



# Going to scale with facilitation for change: developing competence to facilitate community emancipation and innovation in South Africa

H. Ngwenya, J. Hagmann and J. Ramaru

## ***Correct citation:***

Ngwenya H., J. Hagmann and J. Ramaru (2008) *“Going to scale with facilitation for change: developing competence to facilitate community emancipation and innovation in South Africa”*, in Sanginga P., A. Waters-Bayer, S. Kaaria, J. Njuki and C. Wettasinha (eds.) *Innovation Africa: enriching farmers’ livelihood*, Earthscan Publications Limited, London, UK: 340-357

**Going to scale with facilitation for change:  
Developing competence to facilitate community emancipation and  
innovation in South Africa**

*Hlamalani Ngwenya<sup>1</sup>, Jürgen Hagmann<sup>1</sup> and Johannes Ramaru<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Institute for People, Innovation and Change in Organisations (PICO), Postnet Suite 341, P/ Bag X 10, Elarduspark 0047, Pretoria, South Africa. [Hlami.Ngwenya@picoteam.org](mailto:Hlami.Ngwenya@picoteam.org) or [Jurgen.Hagmann@picoteam.org](mailto:Jurgen.Hagmann@picoteam.org)

<sup>2</sup>BASED (Broadening agricultural services and extension delivery) program manager within the ministry of agriculture in South Africa. [mjramaru@yahoo.com](mailto:mjramaru@yahoo.com)

**Going to scale with facilitation for change:  
Developing competence to facilitate community emancipation and innovation  
in South Africa**

***Abstract***

While success of participatory approaches and initiatives to community development are reported, little attention is given to the role that facilitation plays in triggering these change processes. Although the articulation of facilitation has not yet emerged to an extent that it means a common thing, there is a growing number of development-oriented professionals and writers who see facilitation beyond just a technique for running meetings, but a process for stimulating fundamental change in individuals and organisations.

This paper presents experience about an facilitative approach to extension service delivery named Participatory Extension Approach (PEA), which was implemented with success in Zimbabwe in the 1990s, and since 1998 has be adopted, adapted and piloted in South Africa. Developing facilitation competence of the extension officers to be able to mobilise communities to better articulate their demands and strengthen local organisational capacities for better linkages with service providers and enhancing creativity and innovations has been at the center of PEA. The success of this intervention as perceived by various stakeholders has put pressure for scaling from pilots to other districts within and across provinces. Since 2001 the scaling up process started, where a sophisticated competence development process (CDP), with an intensive mentoring and coaching mechanism was developed and implemented in two pilot districts. The insight gained, shows the quality of facilitation and the related competence both for training of extension agents and for community facilitation as a key success factor in the implementation of the PEA process. This paper share experience on how facilitation competence was developed and continues to be developed on a larger scale, including the mentoring and coaching process. It also share about some challenges as brought by the large-scale implementation process as it unfolds from one generation to another and how the government is adapting its organisational structure and mode of operation to support this mass action learning process and institutionalising PEA into their system.

***Key words:***

Participatory Extension Approach; Facilitation-for-change; Competence development; Scaling-up.

**Going to scale with facilitation for change:  
Developing competence to facilitate community emancipation and innovation in  
South Africa**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Enabling communities to become drivers of the own development rather than participating in outsiders' projects has become a major focus for many participatory development efforts in the past decade. This move from 'participation' to 'emancipation' of communities requires a drastic transformation in the way development is perceived by all actors, the way the support systems like rural services are structured and operate and particularly the competence required to stimulate emancipatory and transformation processes in communities.

Facilitation plays a central role in stimulating and triggering such change processes. However, the deep dimension of the word facilitation is often underestimated and it has become a vague catchword which leaves all the interpretations open, ranging from 'bribing', 'paying per diems', 'chairing' meetings, to 'transformative facilitation of learning processes'. We understand it in the latter way and call it 'Facilitation for Change'. Facilitation for change goes beyond moderation techniques for running meetings, training session, workshops and managing group dynamics, as it is seen by many people. Facilitation for change is a process that aims at stimulating fundamental change in both individuals and organisations, and it is inspired and organised on the basis of theories of reflective learning, systemic thinking and organisational development where a facilitator assumes a role of a catalyst for social change in the sense of 'Learning together for change' (Hagmann 1999; Moyo & Hagmann, 2000; Rough, 2002; Groot, 2002).

In South Africa, the Limpopo Department of Agriculture with support from GTZ, has engaged in an action learning process to develop and institutionalise a Participatory Extension Approach (PEA) since 1998. PEA is a facilitative intervention which focuses on enhancing community organisation and innovation / creativity. It was initially developed in Zimbabwe in the 1990's (Hagmann et al 1998) and since 1998 was adopted, adapted and further developed as an alternative approach to rural extension service delivery in South Africa, Mozambique and Dominican Republic in the context of service delivery reform.

The success of PEA stands and falls with the facilitation capacity of extension agents who facilitate and mobilise communities to better articulate their demand and strengthen local organisational capacities to create well-functioning linkages with service providers, markets and sources of innovation. Development of facilitation competence has therefore been a major action learning thrust of the initiative – with numerous lessons.

This paper describes some of this action-learning process to develop facilitation competence at a large scale in South Africa. The paper elaborates some challenges emerging from the large-scale implementation process as it unfolds from one generation of trainers and implementers to the other and how the government department is adapting its organisational structure and mode of operation to support this action learning process and institutionalising PEA into their system.

## **THE CONTEXT OF FACILITATION: PEA PROCESSES**

We differentiate two core processes in extension and rural service delivery: 'technical advisory services' and 'social extension'. Most extension services see their role as technical advisory services and emphasise on advice on enhancing production of specific commodities and all the related service functions including inputs and output market. The knowledge on those commodity packages is clearly with experts who are well informed and can provide the advice required by clients. The model does not reflect the whole system which influences innovation in

terms of social dynamics in a given society or community – which often resulted in only a minority of farmers being involved in extension activities.

