

A Critical Reflection: The Rhetoric and Practice of Participatory Approaches in Rural Extension

**The Case Study of Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi District
Kenya**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CIGs	Common Interest Groups
FA	Focal area
FAA	Focal Area Approach
FADCs	Focal Area Development Committees
FGDs	Focused Group Discussions
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NALEP	National Agriculture and Extension Programme
NASEP	National Agriculture Sector Extension Policy
PA	Participatory Approaches
PAPOLD	Participatory Analysis of Poverty and Livelihood Dynamics
PEA	Participatory Extension Approaches
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring Evaluation

ABSTRACT

There has been an increasing relevance of participatory Approaches (PA) in many rural development institutions over the years (Menter 2002). Proponents of participatory approaches e.g. (Chambers (2005) and Pretty et al (1995) have suggested that higher ownership and sustainability of programmes can be achieved if the end users are engaged meaningfully throughout the participatory process. The proponents have also argued that the participatory approaches can empower the local people to manage their own development. It is with these benefits in mind that the Ministry of Agriculture Kenya embraced more participatory and demand driven approaches (Republic of Kenya 2005). The move aimed to encourage farmer and other stakeholders' participation in providing extension services. Among the PA used by the organization is the Focal Area Approach (FAA) which is implemented under the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP).

Despite the potential benefits that these Participatory Approaches promised, impact assessments done on the FAA indicated that these benefits have not been realized (Republic of Kenya 2006a, 2006b). The reports indicated that the poor and vulnerable farmers who make the highest percentage of targeted population are not participating or being reached hence do not benefit from the focal area activities. Local institutions that resulted from the approach (farmers groups) were noted to be ineffective and unsustainable. Moreover the assessment reports indicated that the accountability of this NALEP Focal Area Approach was mainly to the government and donors, and not to the beneficiaries.

Several authors have warned that the productiveness of these approaches depends on how they are put in practice and the organizational environment in which this practice occurs, (Chambers 2005; Leeuwis 2004 and Pretty et al 1995). Little attention has been given to examine the practice of PA in Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi and to explore the factors that are influencing their productiveness. The researcher therefore considered there was great need to examine the practice of PA in the ministry of Agriculture Mwingi, in order to gain more insights into the factors that have affected their productiveness and develop strategies that can improve their productiveness. This will go along way to contribute to improving the quality of extension service offered by this organization which is critically important in promoting household food security, improving incomes and poverty reduction among the rural poor in Mwingi and also provide useful insights to other rural development institutions on how to further the quality of participation for more sustainable rural development.

This research aimed to achieve this through a case study that explored the views of field extension staff, the farmers and other collaborators in NALEP focal area approach. It aimed to find out the changes that had occurred in the organization since the introduction of PA and to what extent their practice had met the principles of participation. By exploring the internal organizational factors that had hindered or facilitated this change the study sought to give insights into factors affecting their productiveness and conditions that need to be in place for this to occur.

The study revealed that there is a wide gap between the participation the organization preaches through its internal documents and the participation actually practiced. The PA practice was found not to meet the regularly recognized good practices of participation.

Various factors too were identified to have facilitated the organization to being more participatory e.g. improved facilitation of staff. However other internal factors were

identified to have hindered this change e.g. unsupportive organizational culture. Conditions that would need to be changed for the organization to be more participatory were also high lightened.

The study concludes by giving some recommendations that could improve the quality of participation in the focal area approach and areas that needs further research.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher gives the theoretical background of the study, the problem statement and the justification. The research objectives and questions are also indicated.

1.1 Theoretical background

There has been increased relevance and interest of PA for many rural development institutions over the years. Supporters of Participatory Approaches e.g. Chambers (2005) and Pretty et al (1995) have suggested that by involving the end users throughout the process of innovation we can ensure higher levels of adoption and that technologies developed in a participatory way really address the needs of the rural poor. Further more it has been shown that PA are a value in themselves as communities are involved in an empowering process of learning and creating organizational capacity (Menter 2002).

Despite the potential benefit of these Participatory Approaches and the support that they receive from powerful institutions such as international donors, their uptake has been notably slow in the research and development institutions of less developed countries especially those institutions that are funded and controlled by the state (Menter 2002). According to Leeuwis (2004, p.250) and Pretty et al (1995, p.65) there has been mechanical or ritualistic practice of PA in development. Pretty indicates that one of the main challenges facing rural development institutions is how to train its staff to use the participatory Approaches properly and effectively as part of their standard working practices. He also points out that the application of these approaches happens within a particular organizational culture, policy context, structure, professional norms and field practices which must be reviewed if the organization has to transform itself into one that supports local people's participation. Leeuwis (2004:p.248-250) says 'there is often a large gap between Participatory rhetoric and participatory practice, as the participatory practice hardly ever matches the criteria formulated by normative theories and definition of participation'. He partly attributes this to poor application of participatory principles which he says can be frequently observed and also to organizational conditions that are unsuitable for more participatory styles.

