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“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Designing agricultural advisory to promote social equity in the diffusion of climate-smart agricultural practices: Lessons from Zambia

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Abstract

The proposed presentation will share a Zambia case study of the design and testing of mobile phone-enabled agricultural advisory (m-advisory) to reach and benefit diverse smallholder farmers with information on climate-smart agricultural (CSA) practices. In Zambia, an m-advisory service called Atubandike (“let’s have a conversation” in local language, *Tonga*) provides beneficiary farmers access to a toll-free hotline using Viamo’s interactive voice response (IVR), capacitates village-based digital champions to build trust in and support hotline use, and engages communities in gender transformative dialogue. Farmers registered by the project (56 % women, 34 % youth) call into the hotline and navigate several menu options to access static and dynamic content in local languages. Static content is a set of pre-recorded messages on CSA practices co-developed with farmers. Dynamic content is continuously developed and released weekly during project life. Farmers share their experiences and ask questions, by recording messages on their phone. Farmer recordings are then developed into “shared experiences” and “talk shows” by a content development committee with farmer, government, and scientist representation. In the process, farmers are empowered as creators of agricultural content.

The proposed presentation will begin by describing the Atubandike design journey, highlighting approaches used to promote inclusive design at different stages. We then describe the randomised control trial with five treatments (T) for evaluating variants of Atubandike: (T1) push m-advisory (static content only); (T2) m-advisory with feedback opportunities (static plus dynamic content); (T3) hybrid m-advisory (we engage village-based digital champions); (T4) hybrid m-advisory with digital champion training in inclusive communication skills; and (T5) hybrid m-advisory with gender transformative community engagement. Impacts of treatments will be assessed for the following outcomes, disaggregated by gender and age: trust in mobile phones as sources of agricultural information, participation in m-advisory, and awareness and knowledge of CSA practices. The presentation will next present baseline survey results from Zambia that elucidate farmer readiness to productively use their phones for agricultural advice, and how survey results are being used to modify the Atubandike design. We will conclude with a discussion of initial ideas for viable business models to ensure sustainability of Atubandike beyond the project life.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, digital extension tools, gender