Social extension in the PEA model tries to deal with the social dynamics and looks at service functions required in a ‘problem solving based’ innovation system in smallholder farming. The focus is much more on establishing a common platform for trying out new things and include the majority of farmers/ community members in this process. It aims at enhancing the adaptive capacity of the rural people, enabling them to manage better a changing economic, social and ecological environment, to adapt their practices and the way they are organised etc. This to a large extent depends on the collective capacity rather than on the individual one.

Both components, technical advisory services and social extension are required to support communities in their own development. It is therefore not about ‘either – or’, but key is a successful integration of technical advise into a sound social process. This is the central avenue of PEA.

The key principles of the PEA approach according to Hagmann et al, 1998 are:

- Focus on strengthening rural people’s problem solving, planning and management abilities both individually and collectively; this involves development of local organisational capacities and leadership (adaptive capacity)
- Integration of social mobilisation of communities for planning and action with rural development, agricultural extension and research, fuelled by a social process of innovation.
- Equal partnership between farmers, researchers and extension agents and other service providers, who can all learn from each other and contribute their knowledge and skills, and build an effective innovation system.
- Promotion of farmer’s capacity to adapt and develop new and appropriate technologies/ innovations by encouraging them to learn through experimentation, building on their own knowledge and practices and blending these with new ideas in an action-learning mode (usually these are agricultural technologies and practices, but they can also be in social institutions, in health, water and sanitation, and other domains of rural development)
- Recognition that communities are not homogeneous but consist of various social groups with conflicts and differences in interest, power and capabilities. The goal is to achieve equitable and sustainable development through the negotiation of interests among these groups and by providing space for the poor and marginalised in collective decision-making.

In the South African initiative, the main objectives of piloting PEA were to:

- Develop the individual and organisational capacities of rural people and their communities to be able to deal with the dynamic challenges and changes of development (adaptive capacity).
- Facilitate a process of self organisation and community emancipation to enable people to better articulate and represent their needs for agricultural and social services vis à vis service providers and administrative organisations.
- Develop and spread technical and social innovations in a process of joint learning, which builds on the life world and local knowledge of rural people who have agriculture as a common foundation and then spread to other fields of rural development and is connected to decentralisation and municipal development and service delivery in South Africa.

- Link rural people and organisations to external service providers, input and output markets and sources of innovation in order to create a functional innovation system where the demand side and the service supply are both well developed.

The implementation 1998-2001 focused on the development of learning case studies at community level to test the PEA approach, while simultaneously developing the facilitation capacity of extension staff, and to develop further the innovation system through linking communities to service providers, to sources of innovation and to markets and mainstream the approach. The different aspects were planned and monitored as five interrelated ‘loops of action learning’ within the overall PEA process (see figure 1 below). The distinction of the learning areas into loops enabled a complex but well structured and adaptive learning at different levels and served as the reference for process review and conceptual lessons were drawn after each annual self-reflection. The staff competence development process was one of the action learning experiences.

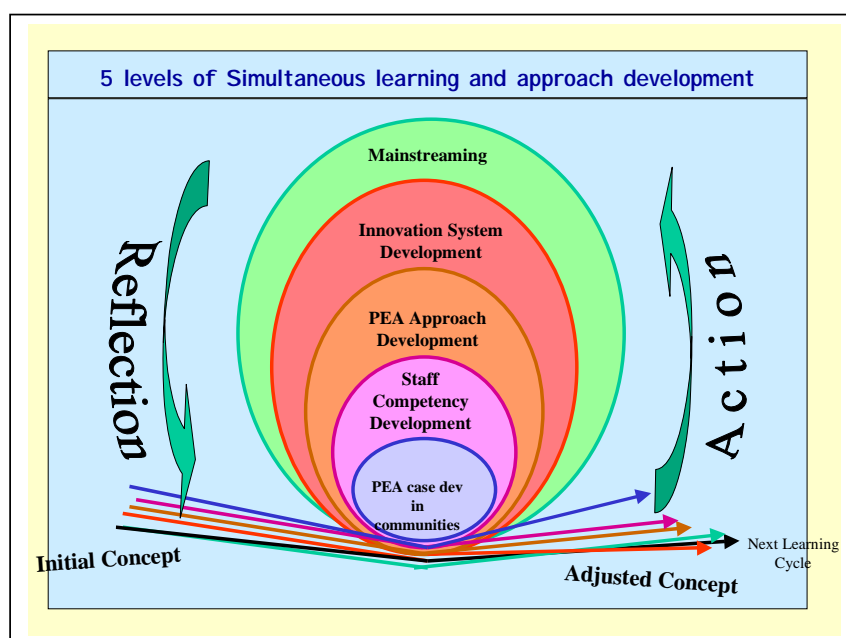


Figure 1: 5 Levels of simultaneous learning and approach development within the PEA process

The PEA process is structured along the operational steps described in the learning cycle (Figure 2), which integrates a variety of extension methodologies and tools in a consistent and rigorous learning process to deal with different topics in agriculture and rural development (Hagmann, et al. 1998). Its focus is on agriculture, but due its broader scope as a foundation capacity for rural communities to deal with their challenges, it is being applied beyond (Ramaru et al 2004).

The learning cycle comprises of six aspect which are: initiating change; searching for new ways; planning & strengthening local organisational capacity; experimentation while implementing action; sharing of experiences and reflection on the lessons learnt and re-planning. The local organisational change is the backbone that cut across all phases as a continuous process.

