

MAINSTREAMING THE USE OF CLIMATE DATA BY SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN ZIMBABWE

Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges



CONTEXT:

- Climate change in Zimbabwe is reinforcing a negative seasonal cycle of decreasing food security, erosion of assets, and increasing vulnerability for poor rural communities
- Drought is the most important production risk, with major impacts on rural livelihoods
- Availability and utilisation of climate information by small-holder farmers has been limited - lack of community and institutional capacity

PROJECT:

- Institutionalising Community-based Adaptation (CBA) by training of extensionists
- Practical Action, Meteorological Service Department, and the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture (AGRITEX) worked together to build the capacity of AGRITEX to share seasonal forecasts and historical climatic data
- Small-holder farmers have been empowered to utilise this information through participatory farm planning and budgeting
- Farmers have been engaged to monitor rain gauges, collect data, and keep records, feeding into farm plans and budgets



MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E):

SUCCESESSES

- Evaluation of the changes in AGRITEX extensionist capacity shows positive results
- Uptake of Practical Action's approach by others, (Oxfam, GIZ, ICRISAT, CCAFS) indicates good impact at institutional level

CHALLENGES

- No baseline study/evaluation of small-holder farmers adaptation knowledge/capacity
- Greatly reduced funding – lack of trust of in-country processes coupled with administrative issues
- Adhering to donors preferences regarding M&E – focus on AGRITEX capacity rather than smallholder farmers
- Extensionists reporting tails off 6 months after project end
- Neither AGRITEX nor community based organisations (CBOs) have the resources and capacity to do post-project evaluation
- Practical Action cannot provide resources for continuous post-project evaluation

THE RESULT

- Reduced understanding of outcomes for small-holder farmers.
- Other organisations in Zimbabwe face the same challenges – lack of resources and low motivation in AGRITEX

HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO THESE CHALLENGES?

BUILDING ON VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LEARNING GROUPS (VSLs)

- Money raised within the group is loaned out to members
- The VSL selects a community-based trainer who monitors impacts on income
- After one year the group becomes independent, managing their own records and affairs, and looking for micro-financing support
- VSLs could be used to monitor the impacts of extensionist work in the community
- The challenge: aggregating data from to assess impact – thousands of communities

