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MONITORING AND EVALUATION: EXPERIENCE FROM SMALLHOLDER FARMERS TRAINING FEEDBACK IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

This paper presents monitoring and evaluation aspects of training drawing from field experience of 50,000 smallholder farmers trained on good agronomic practices and post-harvest management in maize crop value chain in Tanzania. Training feedback was collected through evaluation questionnaire administered to 2,000 respondents selected randomly with gender lense among beneficiary farmers. Overall, majority (90%) of trained farmers report positive feedback. However, farmers report lack of finance as major bottleneck in the adoption of technologies, knowledge, and skills acquired from the training. The results therefore challenges the project to integrate appropriate mitigation mechanisms to overcome thefactors hindering adoption.

Keywords:
Training;
Monitoring;
Evaluation;

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1. Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation are frequently mixed up and usually presented as a dual concept. Though interrelated, monitoring and evaluation have distinct functions and serve different purposes. Monitoring is defined as a continuous function involving collecting, collating,and analyzing and reporting of data for the purpose of providing managers and stakeholders with regular feedback on project performance taking into account the external environment. It provides an early indication of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results (IFAD, 2002; IFRC, 2011; UNEG, 2005; UNDP, 2002; WB, 2004 and WB, 2010). Evaluation, on the other hand, provides a judgment based on assessments of relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of development efforts. It involves a rigorous, systematic and objective process in the design, analysis and interpretation of information to answer specific questions. It highlights both intended and unintended results, and provides strategic lessons on what works,what doesn't work and why to guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders. Monitoring provides critical inputs to evaluation by way of systematic collection of data and information.

In practice monitoring and evaluation plan is prepared for each activity in the project implementation plan or work plan. Project outputs and outcomes are basically results derived from inputs and activities implemented in the work plan. However, many projects and programmes conduct partial monitoring and evaluation of activities especially training (Kusek, J. Z. and Rist, R.C; 2004). Virtually, many development projects and programmes are formulated with activities involving training of beneficiaries.Training is provided with view to build capacity thus equipping beneficiaries with requisite knowledge and skills for the purpose of improving performance and livelihoods. There is a growing concern on resources wastage assciaoated with training activities in many projects and programmes. This is because there are a number of factors such as duplication of training wehere beneficiaries receive same trainings from different development partners. For example, many projects in agriculture and agribusiness sector have training activities around good agronomic practices (GAP) and post-harvest management (PHM) thus beneficiary farmers found themselves with repeated training on same valuechain crop. Further poor training methodology normally leads into issues affecting effectiveness and efficiency of training.

Therefore, for best results, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system is imperative in training activities. As such, evaluation takes lion share and needs to be done at three distinct stages ofany training activity. Evaluation ought to be donebefore training “ex-ante evaluation”, during training “real-time evaluation” and after training “ex-post evaluation”. Evaluation done before training is also called training needs assessment (TNA) and it establishes skills and knowledge gaps to be fulfilled by the training activity. Therefore, evaluation survey needs to be conducted before designing training modules for the prupose of developing relevant training materials, approach and tools taking into consideration of requirements of beneficiaries. Similarly, evaluation needs to be done during training to document what works well and what doenst work well for the purpose of devising corrective actions and improvement of future training. Lastly, evaluation is doneafter training as post-training evaluation which aims to assess training adoption and effectinevess through documentation of behavioural changes among trained beneficiaries (ASARECA, 2010) .Training results in terms of outputs and outcomes are monitored during and after training. Mostly, training attendance is commonly used by many projects and programmes to document number of beneficiaries receiving training. Therefore this paper aims to present monitoring and evaluation experience of smallholder farmers trainingfeedback in maize value chain projectin Tanzania.