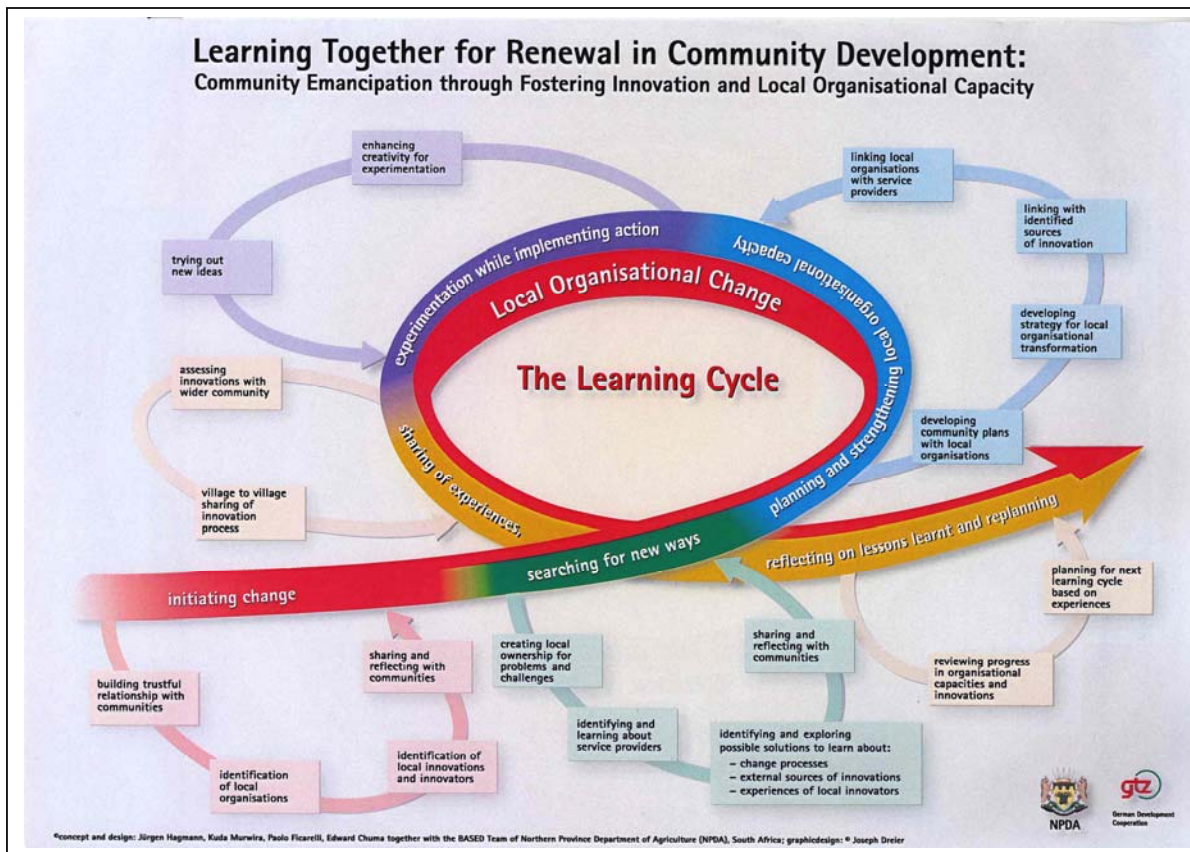


Fig 2: The PEA Learning cycle as developed in South Africa

Deleted: phases of the PEA

### *The outcome of PEA implementation at community level*

After three years of implementation, the program embarked on an intensive impact assessment involving stakeholders at various levels. High impact in communities had been reached in terms of:

*Social aspect:* - enhancing self-organisational capacity and mobilising social energy to engage in development issues. The organised communities have more bargaining power and better linkages with services providers. The assessment also revealed impact in enhancing leadership skills and a change towards more women in leadership positions.

*Technical aspect:* The approach also had impact in recognition of local technical innovations and encouraging farmers to learn through experimentation. Since the beginning PEA there is an increase in the number of farmers who are trying out innovations, share knowledge and train other farmers in such experimentation processes.

*Economic aspect:* Through PEA communities manage to collectively mobilise own resources for services, which yield to substantial benefits by creating economy of scale in both input and output marketing. The process also had high impact in terms of increase production; making farmers to become more market oriented, and generate other income.

The success of this intervention as perceived by various stakeholders at different level has put pressure for scaling from pilots to other districts within and across the province. However, this

demand could not be met in a short space of time, since the facilitation capacity was a limiting factor. The BASED team in partnership with LDA has then since 2001 embarked on a process of large-scale facilitation competence development of local extension officers as a strategy for taking the PEA process further, while ensuring that the department takes full ownership of the initiative by becoming the drivers.

The program has since the beginning undergone different phases/ generations of implementation. More about these phases is discussed later in the section on going to scale.

## **THE ROLE OF FACILITATION FOR CHANGE IN THE PEA PROCESS**

Facilitation for change in essence is about engaging people in a change process through creating critical self-awareness among individuals and groups so that delicate issues can be dealt with. Ultimately it means to make people think deeply and come to terms with hidden agendas, local politics etc, by creating the necessary openness and transparency so that people's energy can be mobilized. Key elements of facilitation for change are:

*Facilitation to create discomfort:* The driver for any change in human beings is discomfort of the status quo – either through suffering pressure or through ambition. Therefore a core element of engaging people in change is to bring out the discomfort clearly. Comfort zones – even in miserable situations- are generally being created through many behavioural patterns. In South Africa's rural areas for example, people tend to follow a 'victim culture' where they tend to blame the government for their lack of development. This makes them create a comfort zone for themselves, which they express through statement such as "what can we do, we are destined to be poor or maybe one day the government will do something to help us". Facilitation for change tries to bring out their own responsibility for their situation and the search for alternatives. Through critical analysis of their past and their future scenarios, people start realizing that change can only come from themselves and that nobody else can and will do it. Through a challenging and provoking analysis and confrontation with the situation, people gradually start taking responsibility for their problems.

*Facilitation for creating imagination and vision:* Any change needs a direction and orientation. Facilitation for change compels people to reflect deeply and to develop a joint vision for own development. Challenging people to imagine what different actors who are involved in development would do or do differently if development efforts would be effective brings out the behavioural changes required. The use of imagination is powerful and important in making people think beyond just a vision, but to focus on the HOW to achieve it. Imagination makes people go beyond their current constraints. It helps to unpack the vision and make it a more concrete plan and breaks their often entrenched thinking patterns to think bigger.

*Facilitate to make people see their potentials:* Often people do not realise their resource base and what potential they have in terms of leading their own development. Facilitation for change challenges people to critically reflect on their own situation, in terms of how they are organised and help them explore what they have in terms of resources and what they know. Appreciation of local resources helps generate a lot of energy for the people by making them feel the solutions for their problems are actually within them. It helps them to be more courageous and daring while being aware of ones capacity.