1.1.1 Participatory Approaches in the Ministry of Agriculture

Historically, the organization has used various extension management systems with varying degrees of success. These included whole farm extension approach, integrated agricultural development and training and visit (T&V) approach.

These approaches were characterized by high demand on manpower, time and financial resources. In general, all the approaches were essentially top-down and lacked participation in articulating clientele demands. Based on lessons learnt from the above approaches, the Government in collaboration with other stakeholders has since the year 2000 embraced more participatory and demand-driven extension approaches (Republic of Kenya 2005). These are intended to encourage farmer participation and private sector contribution in providing extension services. Some of these approaches include the Focal Area Approach (FAA) and Farmer Field Schools (FFS).

1.1.2 National agriculture And Livestock Extension Programme NALEP

Traditional extension provision in Kenya is a public monopoly that is supply driven, with inadequate participation of the beneficiaries and stakeholders in the Agriculture

sector. Little consideration is given to the social economic circumstances of the farmers, including their knowledge and experiences of their environment.

It is with this in mind that the National Agriculture and livestock extension programme (NALEP) was designed to search for and replicate successful extension approaches, with support for pluralism in the provision of extension services, involving key stakeholders. The ultimate aim being to transform the predominantly Government led extension to private sector driven extension.

NALEP is a SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) programme that is pillared on demand-driven, pluralistic and participatory provision of extension services in a transparent and accountable manner as opposed to the conventional blue print approach (Republic of Kenya 2006a). NALEP employs the Focal Area Approach (FAA) in extension service delivery which among other things advocates for strong PA that emphasis on accountability to beneficiaries, encourage wider involvement of stakeholders in extension, recognize the needs of the poor and marginalized and empowering beneficiaries to control and finance their future extension needs. It also promises to strengthen the farmers' extension research linkage and ensure socio economic environmental sustainability.

1.1.3 The methodology of Focal Area Approach Implementation

The NALEP FAA promotes concentration of extension efforts in one administrative location which is chosen as a focal area for a period of one year. Within this time it is estimated that an average of 2,000- 6,000 smallholder farmers will be covered. The focal area is selected by the stakeholder's forum that consists of farmers, project and non governmental organizations representatives, community based organizations and governmental agencies. This mobilizes the community through a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Baseline data/information is taken up to the household level so that it will be used to develop the community action plan (CAP) and later for the participatory monitoring and evaluation.

A representative Focal Area Development Committee (FADC) which should be representative of all categories of farmers (women, youth men, and the vulnerable) is democratically identified by farmers to spearhead general development of the location through networking with other service providers.

The Divisional Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) promote opportunities based on the information collected during community mobilization and in collaboration with other service providers with a view of forming common interest groups (CIGs). These are expected to be avenues for interventions by other service providers and programmes. These subject matter specialists are to ensure that CIGs members are empowered to a level of self sustainability in sourcing for information or any other service through trainings. The intensive period of focal area lasts for a year and it's then transformed into an area of regular group interventions having attracted research, commercial and development collaborators.

Under the FAA different methods are designed to be used to empower communities to develop Agriculture and livestock in their areas .These include;

- Group targeting –emphasis is put in working with groups (CIGs).Each SMS is targeted to work with atlas 16 cluster groups of CIGs with membership of around 20(Republic of Kenya 2006).NALEP believes these are easy to facilitate and should bring various stakeholders together. It also has an advantage of encouraging wider community participation in planning and implementation in a particular project.

- Individual farmers' targeting-beneficiaries are advised individually on economics of farming system, advised on the right enterprise mix and production and postproduction techniques to maximize profits. This is demand driven and it's expected that it will ensure all categories of farmers receive extension services.

1.2 Problem statement

Despite the good and ambitious intensions of the Focal Area Approach under NALEP, impact assessments have indicated that the benefits of this PA has not been achieved (Republic of Kenya 2006a, 2006b). It revealed that the poor and vulnerable farmers who make the highest percentage of targeted population are not participating or being reached hence do not benefit from the focal area activities. The same report indicates that local institutions formed are ineffective, unsustainable and have not created the intended impact. Moreover the total number of farmers benefiting from the CIGs trainings are very low (100,000 yearly compared to the estimated 4 million farming population), and that collaboration among the key stakeholders in the focal area activities is still very weak (Republic of Kenya 2006). The assessment report has also indicated that the accountability of this NALEP Focal Area Approach was to the government and donors and not to the beneficiaries (Republic of Kenya 2006a).

