeted districts. The PAES provincial heads (and the respective provincial focal point for the FOs extension support) attended such missions from the central level. M&E missions were more focused on training sessions to FOs. Interestingly, participating younger farmers and those relatively literate played a more participatory role in the visited FOs during the training sessions.
- Extraordinary missions from the "PRONEA Support Project" management team to the provinces aiming at addressing specific issues with the services providers, in close collaboration with the PAES provincial heads and other relevant local staff.
- Semester-based joint supervision missions (Government and IFAD), which included field visits to selected provinces in the three regions. The three regional contracts for FOs' training constituted one of the main areas that was strongly addressed (follow up) by the joint supervision missions. The three "regional" services providers were always asked to attend these missions.

- Technical meetings involving PAES/"PRONEA Support Project" relevant staff and the three "regional" services providers.
- A regular reporting system based on a number of performance and process indicators (at output level) that should be submitted and approved (or not) by PAES/PMU.

The combination of the above M&E mechanisms ensured substantial accountability from the three hired "regional" SPs. Some findings from the M&E at field level include a relatively strong motivation and participation of younger and relatively literate farmers (including women) in training sessions; major farmers' interest and involvement in training sessions when the modules covered were actually the most relevant to them (for instance, cash crops with high value in recent years); the technical and communication competence of the trainers as a fundamental factor to boost participation from the trainees; the importance of adequate logistical arrangements in particular for training sessions lasting for more than one day, thus requiring accommodation facilities; the need of sound but friendly and "simple to understand" training materials and tools for participating FOs members (trainees). Table 2 summarizes the main training approaches and subjects addressed by the SPs for the training of FO:

Table 2: Training approaches and main subjects addressed by the "regional" SPs

South region	Central region	North region
<p>(i) Training of trainers (ToT), including extension workers from some local NGOs and private entities</p> <p>(ii) Training of FOs was conducted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainers (capacitated extension workers) under close supervision and technical leadership by professional staff from hired entity. • Relevant staff from SDAEs and DEAs (supporting participation) <p>(iv) Relatively strong emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crop pests and diseases control • Agribusiness <p>(v) Production and sharing with extension staff and managers (provincial and central level) of low-cost videos illustrating live training sessions to FOs</p> <p>(v) Design and multiplication of relevant technical manuals for field EWs (for post project use)</p>	<p>(i) Training of trainers (ToT)</p> <p>(ii) Training of FOs involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainers (extension workers) • Some hired senior professionals for specific modules • "Internal" staff from the contracted organization <p>(iv) Relatively major emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local participatory planning and M&E • Agribusiness <p>(v) Introduction of innovative coordination approaches at district level: "integrated forum for coordination of rural development activities" (FICADER, Portuguese acronym); in which FOs learned how to negotiate with relevant/available rural traders</p> <p>(vi) Trained local services providers benefited from start up working kits</p>	<p>(i) Training of trainers (ToT)</p> <p>(ii) Training of FOs involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainers (EWs, including one per district from the contracted entity). • Generalist "provincial coordinators" from hired organization • Some agricultural research staff from public system (located in one (Niassa) of the three provinces of this Region) <p>(iii) Relatively major focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Farmers associations issues

Source: Authors compilation from relevant reports

The three SPs included training modules on the main cultivated food crops such as maize, cassava, rice (where applicable), vegetable crops (mainly tomato, onion and cabbage) as well as some cash crops as sesame and pigeon pea, the last two in the North region. The modules on food crops included post-harvest issues.

Main Implementation Challenges Faced by PAES / PRONEA Support Project

Some challenges were particularly significant in implementing the three "regional" outsourcing contracts aimed to strengthen FOs and local services providers through needs assessment-based training. They comprised a (i) limited capacity at local level (provincial and local) to ensure an effective M&E; (ii) need to ensure that SPs interventions were responsive to the TORs in particular at field level, participatory oriented, quality and sustainability based and well

documented for sharing and learning (iii) difficulties by the contracting entity (PAES) to ensure regular disbursements to SPs; (iv) need to ensure transparency on budget execution in accordance with the main Government administrative procedures. The following set of implementation challenges were identified.