*Facilitation for self-discovery of behavioural patterns:* The analysis of local situation does not help much if individuals are not able to reflect on themselves in terms of their strength, weakness and their source of power. Facilitation for change creates situations where patterns become obvious and people start challenging their own behavioural patterns which keep them where they are, e.g. the 'culture of silence', the 'victim culture' and 'blame culture' as



well as cultural behaviours which may be hindrance to development endeavours. Once openly discussed, patterns can be dealt with and people can make decisions on how to escape.

*Facilitation to discover and create norms and values:* Over time communities have developed a complex system of norms and values. They are so “normal” to villagers that in most cases they are not aware of. The “modern” society and its values have changed the traditional structures, so that often serious conflicts between modern and traditional elements in the rural societies emerge. Facilitation for change deeply analyses the origin and state of values and norms which emerge as issues. This analysis enables people to bring out in the open the issues and to identify alternatives. Often the solutions are not so far, but the issues, taboos and power structures block them. The idea is to unblock the debate and enable dialogue and negotiation. In many cases new norms and values are being created together with by-laws etc. These can be supported through creation of proverbs, slogans and other elements which support an oral culture.

*Facilitation for creativity, solution-orientation and dealing with change in a positive way:* The problem focus in the development process in communities (and among development agents) has become a blockage itself as it closes the mind and blocks the positive energy. Hence facilitation for change stimulates thinking in solutions and tries to make the opportunities visible rather than finding reasons why things cannot work. Entrepreneurial thinking is required (*‘smoke and courageous people always find a way out – Ethiopian proverb*). To motivate community members finding out new ways of doing things and to try out new solutions are one of the central thrusts of facilitation for change. Through facilitation people are provided with space for making mistakes (as *‘nobody knows everything, and nobody knows nothing’*) and encouraged to learn from those mistakes.

*Facilitation to establish a culture of feedback and reflection:* In face of the history of rural communities in South Africa, is no wonder that their ability to systematically analyse things is not very well developed. Facilitation for change creates a culture of openness and transparency in the community’s groups. Openness and transparency are the starting points when constructive criticism is taking place. It is about making it normal to ask why certain things are done in certain ways and bringing the inside out in order to go to the ground of problems. Constructive and appreciative feedback is the core of differentiating between facts and personal attacks.

*Facilitation to see the facts instead of politics:* Many of the problems and conflicts communities and their organisations are facing are due to politicising any issues. Anything is seen in the light of personalities and relationships rather than facts. A significant contribution of facilitation for change is to challenge the politicisation and structure processes of negotiation in a way that they become de-politicised. Focusing on future tasks, roles and functions and other organisational development principles, instead of dwelling on the ‘WHO’ is often a break through. Even for good leadership there should be clearly developed and transparent criteria, with clear terms of references before the choice of new leaders.

These are some of the thrusts of facilitation for change. There are many others and they are underlain by tools which help to operationalise these ideas. Overall it is obvious that this kind of facilitation is very demanding and not everyone might be ideal to implement it.

## **WHAT COMPETENCIES ARE REQUIRED TO PERFORM SUCH FACILITATION**

As PEA implementation is a multi-layered process, different competencies are required at various levels in order to carry out such high level facilitation. Here we clearly distinguish three

levels of facilitation competencies, which are indispensable for the success of PEA. However, this does not suggest that these are the only competencies required in the whole PEA process.

The first level is the training facilitation competence (TFC), which serves as an input in the whole competence development process because it is required to be able to initiate, design and provide training in PEA as well as providing continuous mentoring and coaching through out the entire PEA learning cycle.

The second level is the Community facilitation competence (CFC), which is required to be able to facilitate the PEA implementation at the community level. This is focused on extension officers, who are key actors from triggering the entire process and are directly linked with the farmer. Developing these competencies for extension officers becomes an entry point, and requires intensive iterating learning process. However, his/ her success strongly depends on the support of other actors.

Last but not least, is the farmer trainer competence that is required by the farmers who become trainers.

While the intensity of the competence development process varies from one level to another, there are some minimum competencies required for each level and the basic principles cut across all levels. In this paper, the focus is on the second level, which is the competence referred to for the scaling up process.

Based on the experiences and lessons on PEA implementation in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique and Dominican Republic, we came up with four broader categories of competencies, which have further sub-divisions.

**Vision and values for self and for development:** Being a facilitator for change is a challenging role in that it requires a strong own emancipatory vision on self and development in order to be able to provide orientation for others. It also needs clear values, which the facilitator has internalised and makes transparent in groups in order to minimise continuous suspicion about the facilitator's agendas.

**Personal development:** Facilitation competence does not go without self-development of the people. An insecure or not very confident person often does not make a good facilitator. Therefore, personal development has been the main focus for the competence development and according to Hagmann et al (2003) it needs to stimulate and enhance the cognitive, behavioural/ attitudinal and emotional levels simultaneously in order to build the capacity of individual personalities to act in a different way. Other writers (Goleman, 1998; and Roberts, 2000) recognise that human being have multiple intelligences such as social, emotional, and they advocate for such a holistic approach to personality development, which challenges people to learn to exercise these multiple intelligence, all at one.

*At Cognitive level:* The focus was on opening the minds of the extension officers to lateral thinking in terms of processes and systems perspectives. This was achieved through critical self-analysis and challenging one's mindset, and by exposing them to this awareness of own potentials to various alternative concepts and paradigms. The extension officer's creativity was stimulated and enhanced through experimentation with new ideas.

*At behavioural/ attitudinal level:* The focus is on challenging the behaviour and attitude of extensions, which are rooted on the prevailing values and social norms. Such attitude, for instance often value formal education more than experiential, non-formal knowledge. This is common in SA where farmers see extension officers as superior, who cannot be challenged because of their formal education, while farmers are regarded as backward and not good enough to make a valuable contribution, regardless of their vast experiences and local indigenous knowledge.

*At emotional level:* The focus was is on enhancing their confidence, self-esteem and their cultural identity for them to be able to manage complex social processes in communities, which are characterised by continuous uncertainty. A sound degree of common sense, empathy, self-awareness and self-regulation-in other words ‘ emotional intelligence’ (Goleman 1998) and personality is essential in helping facilitators to read a process, thus reducing the uncertainty and creating a reference base for decision making.