Several authors have warned that the productiveness of these approaches depends on how they are put in practice and the organizational environment in which this practice occurs (Chambers 2005; Leeuwis 2004 and Pretty et al 1995). Could it be that the practice has contributed to the low benefits from the PA in the FAA? The author considered there was a need to closely examine how participatory approaches have been put into practice within the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi in order to improve our insights into the factors that affect their productiveness and on the condition that may have to be put in place for this to happen.

1.3 Justification of the study

Agricultural sector extension service plays a vital role in sharing of knowledge, technologies, agricultural information and also linking the farmer to other actors in the economy. The extension service is, therefore, one of the critical change agents required in the transformation of subsistence farming to modern and commercial agriculture (Republic of Kenya 2005). The results of this study are expected to contribute to improving the quality of extension service offered by the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi which is critically important in promoting household food security, improving incomes and poverty reduction. The findings of this study can also provide useful insights to other rural development institutions on how to further the quality of participation for more sustainable rural development.

1.4 Objective

To examine the practice of Participatory approaches in the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi by exploring the views of field extension staff, the farmers and other collaborators and come up with recommendations that can be used to improve the practice based on the lessons learnt.

1.5 Research questions

1.5.1 Main questions

1. How are Participatory Approaches put into practice in the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi District?
2. What strategies can be used to improve the productiveness of the participatory approaches in the organization?

1.5.2 Sub- questions

- i. What definition(s) of participation has been used by ministry of agriculture Mwingi?
- ii. What changes in practice have occurred in the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi since the introduction of Participatory approaches?
- iii. To what extent does the practice of Participatory approaches in this organization meet the regularly recognized principles of good practice in participatory approaches?
- iv. What factors in the organization have facilitated or hindered this change?
- v. What conditions need to be put in place to improve the practice of participation in the organization?

1.6 Definition of concepts

Practice

For the purpose of this study practice will refer to the involvement of all stakeholders (beneficiaries, private sector, government ministries, NGOs and CBOs) in interactive learning and decision making and joint analysis through out the participatory process.

Change

For the purpose of this study change will referred to the degree in which the organization had become more or less participatory in conducting its focal area activities with other stakeholders.

Participation

For the purpose of this study participation will occur if key stakeholders are taken as equal partners in the participatory process and that the process involves joint learning, reflection and partnership building among all key stakeholders.

Field extension staff

For the purpose of this study field extension staff shall mean an agricultural extension officer or worker operating at the implementation level (district level)

1.6 Hypothesis

The assumption behind this study is that effective use of PA will improve the extension service delivery to farmers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this Chapter the researcher has summarized the views of other authors on the area of study.

2.1 Participation: An overview

Analysis has shown that participation is a critical component that determines success and sustainability of rural development projects (Chambers 2005; Leeuwis 2005; Menter 2002). Proponents of participation have indicated that active involvement and collaboration with stakeholders can not only make development efforts more effective and sustainable but can foster ownership and a sense of belief in the relevance and value of the development programs right down to the community levels.

Various Authors have put several arguments for organizing change process in an interactive participatory way (Chambers 2005; Pretty et al 1995; Leeuwis 2004). Such arguments indicates that a close interaction with stakeholders can help gain access to all sorts of relevant knowledge, insights, networks resources, experiences and/or creativity that different stakeholders may have. Moreover it's theoretically inconceivable that people will change without some degree of mental, emotional and/or physical involvement.

Participation has been defined as the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them (World Bank 2002), but Leeuwis (2004:p.251) has criticized this definition and points out that from this definition, a process cannot be labeled participatory if 'influencing' and 'sharing' of 'initiatives', decisions and resources do not occur. He further notes that the wording in the definition (in particular 'share' and 'affect' suggest that the initiative to develop comes from outside .i.e. it is the stakeholders who participate in a relatively outsiders project.

Political consideration are often used to justify PA approaches, the idea being that participatory processes can be used to empower and liberate the disadvantaged groups in the society (Rahman 1993; Nelson & Wright 1995). These authors have argued that through their involvement, the disadvantaged groups can build up their necessary skills, insights and resources that help them to strengthen their position in relation to others, however Leeuwis (2004:p.254) argues that other motives other than empowerment of the disadvantaged frequently lead people to use the language and motives of participation, maybe to solely gain access to scarce resources, or for organization image management, what he calls 'window dressing', or to provide legitimacy to already pre conceived policies. Other authors have also differentiated the use of participatory methods and techniques as a means (that is when an interactive approach is used mainly for pragmatic reasons in order to further goals that are still largely externally imposed), or as an end (when a process is used to empower participants so that they can determine their own future (Nelson & Wright 1995).

