



**BRIEFING  
NOTE ON:**

**Insights on Fostering the  
Emergence of Demand Driven  
Services<sup>i</sup>**

Even though local practice in this programme has been going on for only a short time it was built on long years of experience of farmers and service providers in service delivery. Much of that experience covered T&V systems and various forms of public extension as well as fully privatized systems like veterinary services and private sector agricultural suppliers. As the farmers explored their own needs and formulated their own demands we saw a shift in the kind of things farmers were demanding. Gone or reduced were the requests for advice and training in staple food production. Where demand for crop production advice did exist it was for new crops like snow peas or pest and disease control. Rather, farmers were demanding for advice and training in marketing, financial management and access to capital, information access, and how to run a business like becoming a stockist. The emergence of demand driven services will require not only the education of farmers to articulate their demands, but also the re-tooling of service providers to offer advice and training in these new areas of marketing, finance, information and business management.

Local practice also showed a movement of service provision from district to more local levels. Meeting the demands of most farmers will be, it appears here, a matter of mobilizing many more 'service providers' at the local level. Services run from the district cannot begin to satisfy the diverse and changing demands of the multitude of small holder farmers. The local practice emerging very strongly is that coverage of most small farmers will only come when service providers are other farmers. Farmers do not speak here of their traditional practices of farmer-to-farmer sharing of information. These will continue as they always have done. Rather they talk of business ventures to sell their advice and knowledge either on their own as a farmer group or as joint ventures with extension agents. The emergence of demand driven services will require support to the emergence of small

businesses run by farmers with or without extension agents.

We are beginning to see the importance of commercialization of service provision as close as possible to the village. This not only offers the possibility of coverage for all small farmers but also the possibility of choice of service provider for farmers. Healthy competition between very large numbers of small independent advisory businesses is more likely to meet the demands of small farmers than any large monopoly whether it is a public or private organization. As 'privatization' appears to be the local practice emerging here and now, farmers and extension agents' alike have already begun to identify important roles for government. They foresee a public role for ensuring quality control in service delivery, resolving conflicts over contracts, setting and more importantly implementing regulations, and facilitating the disbursement of any public funds to help poor farmers get access to services that they cannot afford. The emergence of demand driven services will require strengthening of government roles in quality control, contracting, regulation and targeting funds to the poor.

Our last insight emerging from local practice concerns the farmers' voice. Farmers call for the 'break-up' of long standing communication protocols. Protocols that dictate the farmer to talk only to the extension field agent, who then takes the message to his local office, who then takes it to the district agricultural officer who then takes it to the central office by which time the message has become so corrupted such that the answer that eventually gets back to farmers is either too late or of little use. Email and internet allow farmers to talk directly with national level officers or even the minister and get a straight answer directly without the public 'scrutiny' of the radio. Local practice in our programme also shows that direct email exchanges between farmer group and between service providers waters down hierarchical communication. Moreover, farmers report that groups with email access are building social capital in their community by providing a voice to members who do not have access to the internet. The emergence of demand driven services will require the break up of formal hierarchical communication protocols to give farmers a voice in high places that they can use at their own volition.

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