**Facilitation skills:** Apart from developing self and own vision, facilitation skills are at the center of the competence development process. These competencies are involves process related aspect

*Process related aspect:* Which involves process design, process observation and visualisation as well as process documentation.

*Facilitation techniques:* This involves facilitation techniques, communication, the art of questioning & probing and the use of codes & role-plays etc.

*Toolbox:* To complement their facilitation skills, the extension officers need to have a basket of options, which they are exposed to during the workshops and they can utilise as they implement in the field.

**Conceptual and methodological aspects:** This involves the broader technical, conceptual and management knowledge in relation to extension organisational context, community development context and operational and process management aspect.

*Extension organisational context:* The critical analysis of the current situation in terms of its success and constraint, the reflection and analysis of the history of extension approaches and articulation of vision for effective extension service form the basis through which new alternative ways for improvement can be discussed.

*Community development context:* Facilitators need a better understanding and internalise concepts related to community development such as local organisational development (LOD), rural livelihood system, sustainable agriculture and other related fields

*Operational and process management:* In order to operationalise and manage the PEA process, there is a need be exposed to concepts of change and change management; facilitation for change; design/ management of learning process intervention and mentoring and coaching.

Besides the four categories, there are numerous other skills which emerge during the process, but which are not at the heart of it.

## **HOW TO DEVELOP THESE FACILITATION COMPETENCIES?**

The facilitation competence development process is an iterative learning, which cannot be dealt with in a conventional modular training way, but requires learning by doing and reflection thereafter. Therefore the process was not a ‘once off’ training exercise, but planned and organised in a series of 5 learning workshops spread over a period of 18 months. Each workshop followed by a period of 2-4 months field practice, where the trainees implement what they have learnt in selected villages and where a periodic mentoring and coaching in the field as well as peer learning through groups and self-learning by the trainees are taking place.

### ***The learning workshops***

The focus of the learning workshops is on exposure to concepts and reflection on practice. The first orientation workshop forms the basis for initiating change, introduction of the basic concept of PEA and other development related concepts. This is the longest, and put more emphasis on laying a good foundation for sharing and feedback, which is crucial for the entire competence development process.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> workshop, the focus is on the reflection (at individual and PTL level) and then sharing with the others field experiences, in terms of successes, challenges and also developing of strategies for dealing with challenges. This enables a continuous monitoring and evaluation process to take place.

Apart from reflection and sharing of experience, the workshops also focus on deepening some concepts, which were introduced in the previous workshop, while introducing new ones based on the different phases.

The 5<sup>th</sup> (final) workshop focuses on the overall evaluation of the process, synthesizing lessons and determining what need to be done for further learning.

While the intensity of the workshops different from to another, they all focus on the four broader aspects of competence development. (Vision, personal development, facilitation skills as well as technical & methodological aspect)

In addition to these series of workshops, trainees also go through specific technical workshops, where they learn and deepen technical issues. So far there had been four major technical areas which PEA focused on based on the needs of the farmers. Namely: Soil fertility management (SFM), Soil and Water Conservation (SWC), Small scale sees production (SSSP) and Livestock.

It is during these technical workshops that various institutions (i.e. local universities, colleges and research institution) are involved in order to provide support in technical expertise.

### ***The learning tools***

PEA derives its strength from the use of a range of tools to operationalise the ideas. Different tools are used for different purposes, such as creation of discomfort, visioning, self-discovery, instilling value of sharing and feedback, self-reliance, and inclusivity, unity & cooperation etc. The tools are also used for problem solving, conflict management, team building etc. The tools that are more prominent, and have been found to be very useful in the implementation of PEA both at extension and community level, is the use of codes, role-plays, proverbs and songs.

### ***Organising the field Practice and mentoring***

In order to manage the implementation of PEA activities, there was a need to establish a support structure for the competence development and PEA implementation process. The BASED management team, with the provincial coordinator and districts coordinators, mentors/ backstoppers at sub-district level, with peer learning teams (PLTs) implementing at ward level. was set up as a support to the line structure of the department(See fig 3).

The training strategy		
Phase	Activity	Duration
1	Orientation learning workshop	15 days
	Field practice- initiating change	2 months
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> learning workshop	10 days
	Field practice	4 months
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> learning workshop	10 days
	Field practice-	4 months
4	4 <sup>th</sup> learning workshop	10 days
	Field practice-	4 months
5	5 <sup>th</sup> and final learning workshop	5 days

A mentoring and coaching process was designed to support the trainees in the field. The trainees were grouped into peer learning teams (PLTs) based on the geographic areas. The peer learning teams consisted of 3 to 4 members who are implemented in 3 to 4 villages. The trainers / mentors, who are well ahead in terms of the process, provide mentoring and coaching to the PLTs. Each mentor/ backstopper is responsible for 3 to 4 PLTs, depending on the areas.

The purpose of PLTs were to provide support for each other during the field practice in terms of planning together, giving each other feedback and also giving moral support when facilitating community meetings. The mentor/ backstopper on the hand is responsible for providing guidance and support to the PLTs when needed.

