

6980328
PN-AP-289 (7)

00-3702



Ministry of Agriculture

extension
aids circular
No 2/83

REACHING FEMALE FARMERS THROUGH MALE EXTENSION WORKERS



EXTENSION SERVICES NEED TO BE GIVEN TO WOMEN FARMERS BECAUSE

- WOMEN CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO PRODUCTION OF FOOD, CASH CROPS, AND LIVESTOCK
- WOMEN PERFORM MANY FARM OPERATIONS
- WOMEN HEAD ABOUT 30% OF MALAWI'S RURAL HOUSEHOLDS AND MAKE THE FARM DECISIONS FOR THOSE HOUSEHOLDS
- WOMEN ARE FARMERS AS WELL AS BEING FARMERS' WIVES.

11

THIS CIRCULAR WILL HELP EXPLAIN WHY AND HOW YOU SHOULD INCLUDE WOMEN FARMERS IN YOUR ACTIVITIES.

There are very few female extension workers (about 150) compared with many male extension workers (about 1,850). Many Extension Planning Areas (EPA) do not have even one female extension worker but do have several different types of male extension workers who should be providing extension services to farmers, both men and women.

Agro-Economic Survey data show that women farmers do 50-70% of the agricultural operations in the smallholder sector, either alone or with their husbands and families. They cultivate food and cash crops in gardens managed personally or by their husbands. According to National Sample Survey of Agriculture (NSSA) data, men receive most of the extension visits and training as well as extension services such as credit, technical information, etc.



Some people say women are not interested in agricultural training but are only interested in home economics. Many female farmers are interested in agricultural training, but they think it is mainly for men because agriculture has not been commonly offered to women. Also, some women have not been keen to take training opportunities because of



family commitments. Women farmers are interested in both agriculture and home economics subjects. Through their agricultural production, women can generate income which will pay for the costs of home economics materials. Where the initiative has been taken to offer agricultural training to women, they have learned new knowledge and skills so that they have increased their production.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO HELP WOMEN FARMERS KNOW ABOUT EXTENSION RECOMMENDATIONS AND HAVE ACCESS TO EXTENSION SERVICES. A VARIETY OF METHODS EXIST THAT YOU CAN USE TO INCLUDE WOMEN FARMERS MORE FULLY IN EXTENSION PROGRAMMES.

METHODS OF IMPROVING EXTENSION SERVICES TO WOMEN

Here are some approaches that have been successfully used in various areas to contact women farmers.

VILLAGE MEETINGS

There is a great potential for reaching women farmers through the group approach. When the extension worker calls a meeting, ask the local leaders to call both men and women. However, it is possible to have few women participating. If you find few women in your meetings, it will be useful to do

some fact-finding to discover the reasons. Are women in the area too shy to attend? Do you come at times when women are busy with gardening and domestic tasks? Do you address your comments only to the men? Do the women have the idea that the agricultural topics are not for them? Is it difficult for both husband and wife to attend at the same time? Are the women reluctant to ask questions in front of the men? (etc.) Depending on what the reasons are, you will have to devise strategies to help the women participate. Leadership training for women will help women take part in meetings and demonstrations. Proper scheduling and appropriate topics will facilitate participation. An interest by field staff in women's agricultural problems and questions will motivate them to contribute to the discussion.

Farm Visits:- During your on-site visits to individual farmers, request that wives and other female relatives be included in your discussions, demonstrations, pegging marker ridges, farm planning and the like.

Local leaders (both men and women) can help call women together for agricultural activities such as demonstrations, courses, club formation, credit registration and tours.



AGRICULTURE TRAINING COURSE FOR FARMERS

Some Agricultural Development Divisions (ADDs) have set targets (e.g., at least 30% of participants) for the number of places for women in agricultural courses at Residential Training Centres (RTCs), Day Training Centres (DTCs), and Farm Institutes (FIs). Women can be recruited for agricultural courses using local leaders, husbands and male relatives as well as by yourself and female staff. When you teach women agricultural topics, you should use the same materials as is used for male farmers. Do not leave out

topics such as forestry and tobacco production which many people think are only for men.



CREDIT PROGRAMMES

Seasonal and medium-term credit programmes are direct ways that farmers receive aid to boost agricultural production. The policy concerning seasonal credit is that both men and women who are in farmer's clubs are eligible, but in practice the number of women who receive credit is small. Nevertheless, women are excellent at repaying credit.