Limited capacity at local level (provincial and local) to ensure effective M&E: Institutional capacity for implementing effective M&E at local (district and provinces) is crucial at PAES. However, in general it is still limited, in particular to follow up outsourcing contracts. Effective M&E here means that it should be regular, participatory and analytical for learning and action-oriented, according to contractually agreed deliverables, including quality issues and deadlines to be complied by the contractors (SPs). Because of this limitation, the bottom-up flow of relevant information for action by the central level, where applicable, was limited. To overcome this problem, the PAES at central level, and particularly the PMU, redoubled their efforts to strengthen M&E at local level, involving the relevant local staff members.

Interventions needs to be responsive to the TORs, in particular at field level: The weak analytical M&E at local level made it challenging for the PMU and PAES as whole to ensure full compliance with the provisions of the signed contracts (deliverables, quality issues and timelines) by contracted organizations. To help overcome this weakness, two meetings were held with the three "regional" SPs in their respective regions: the first aimed to discuss intermediate results: expected deliverables, level of accomplishment, processes/methodologies used, and challenges faced by the SPs. The second was aimed to share and to debate final results, based on contracted deliverables, including sustainability issues. The two meetings were attended by the directors of all 42 District Services of Economic Activities (SDAEs, from "Serviços Distritais de Actividades Económicas"), PAES district supervisors, staff from PAES at provincial level (Departments of Agrarian Extension, DEAs) and from the central level, including the PMU.

Interventions should be participatory oriented: TORs emphasized the need to adopt participatory oriented approaches as a principle in implementing the outsourcing contracts. However, there was a need to follow up this issue carefully with PAES managers at provincial level and even at district level during the M&E visits from the central level. Various decisions were taken by the PAES central level and by the PMU in particular to improve coordination issues between contracted organizations and PAES managers at local level. Importantly, the commitment in ensuring participatory methods and approaches varied among the three "regional" services providers, from good to reasonable.

Quality and sustainability of interventions: Quality and Sustainability were two important principles that were contractually stated. Once again, the commitment to comply with the two principles varied among the three regional SPs. For example, some training materials, the initial high number of trainees in each training session (above 50 to 80 or even more), and time allocated for each module by at least one of the three regional SPs were immediate and strongly rejected by the PAES/ PMU at central level during an M&E mission conducted in some districts at the beginning of the outsourcing described here.

Well documented for sharing and learning: One of the comparative advantages that was expected from the regional SPs was its capacity to analyse, document and share relevant processes and events, and lessons learned in particular. However, only two of them were able to document and share relevant issues with PAES and other key stakeholders. One of the three regional SPs was able to produce edited low-cost videos illustrating FOs' training sessions with the involvement of some PAES staff members at provincial and district levels; and, notably, to prepare and deliver a number of printed manuals that were used for training FOs and extension workers.

Difficulties from the contracting entity to ensure regular disbursements to the service providers: PAES faced difficulties in ensuring regular disbursements to the regional SPs due

to irregular or insufficient provision of financial resources to the project from the Treasury within some periods throughout the annual budget execution. This is a risk to be considered by the PAES managers in the event of future large outsourcing contracts involving projects whose financial resources are channelled through the Treasury, following the normal Government budget allocation system and execution mechanisms.

Need to ensure transparency on budget execution in accordance with the main Government administrative procedures: The regional SPs were expected to follow main Government administrative procedures for procurement of eligible goods and services over the contract implementation. This was a challenging process as PAES interaction with the SPs on this regard shown to be time consuming and demanding in terms of number of involved project accountants.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

Several lessons could be drawn from studying the intervention described above. As mentioned above, pioneer outsourcing experiences in Mozambique's PAES were undertaken in 2002-2005, with the World Bank financial support. Since then, the second major outsourcing contracts were implemented in 2015-2016 and 2017, with IFAD's financial support and some also funded by the EU (at provincial level). Recent debate in Mozambique's PAES on outsourcing as a potential or valuable alternative for extension provision to smallholders' farmers, does not seem to be conclusive. At least with regard to stakeholders' debate held after the expiration of the recent outsourcing contracts in December 2017 and April 2018, involving PAES as a contracting entity.