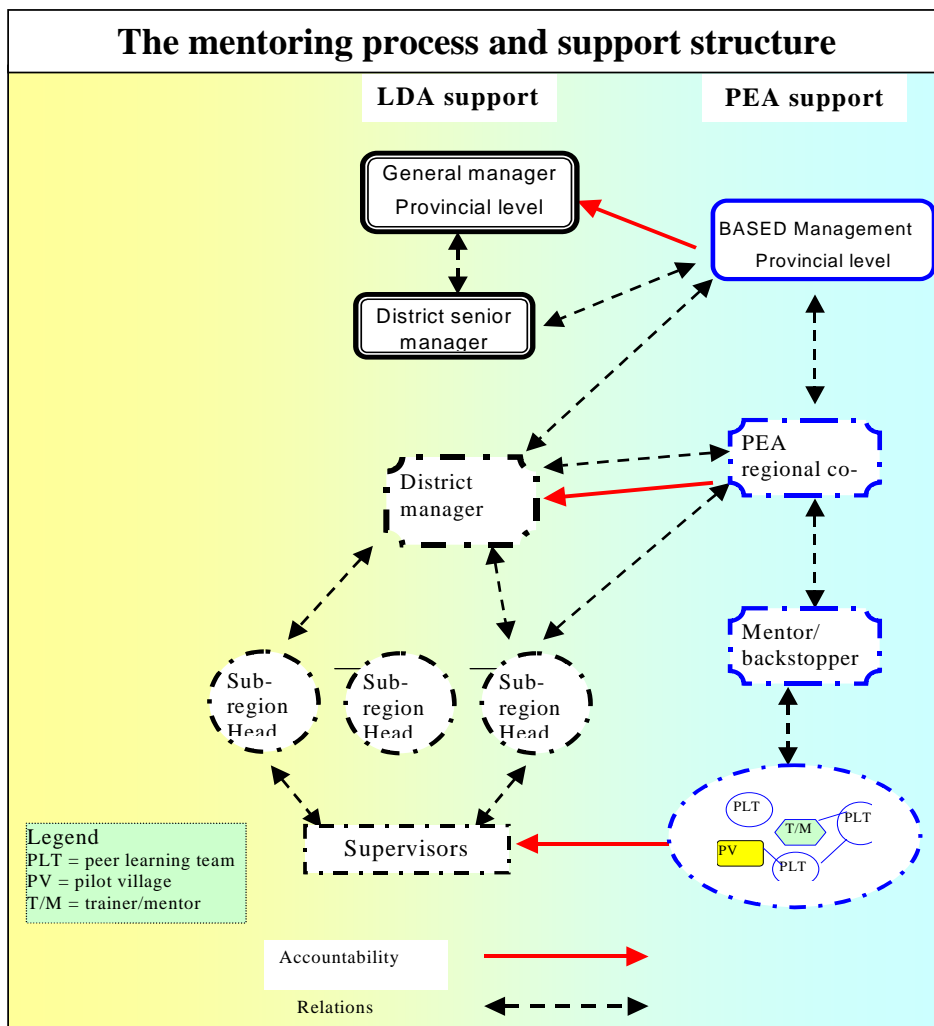


Fig 3: Organisation of the mentoring process and support structure

### GOING TO SCALE- WHAT IT MEANS IN THIS CONTEXT

Like with ‘facilitation’, the articulation of the concept of scale has not yet evolved enough to an extent that it means a common thing. While the definitions differ, authors such as (Edwards and Hulme, 1992; Blackburn and Holland, 1998; Uvin, 1995; Uvin and miller, 1994) link theirs with expansion.

### ***Horizontal expansion of PEA***

In this case going on scale meant the expansion or spread the PEA implementation either with or without intention. The intended process of expansion had been through developing more facilitation competence of extension officers, which in turn increased the number of villages where PEA was implemented.

Between 1998-2000 there were 35 extension officers trained in two sub-districts (Vhembe and Capricorn) implementing in 6 villages. We refer to this phase the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, and the extension officers and the villages involved the first generation trainees and villages. During the second generation, which is the phase between 2001-2003, the number of trainees increased to 103, in those two initial districts, implementing in more than 80 villages. Since 2003, the competence development process continued to spread to the other four sub-districts within and outside the province.

According to the BASED Program Process Review- PPR (2005) conducted by the LDA senior management, by June 2005 about 389 extension officers (EOs) have been trained in the five phases of the PEA learning cycle and applied the approach in 211 villages in five of the six districts of the Limpopo province. About 142 (37%) EO trained in SWC technical area, 109 (28%) trained in SFM, 71 (18%) in livestock production & management, and the remaining 67 (17%) trained in SSSP.

The PPR also revealed that by then there have been about 200 farmer trainers have been trained in the same technical areas to stimulate spread of innovation from farmer to farmer. About 105 villages in the five district of Limpopo province have by then been implanting soil fertility management, 99 villages doing SWC, 98 villages doing SSSP and 95 implementing innovations in livestock production (BASED PPR, 2005).

The unintended process of expansion has been observed at the community level where neighbouring communities started to adopt the technologies that were developed in the villages where PEA were implemented.

### ***Intensification***

As the learning loops and cycle suggest, action and learning has been the main mode of operation for the PEA initiative. The using of short reflective cycles enabled the program to continuously assess its activities, and adapt its initial concepts, focus and strategies based on the arising needs. Along these lines, the scaling up program did not only expand to cover a larger constituency, but also increased or diversified its range of activities.

#### **Evolving dynamics: an example of the seed case**

*During the piloting phase farmers engaged in an experimentation process to test different varieties of seeds. After an intensive experimentation process, they selected the variety that suit their conditions based on the criteria they development for themselves. Although the process involved a few farmers who volunteered to conduct the experiments, the results where shared with the larger community. The selected variety was adopted by the local community; who later engaged in small-scale seed production (SSSP) process.*

*While the number of farmers producing seed expanded, the activities around SSSP also become intensive. The activities involve getting the seed certified by the Seed regulatory authority, getting some extension officers trained as seed inspectors, and establishing a seed unit, for seed quality control purposes.*

## ***Vertical integration of PEA***

The involvement of the LDA management in the impact assessment of PEA pilot cases played an important role in getting the buying in by the department, and getting them to adopt the approach as promising option to break unsustainable development in the province.

This adoption meant that the department had to design a way of integrating PEA into its existing structure and system. This was realised by mandating the Senior Manager Extension to become the champion who oversee the overall PEA integration process, and the establishment of a provincial change management team, with a task of facilitating PEA integration activities.

## **MAJOR LESSONS AND INSIGHTS**

### ***Lessons in terms of the facilitation competence development***

#### **Learning workshops**

*Learning versus training workshops:* The emphasis on learning rather than training suggests that the learning is based on a process of co-generation of knowledge grounded on people's experience, rather than receiving it from one who knows better. While the principle has worked very well, this puts a high demand on the quality of trainers. It is easy to take people through modules, but very often this has not resulted in the desired success. Bringing out the real issues, confronting and provoking requires a deep experience and orientation of the trainers. This has been a major challenge for the scaling up.