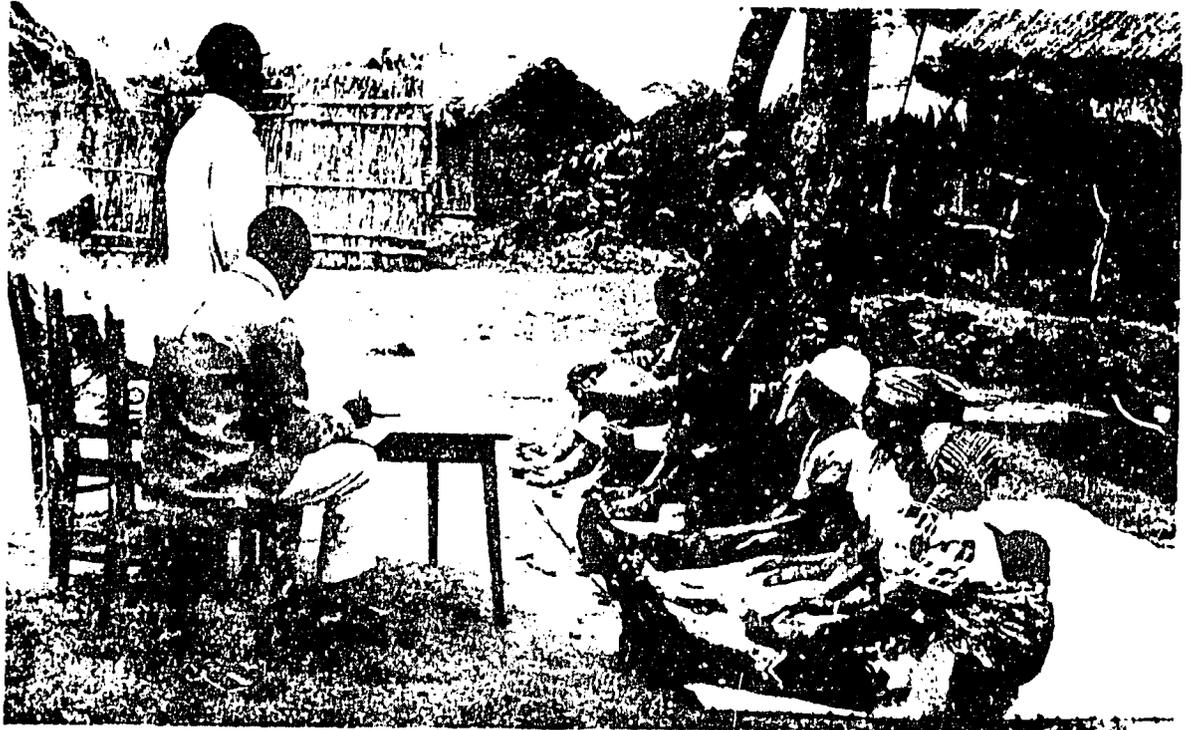
In some families both husbands and wives obtain seasonal credit packages. Other families prefer only the husband to get credit. In some families, the husband is away and the wife would like to get credit. In many female-headed households there are no husbands. Some women are too shy to ask for credit and many believe credit is only for men. Depending on the situation and the farmer's preferences,

both men and women should be actively encouraged to obtain seasonal credit packages to increase their production. This will make them self-sufficient in food or enable them to generate income. Special programmes may be necessary to encourage women to join clubs in order to help them be eligible for credit.



FARMERS' CLUBS

Farmer's clubs are an effective means of giving information on new technologies as well as facilitating ease of contact with the extension agent. Since credit and technical information are being given to farmers mainly through clubs, women farmers must be members of clubs to receive these services. Women should be encouraged to join farmers' clubs on their own or with their husbands.



As an extension worker you should counsel women to join clubs. You should inform club members that women can be office bearers as well as men. The groups of the female extension workers have the potential for being turned into clubs or the members might want to join existing clubs. Your advice on club requirements and procedures may be helpful to these groups. You should inform women about the factors used to decide credit worthiness and make them aware of the types of credit packages, livestock, and implements that are available.

DEMONSTRATION PLOTS AND FIELD DAYS

You should select women farmers as well as men to participate in demonstrations and any programmes in which farmers are requested to provide land and management. Local leaders should select women as well as men farmers of good standing in mounting demonstrations. Both men and women

farmers could also attend field days and view demonstrations to broaden their knowledge.

RECORD KEEPING

In order to monitor your extension contacts with women and men farmers, you should keep records of the type of frequency of contacts and demonstrations, meetings, on-site visits, training sessions and credit taking. Instead of listing only the number of farmers, you should list the number of men and women farmers.



CHITEDZE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH STATION
P.O. BOX 158
LILONGWE

Prepared by Dr. Anita Spring, Director
Women in Agricultural Development Project



PRINTED BY EXTENSION AIDS BRANCH,
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
LILONGWE, REPUBLIC OF MALAWI.
JN 56/83-4M-VI-83

81