

Modernization of Guyana Extension Services – Phase I

Partners of the Americas - Farmer to Farmer Program Trip Report

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Background

Our task was to scope out the need for a longer term, more thorough review of the extension services, including who should be contacted for such a review and how they should be contacted and how the current system should be analyzed. Simultaneously, we were to gain an initial understanding of the Guyana Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), both how it is organized and how it functions, other extension function providers, and other agriculture extension/extension serving institutions. Finally, we asked to work with the local Partners of Americas Farmer to Farmer leaders (Kelvin Craig, Project Director and Shaun Francis, Project Coordinator) and the MOA officials to establish a realistic timeframe for the second and third phases of the project.

Over the course of the two weeks we met with several Ministry of Agriculture, NARI, USAID, and NGO leaders. We also met with farmers in various regions of the country. Our base of operations was at the Rainbow Forest B&B, operated by Manager Syeada Manbodh and Administrator Jerry La Gra. The location was a great respite from the city and long days in the field. The hosts were also very knowledgeable on Guyana and Guyanese development efforts.

We will provide a detailed description of our visit under the Activities section. We will also provide a summary of our findings, by visit. Since our task was primarily to complete an initial needs assessment and to develop the next steps for phases II and III, our range of recommendations for making a more effective and efficient extension system is provided as our chief results. We also present concrete recommended next steps in the follow through section. We will also provide some additional Farmer-to-Farmer possibilities that complement the Modernizing Project but are specific items. Please note that like the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and MOA concept papers, we have drawn from Qamar's Modernizing Extension Services FAO document, a well-recognized resource used in the evaluating Extension services around the world.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Review of the Extension Services assignment was to contact Guyanese and international agencies to explain the modernization goals of the Ministry of Agriculture's extension efforts and learn how Partners and others could assist them. We were to identify realistic partners, strategies, and timetables for the overall modernization project, which will come in phases II and III of the project. Prior visits by extensionists and specialists such as Otto Weigand and Bill Olsen greatly aided this effort

as our credibility and usefulness was accepted. The reputation of the Partners of the Americas Washington Office (Erin Means and Peggy Carlson, specifically) was also quite strong. Finally, the local Farmer to Farmer office staff professionals (Kelvin Craig and Shaun Francis) were quite well respected in country for their ability to understand issues and provide possible assistance. We both believed that the previous Farmer to Farmer work provided an ample foundation for moving ahead with this project.

Over the two week period we met with 48 agriculture and extension professionals, rural development agency heads, and local farmers. We met with approximately seven national organizations that deliver rural or agriculture development services in the country. We interviewed the US Ambassador, USAID Director, US Peace Corps Director, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture Director, and the local head for the Guyanese Trade and Investment Services project. We also met 100 extensionists at a professional development conference where we presented on our model of extension delivery. We visited four regions of the country to meet with farmers, agriculture extension professionals, and local officials. Our major accomplishments include gaining a more complete understanding of the extension service providers in Guyana, mapping out a strategy for their modernization goals, sharing several current extension practices and strategies with local professionals, and establishing concrete next steps for the modernization project to move forward.

In our recommendations section we outline Macro-Institutional, Inter-Institutional, and Micro-Institutional actions that we believe can enhance the performance of the Guyanese extension services. All these recommendations were shared with top Ministry officials before we left and there was agreement on the validity of them. We did change the focus of the upcoming Phases II and III based on our observations and conversations. The focus is still on modernization of the services, but with slightly different potential participants from the initial project strategy and background document. Nine assignments or areas of support are listed: 1) Senior Extension official on policy, mission, vision, and institutional actions; 2) Extension specialist and senior agriculture extensionist for commodity-based team development (Preissing recommends that Tom Cadwallader continue in his role); 3) An organizational development and strategic thinking extensionist for community-based and institutional-based planning efforts; 4) Agriculture Economics and/or Business Development specialist to assist with feasibility studies, impact analysis, and entrepreneur decision making; 5) Senior extension agent to share current extension practices, skills, and methods; 6) Associate Dean, District Director, or Human Resources professional to share staff development and entire range of personnel management; 7) Program Development specialist to share our work in program development and evaluation; 8) Information Technology specialist to share our work on practical applications of technology for extension work; and 9) Youth and intensive gardening practices. This could be through 4-H YD, Agriculture, or CRD extension staff. It is possible that some Wisconsin extension staff could fulfill more than one of the roles/assignments. Finally, our recommendations include attempting to bring Guyanese Extension professionals to Wisconsin to learn first-hand about current practices. Opportunities for this could include when state, regional, or national meetings are planned.

Our University of Wisconsin Extension International Committee will work with the Partners of the Americas to coordinate the exact timing and scope of assignments by upcoming volunteers. We understand that the Ministry of Agriculture is keen on having these assignments move forward quickly and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Our Recommendations

This section is divided in three parts: macro-institutional recommendations; inter-institutional recommendations; and micro-level stand alone recommendations for strengthening the Guyanese extension service. Plans for the next larger group of UWEX professionals in Phase II and/or III are presented in the follow through section.