*The systemic nature of the CDP:* Facilitation competence development and the PEA process, as a whole is a systemic intervention, which is based on principles process-orientation and strategic thinking. This means that whatever part in a system is moved, many other parts move as well. Often this is unpredictable and therefore needs to be observed and analysed closely and the intervention needs to be adapted step by step. Facilitation of this flexible process with its interconnected parts is a great challenge and the trainers in the making have been struggling. One should not expect quick successes through a trainer of trainers approach, but rather develop trainers as a longer term coaching process.

*Appreciation of current success as a starting point:* Starting by creating awareness on the current situation of extension services, in terms of roles, responsibilities, vision and by appreciating the experiences (successes & failures) of current approaches is crucial at the beginning. This helps minimise chances for resistance as it does not give the people the impression that the introduction of PEA undermines the previous approaches, but try to bring on board the good things about the old ways and then find ways on how to add value in terms of providing strategies for dealing with the challenges that people face.

Exposing the trainees to concrete cases during the first learning workshops has been crucial in terms of creating an imagination of what alternatives could be to make.

*Learning through self-reflection:* The short-reflective cycles in the learning process have been crucial in enabling action learning and reflection, making the process more manageable and helped to fuel the energy. The longer the time without contact with the learners the more it flawed down. This process allows for flexibility and adaptive capacity to accommodate emerging issues along the process, while enabling capacities to emerge and better understanding of the process.

*Feedback and sharing of field experiences by trainees during the workshop:* Laying a good foundation for sharing by consciously promoting a feedback culture from the beginning of the learning workshops, has been crucial in stimulating debates, where trainees questioned each other in their experiential learning. During the sharing, trainees would

challenge each other and demand transparency and evidence of progress made from their fellow trainees. This created a lot of peer pressure for the trainees to be active during their field experience, so that they do not lose face when they have to report about their progress. In light of public servants who do not get any additional incentives, this has been important. The sharing also served as a platform for developing a pool of possible solutions to the challenges faced by trainees

*The use of codes, role-plays, proverbs and songs:* PEA implementation draws its strength from the use of such communication tools at all levels. It was through the use of these tools that people were challenged to critically reflect on their existing situation, depoliticise issues and engage in a learning process geared towards their own development.

The codes and role-plays were effectively used in the creation of common vision for the communities and to surface out important values that communities value such as self-reliance, unity and cooperation and self-organisation. As facilitators internalise how to use these codes for different purposes, they soon realise that there are corresponding benefits that farmers derive from them. These strengthen farmers' belief in them as they start sharing through examples how they have applied some of them. Some codes can be used to simplify communication messages between researchers and farmers in the process of innovation development.

Proverbs and songs: Many African societies relate to music. However, for the majority of South Africans, music goes beyond culture and has a deeper meaning. During the apartheid era when people were denied a freedom of speech and the basic human rights, they used songs and slogans to register their dissatisfaction as well as mobilising communities. It is in this light that the use of such communication plays a significant role in mobilising communities towards pursuing development endeavours

### **Field Practice**

*Peer learning team concept:* The formation of peer learning teams (PLTs) during the field practice was crucial in terms of providing a strong support base for extension officers approaching the communities for the first time. “*Knowing that I am not alone helped to boost my confidence when addressing the entire community for the first time*” one extension officer said. Apart from providing support, it helped to enhance interpersonal relationships by increasing collaboration and co-learning among extension officers instead of competition. The fact that PLT members become acquainted to their members' villages, this ensures continuity of activities even in the absence of one team member. While this is positive it might make some officers dependent on others to an extent that they are unable to do anything alone.

The PLT members specialised in different technical areas, which compels them to work together in order to complement each other. However, this has its set back in the sense that EOs tend to promote their technical areas in the communities where they are implementing.

*Mentoring and coaching:* This played a crucial role during the field practice in providing guidance to the PLTs in terms of operationalisation of PEA. There is a correlation in good relationships between mentors and PLTs and the high performance of those teams. The PLTs that reported having support from their mentors in terms of having regular joint planning and feedback meetings were outperforming those that complained about not having necessary support from their mentors.



### ***Lesson in terms of going to scale***

Going to scale in terms of horizontal expansion, intensification and vertically integration increase the complexity of the process. Some trade off that come with the process of going to scale include:

*Quality aspect:* Quality assurance remains a big challenge as the process unfolds from one generation to another, which results in the dilution of the process. While recognising that the dilution of the process is inevitable, due to the different context of implementation of each generation. However, there are minimum quality factors, which cannot be compromised.

Some of the dilution effects, some which are beyond control and some, which are due to mere negligence were observed during the third generation training. Due to lack sufficient financial resources and the pressure for training more extension officers by government, all learning workshops were cut to a maximum of five days per phase. This meant that what was dealt on in 10 or 15 days in the first and the second generation, had to be squeezed into five days. This had an impact on the quality of the process and content. The process on how to generate knowledge based on experience, which the first and to some extent the second-generation trainees went through was lost on the way. Issues that were generated and documented in the previous workshops tend to be copied and be presented as standard knowledge (The copy and paste) instead of taking them through a learning process. This makes one wonder if there would emerge any future trainers from this group.

Process documentation has been another weakness as it became very shallow during the third generation competence development.

*Technology versus process:* The intangibility of processes makes process knowledge to travel slower than technology knowledge. People remember what they see, and what they have achieved, but tend to forget how they got there in the first place. The ability to remember and understand processes is crucial for facilitators in order for them to ask the right questions.

In some cases, extension officers make an effort to continuously remind the communities about the process that they went through and the benefit thereof. This helps community members to internalise the PEA process and its values.

Neighbouring communities also adopt technologies that are developed in the PEA villages, without having gone through the learning process themselves and without the organisational aspects which are key for a lasting success. Such spread in technologies is a great achievement. However, developing farmer trainers who conduct farmer-to-farmer training in technical areas have proven not only to help spread PEA in an organised manner, but also encourage farmers to learn, since they learn better from their fellow farmers.