However, the experience of contracting out private enterprises and NGOs to provide needs assessment-based training to FOs, local services providers (relevant to agriculture) and to PAES extension workers was particularly motivating for the targeted audiences. Despite the

varying degrees of commitment from the regional SPs in implementing key contractual principles (participation, deliverables quality and sustainability issues), in general the initiative resulted in more robust and undeniable interaction with the FOs and with local service providers. In its historical trajectory, it was the greatest PAES's institutional effort made simultaneously in large number of districts (42) aimed to update FOs' data through district field surveys and to provide training for 1264 FOs and close to 200 local service providers in two years (2016-2017).

The lessons from the three regional contracts is summarized as follows:

- First, effective M&E (regular, analytical, participatory) at field level and close working interaction (ordinary and extraordinary meetings) between the contracting entity (PAES) and the regional SP were of paramount importance for the timely identification of problems or challenges, and the respective alternative solutions
- Second, services providers' pro-activeness and competence was crucial to adequately address the various training needs of different categories of FOs and local services providers. The regional SPs with strong human capital and capacity delivered enhanced performance. Therefore, qualified human capital should be timely available in order to respond to programmed activities over the contract implementation
- Third, services providers' financial autonomy was fundamental in order to cope with likely delays of disbursements from the PAES. Two of the three regional SP had resources to face funding delays and this was very important to avoid interruptions in the planned activities. This is particularly relevant when the financial resources of the involved PAES projects are channelled through the Treasury and not directly by the cooperation and development partners providing funding for such initiatives
- Fourth, the selection criteria of participating farmers (trainees) from targeted FOs makes a difference. M&E field visits showed that younger participating farmers and those with

some literacy (including woman) were more engaging in the training sessions. In general, FOs were responsible for selecting their representatives (2 to 3 persons per FO). Many opted to send people from the leadership team

- Fifthly, outsourcing can be a valuable alternative for the provision of extension services for smallholders if oriented for specific intervention areas (for example, training to FOs), limited activities, well defined deliverables (including quality and sustainability issues), clear timelines, strong M&E from the contracting entity and other beneficiaries; as well as clear responsibilities and obligations between the parties and relevant participating stakeholders. These issues are very important taking into consideration that outsourcing in Mozambique has shown to be much more-costly than PAES. Unit costs of the regional contracts were not estimated, in part because there were different categories of targeted audiences (FOs, local service providers and PAES extension workers). But the three regional outsourcing contracts demanded 15 to 20% of the total project budget.

Finally, training FOs, local services providers and PAES extension workers is only one important step within the wide efforts made by relevant stakeholders to strengthen smallholders' agriculture. For the success of this investment made through PAES training, other actions are needed. Trained PAES extension workers should deliver on those modules in which FOs were trained by the regional SPs while assisting FOs, including newly formed ones. Trained local services providers should also deliver competently and skilfully in their areas of expertise. And trained FOs should perform better in their production and marketing efforts. For all this to happen, a well-equipped PAES is needed across the country while conducive policies to improve FOs' linkages to crucial services and markets are also required.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper we have attempted to assess the performance of interventions that empower the FOs through state and non-state service providers. In the absence of well-functioning public extension system, there is a need for identifying alternative opportunities such as outsourcing the extension and advisory services. However, the performance of such approaches has not been studied adequately. In this paper, based on the case study of Mozambique, we have drawn specific lessons for the implementing such interventions. A major conclusion of this study is that intervention such as outsources extension services must be context specific and the services providers needs to be well equipped, full collaborative with key stakeholders and guided through the implementation process.

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