Macro-Institutional Recommendations

- We applaud the MOA goal of refocusing on an Extension Services Unit. The opportunity is ripe for considering a strategic focus for the extension service.
- Explore in depth the MOA commitment to modernizing extension including multiple extension services, the link to research, the link to training (Guyana School of Agriculture and University of Guyana) staff and operational support, the broader mission of extension w/in MOA.
- Explore the MOA current mission, vision, goals, and guiding principles as they affect the policy-making and leadership philosophy in MOA. Explore the possible role of self-directed teams, individual accountability, and shared leadership w/in the institutions. Share UWEX programs, DVDs, and educational materials on this area.
- Discuss the major questions on the optimal size of an effective and efficient extension service. Explore the impact of greater revenue generation on the scope of the MOA Extension Services Unit.
- If there will continue to be parallel extension organizations, then discuss mechanisms to strengthen sharing and complementarity between the organizations.
- Inventory the complete extension providers, their relationships, and roles (including forestry).
- Meet with the University of Guyana to better learn of their role within the agriculture development needs of the country and the extension services.

Inter-Institutional Recommendations

- Explore a commodity based systems management approach as an example of a role for extension in modernizing their strategies and approaches. The GTIS work and Tom Cadwallader's work with a variety of Wisconsin farm organizations, and the Wisconsin Ginseng Board in particular, can serve as examples for this approach.
- Explore a sub-regional approach for a community-wide or multiple community strategic planning effort. This would focus on commodities and other aspects of the community. Lead an initial strategic planning process in a community to train staff and to collect information needed on community needs.
- A dual purpose trip with an agriculture economist, to analyze the existing staff training, resources, and daily use of economic, business, feasibility, and marketing analysis by MOA staff. The second purpose would be to conduct some pilot analyzes

on these tools and to provide training. Overall, it would be designed to focus on market driven programming and developing program support through economic development extension programming.

- Have POA and MOA organize some community sessions/ focus groups to determine programming needs and extension skills needed. This can be a dual-purpose activity as well – to acquire information on the needs and to demonstrate tools.
- Include a youth based person to discuss strategies for engaging youth in positive community change with MOA staff and encouraging young into farming and agribusiness pursuits.

Micro-Institutional Recommendations

- Meet w/ the staff training and development leadership to understand better their policies, practices, goals, and activities. Share the UWEX recruiting, hiring, orientation, core competency assessment, ongoing professional development, and career ladder strategies.
- Explore leadership development and succession planning possibilities. Discuss the role of special projects, exchanges, NELD, Leadership Academy, and Lead21 (three extension management leadership training programs), and personal learning plans.
- Explore how individual and/or team program planning and program development skills can be enhanced.
- Explore information technology needs and uses for both institutional modernization as well as possible tools for delivering information/interacting w/ producers. Explore how information technology can be used to delivery extension principles.
- Consider incorporating more marketing based analysis for staff and farmers. This can include enterprise budgeting, feasibility analysis, economic impact analysis.
- Strengthen skills in organizational development, facilitate discussion based learning, and strategic planning. Staff training and training in extending this to communities can be beneficial.
- An assessment of small intensive garden possibilities and training programs around it as well as meaningful ways to document impact.
- Learn more about the current program planning process used by the MOA and its various entities and provide initial training on our program development model, logic model for outcome and impact evaluation.
- Provide recommendations for future modernizing of the extension service.

Follow Through

Based on our conversations with the MOA and the POA Farmer to Farmer staff we recommend that the following teams work plan for Phase II. Phase II's goals are now more concrete and will involve assessment and doing. In fact, Phase II is recommended to be the principle phase of the project with Phase III being a follow up and monitoring stage. We are also recommending that potential participants from Wisconsin all provide at least two if not more areas of expertise. **Please note that the individual names are not to imply that we two recommend them specifically, but that the individual's skill sets are what is being sought. The UWEX International Committee and Dean as well as Partners of the Americas and the Guyanese will be the final arbiters for these assignments.**

1) Extension Leaders for Policy Discussions, Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, Partnerships, Operational Matters, Revenue Generation Concerns:

Potential: Dean; Associate Dean; Finance Director; ANRE Program Leader or Asst. Program Leader; CRD Program Leader Asst. Program Leader; or Liaison;

2) Extension Specialists and Sr. Agents/Faculty for commodity-based team development:

Potential: Lincoln County ANRE Agent (Tom C. – expertise and project continuity); Dean’s experience would be asset; State Specialist

3) Organizational Development, Team Building, Systems Thinking, Strategic Planning. Community Building:

Potential: Lincoln County CRD Agent (Art Lersch); Marathon County CRD Agent (Mary Kluz); Ashland County CRD Agent (Jane Silberstein); most CRD Agents (Dan Wilson)

4) Economic Analysis, Business Feasibility, Marketing Analysis skills building:

Potential: Agriculture Economist (Steve Deller); Business Development Specialists (Bill Ryan, Greg Wise);

5) Extension Skills and Practices (new methods, role of scholarship, facilitation practices):

Potential: Most ANRE and CRD Agents (Tom Cadwallader, Art Lersch, Corrine Seaman, Annie Jones).

6) Staff Development Resources:

Potential: Associate Dean; Cooperative Extension Human Resources Director (Sharon Klawitter); Personnel Coordinator (Julie Jakska); Program Development and Evaluation Director (Larry Jones).

7) Program Development and Evaluation Practices:

Potential: Associate Dean (Yvonne Horton); Program Development and Evaluation Director (Larry Jones).

8) Information Technology for Extension Practices:

Potential: IT Director (Greg Johll); IT Outreach Officer (Deanna Shneider)

9) Youth and Agriculture; Intensive Home Gardening Systems, Organizing Youth for Agriculture:

Potential: Sr. 4-HYD Agents (Frank Ginther, Others); CRD or ANRE Agents (Arlen Albrecht, Tom Syverud, Others).