*Large-scale and Inclusivity:* The lessons reveals that as the process move from one generation to the other, while expanding in size, geographical scope and complexity, the inclusiveness of the process both at (extension and community level) also suffers. The trainees who become trainers remain more visible; express more benefit from the process; and are more likely to continue to internalise the PEA process, while the majority are left unattended to, which increases the likelihood of collapsing without notice.

There is a need to balance the scale between the so called “champions or super facilitators” and the rest of the PEA practitioners, in order not create jealous by the mass. The challenge is how to keep the majority on board while creating champions to take the process further.

### ***Lessons in terms of institutional response to the scaling pressure***

*Getting the buy in by LDA:* The involvement of the LDA senior management in the designing of the impact assessment strategies for the pilot cases, and their exposure to the cases has

played a significant role in getting them not only to appreciate the contributions made by PEA, but also adopt it as the promising approach to improving extension service delivery.

*Integration of PEA in LDA:* The adoption of the approach forced the LDA to adjust its service deliver system and budgeting allocation process in a radical manner. Other than establishing a provincial change management team to ensure the integration process, PEA competencies were included to become part of the contractual agreement within the Performance Management system (PMS) of the department. This recognises that while the facilitation competence of extension officer is the centre of PEA, its success depend on other competencies needed to support the process. In this light LDA have come up with some minimum competence requirements various actors at various levels (Ranging from the top management level to the lowest level of the hierarchy), in order to ensure support for PEA integration.

LDA also allocated funds for competence development process within districts, and other activities related to the integration of PEA.

## **FUTURE CHALLENGES**

The challenges for the future includes:

- Finding a strategy to operate in new areas while maintaining the initial areas-The present BASED pilots have to be kept supported and further developed as a source of “inspiration” for exposure of new trainees to the practice of the approach and for further concept development and learning for the future (more technical support). They remain the forerunners of the approach. (Different focus for different generations)
- Maintaining quality of PEA while scaling up, i.e. avoiding dilution and blueprinting of the approach. The challenge is to maintain high quality of learning matched with the available human and financial resources of LDA. So far, it has been difficult to develop a quality assurance system to enable maintaining and further development of the approach and competence development. Without that, the training will probably look the same in 10 years from now and will have lost its energy. New ideas and concepts as well as new methods and tools etc. are required to keep an approach alive.
- Maintaining critical mass is crucial: The more people become capacitated, the more attractive they become for other organisation, thus increasing staff turnover. There is therefore a need to develop a strategy for building and maintain high critical mass in order to keep the process. Without a continuous nurturing and grooming of new people, the competence will be exhausted after 5 years, due to turnover or – as we observed- high quality staff is quickly promoted to management positions and get removed from the field.
- The ability to harmonise PEA with other departmental programs and project remains a major challenge for LDA: There are many other donor programs within LDA, with own mandates and differing approaches. Some still operate in a mode that promotes ‘ dependency’, which destroys the value of self-reliance promoted by the PEA.

These are enormous challenges in a public service institution where human resource development is bound by many regulations. Thus, the competence development process needs to continue and embedded in a quality assurance system for training and implementation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BASED report (2005) BASED Project Progress Review by LDA senior management. Unpublished manuscript.
- Blackburn, J and J Holland.1998. *Who Changes? Institutionalising Participation in Development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publication.
- Edwards, M and D, Hulme. 1992. “Scaling up NGO impact on Development. In *Making a Difference: NGO and Development in a Changing World*. Edited by Edwards, M and Hulme, D. London: Earthscan.
- Goleman, D. 1995 *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books publishers.
- Goleman D. 1998. “What makes a good leader?” Pp 92–105 in *Harvard Business Review of Nov/Dec 1998*,
- Groot, A, E. 2002. *Demystifying Facilitation of Multiple-Actor Learning Process*. The Netherlands: CIP-DATA Koninklike Bibliotheek.
- Hagmann, J. 1999. *Learning together for change. Facilitating innovation in natural resource management through learning process approaches in rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe*. Germany: Margraf Verlag
- Hagmann, J., E. Chuma., K. Murwira and M. Connolly. 1998. *Learning together through Participatory Extension. A Guide to an approach developed in Zimbabwe*. Published by the Harere, Zimbabwe: Dept. of Agric., Technical and Extension Services, GTZ and ITDG <http://www.gtz.de/agriservice/areas/concepts/concepts.html#7>
- Hagmann, J., E. Chuma., K. Murwira and M. Connolly. 1999. “Putting Process into Practice: Operationalising Participatory Extension”. In: *ODI Agricultural Research and Extension (AGREN) Network Paper No. 94*. [http://www.odi.org.uk/agren/papers/agrenpaper\\_94.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/agren/papers/agrenpaper_94.pdf)
- Hagmann, J., Moyo, E., Chuma, E., Murwira, K., Ramaru, J., and Ficarelli, P. 2003 “Learning about developing competence to facilitate rural extension process”. <http://www.iirr.org/PTD/Cases/Moyo.htm>
- Moyo, E. and Hagmann, J. 2000. “Facilitating Competency Development to put Learning Process Approaches into Practice in Rural Extension” Pp. 143-157 In: *FAO- Human resources in agricultural and rural development*, FAO, Rome. <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/X7925M/X7925M14.htm>
- Ramaru, J.; J. Hagmann., E. Chuma., P. Ficarelli., M. Netshivhodza, and Z. Mamabolo. 2004. “Building linkages and bargaining power between smallholder farmers and service providers: Learning from a case on soil fertility inputs in South Africa, *Ugandan Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 9: 2004 – 214.
- Senge, P.M., A. Kleiner., C. Roberts., R.B Ross, and B.J. Smith. 1994 *The Fifth Discipline Field book: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday
- Roberts, C. 2000 Conscious oversight: “A discipline of organizational stewardship”. In: *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in learning Organizations. A Fifth Discipline Resource*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Rough, J. 2002. *Society’s Breakthrough: Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in all the People*. USA: Bloomington, IN.
- Uvin, P., and D. Miller. 1994. “Scaling up. Thinking through the issues”. *The World Hunger program*. [www.gbalpolicy.org/ngos/role/intro/imp/2000/1204.htm](http://www.gbalpolicy.org/ngos/role/intro/imp/2000/1204.htm)