2. Method

This paper presents cross-sectional data collected throughevaluation questionnaire involving 2,000 smallholder farmers trained on good agronomic practices (GAP) and post-harvest management training (PHM) in year 2017. The training covered 50,000 small holder farmers trained in 1000 sessions in three months in twelve regions in Tanzania namely Rukwa, Songwe, Mbeya, Iringa, Njombe, Ruvuma, Kilimanjaro, Manyara, Arusha, Dodoma, Singida, and Morogoro.The training approach involved co-facilitation by project field officers with technical backstopping of agronomists from input companies. Training sessions were held in classroom mode attended by a maximum of 50 farmers in one training sessionof one day duration.Evaluation questionnaire and attendance register were data tools administerd during training sessions to collect data on monitoring and evaluation. The attendance sheet was designed taking into consideration of GEWE programming approach (gender equality and women empowerment). Therefore, attendance register comprised key two sets of information (i)

farmer organisation profile such as region, district, ward, village, and name of farmer organisation and (ii) profile of smallholder farmer e.g. name of farmer, gender of farmer, telephone, education, marital status, and signature. As for evaluation questionnaire thequestions were set in three categories: (i) qestionas on logistics e.g. timing, venue, refreshments, and training approach; (ii) question specific to knowlwege and skills imparted; and (iii) questions on adoption including challenges and comments from trainees. On average six respondents were randomly selected with gender lenseat the end of every training session.

3. Results and Analysis

Overall, both good agronomic practices training and post-harvest management training were highly rated positive by beneficiary farmers as presented in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. Logistic aspects were highly rated meaning that training plan regarding venues, timing, and refreshments (mineral water and meals) were done well. Further, pedagogical approach seems appropriate with the farmers. As for technical apects of the training, farmers were comfortable with content and modules in the training. Farmers were eager and willing to adopt knowledge, skills and technologies introduced though the biggest challenge was limited financial capacity to afford underlying cost of the technologies.

Table 1: Farmers' feedback on good agronomic practices training

No	Description of questions	Results
1	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on maize farming as a business is very useful	96%
2	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on land preparation and planting is very useful	99%
3	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on soil fertility management is very useful	99%
4	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on integrated pest management is very useful	99%
5	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on handling and safe use of agro chemicals is very useful	99%
6	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on preparing for the harvest is	99%

	very useful	
7	Overall GAP training subjects are very useful	98%
8	Farmers acknowledging that the training method is good	98%
9	Farmers acknowledging that amount of information provided is enough	91%
10	Farmers acknowledging that time allocated for the training is adequate	53%
11	Farmers with sufficient money to buy equipment, material, and tools required for good agriculture practices	9%
12	Farmers prefer traditional agriculture practices over GAP	17%
13	Farmers that are willing and eager to implement good agriculture practices learned (GAP adoption)	100%

Table 2: Farmers feedback on post-harvest management training

No	**Description**	**Result**
1	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on introduction topost-harvest management is very useful	92%
2	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on managing harvest is very useful	88.7%
3	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on grain quality is very useful	84.3%
4	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on threshing and cleaning is very useful	89.5%
5	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on drying grain is very useful	87.9%
6	Farmers acknowledging that the topic on grain storage and post harvest management is very useful	84.8%
7	Farmers acknowledging that The training method and approach is excellent	80.1%
8	Farmers acknowledging that Time allocated for the training is enough	51%
9	Farmers acknowledging that lack of finance is the biggest challenge which might prevent them from adopting post-harvest handling and storage technologies	50.8%

4. Conclusion

This paper has emphasized the need for evaluation of training activities. As such monitoring and evaluation ought to be done at three disctin stages before, during and after training. Each stage of evaluation plays an important role towards effective and efficient training thus avoindingreasouceswatage from duplication and the conduct of uninteresting training.Furthermore, proper tools are need to collect data on training activities these tools include evaluation or feedback questionnaires and attendance registers. As Adato, M. (2011); Bamberger, M., Rao, V., and Woolcock, M (2010); and Place, F., Adato, M. and Hebinck, P. (2007) put forward, mixed methods involving qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used together in complementary and supplementary manner. From field results presented above on good agronomic practoces and post-harcvestmanagennet training above the feedback from framers suggest susthat even if the training were well done however results show that training adoption would be affected tby lack of financial muscke to afford cost of technologies underlying good agronomic practices and post harvest management. In this case project implementaers need to figure out how to address financing matter to unlock farmers' potentials to embrace knowledge, skills and tecjhnologies learned.

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Abbreviations

ASARECA	The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
GAP	Good Agronomic Practices
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFRC	International Federation of Red Crossand Red Crescent Societies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PHM	Post Harvemest Management
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United NationsDevelopment Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WB	The World Bank

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