Participatory approach to development have also been advocated to enhance accountability of intervention activities (Leeuwis 2004). He argues that involvement of the beneficiaries helps to make projects and their staff more accountable to the their clients. By ensuring that the beneficiaries have a certain amount of control over project budgets and activities, interventions are not only expected to be more effective but also more legitimate from the ethical perceptive. However this has been

refuted by critics of participation who argue that such approaches are used to meet donor demands or satisfy bureaucratic needs or to help create a positive organizational image or to give the impressions that public concerns are being considered (Pijnenburg 2003; Mosse 2001).

2.2 Levels of participation

According to Pretty (1995,p.60-62) there are seven different ways in which different development organization interpret and use the term participation .These range from people being involved by merely being told what is to happen to 'self mobilization', where people take initiatives independently of external institution.

In respect to information input and decision making authority, the levels as adapted from Pretty et al (1995)

- Passive participation-People are informed what is going to happen. Participants are informed what the project will do after it has been decided by others.
- Participation in information giving –People respond to predefined questions that interventionist deem right for making decisions about projects.
- Participation for material incentives-People participate because it gives them access to resources
- Functional participation –People participate by creating conditions that are favorable for an external project
- Interactive participation –People participate in joint analysis and decide on follow up. Participants are taken as partners and jointly decide about issues with project staff.
- Self mobilization –People take their own initiative, work on and decide on projects independently with interventionist role being to offer advice or resources.

Pretty (1995,p.62) has emphasized that if the objective is to achieve sustainable development only higher levels of participation can do, he cautions that most forms of participation will threaten rather than support the goals of development. Pretty suggests that those using the term participation should both clarify their specific application and shift from more common passive, consultation towards the interactive end of the spectrum. According to (Chambers, 2005p.192), it is important to 'hand over the stick' as much as possible.

Leeuwis (2004, p.250-251) has however criticized the levels of participation wondering if they are necessary and whether it makes sense to strive for 'maximum participation.'

He argues that levels of participation should be measured not in terms of decision making but in terms of involvement in learning or negotiation .By defining levels of participation largely in terms of decision making it is suggested that decision making is indeed the central process in participatory innovation trajectory .He points that this by no means guarantee a successful innovation. He further notes several other limitations to maximum participation or situations which might not be very productive to strive for maximum participation e.g. conflict management may require top down intervention and stakeholders exclusion, innovations may require strong leadership within communities, participation is a scarce resource for participants and there are also boundaries posed by politics of intervention and development. Moreover he notes that striving for maximum participation assumes that human beings are active and knowledgeable agents who can make a crucial contribution to their own development. Leeuwis (2005,p.256) argues that this in itself is in contrast to the basic

idea behind an intervention which is that actors lack crucial ingredients and so certain means and activities must be brought in from the outside.

2.3 Principles of participation

Different authors have indicated that there are some common good practices of participation that lead to a constructive and meaningful engagement, healthy conflict and value adding in a participatory development process

Participatory process must be flexible and content specific hence cannot be guided by series of steps, methodologies and procedures (Leeuwis 2004; Pretty *et al* 1995). Leeuwis argues that interactive trajectories are better thought of as in terms of learning, network building and conflict management. They indicate that activities of the interventionist need to be developed and designed as the process unfolds. Leeuwis has indicated that in a participatory process it is illegitimate to intervene in a 'top down' mode. This is further supported by Vernooy & McDougall (2003, p.113-137) who states that any participatory process should address and integrate complexities and dynamics of change. In a participatory process there is promotion of farmer's capacities to adapt and develop appropriate technologies and innovations by encouraging them to learn through experimentation, building on their own knowledge and practice and blending these with new ideas in an action learning mode (Moyo & Hagmann 2000).

The participatory process is based on interactive learning and feed back loops and there is two way sharing of the results (Pretty *et al*, 1995; Leeuwis 2005). Others have described PA as a comprehensive, interactive learning approach to rural innovation and problem solving in rural areas in which both farmers and extension agents accumulate knowledge and skills (Moyo & Hagmann 2002).

The PA process reflects clear and coherent common agenda set transparently and with honesty among all stakeholders and it contributes to partnership building (Vernooy & McDougall 2003). All the stakeholders should be involved meaningfully at all stages of the participatory process. Participants must have equal opportunities to speak freely and power imbalances among stakeholders needs to be rectified as far as possible Participants must have equal opportunities to speak freely.

The key stakeholders need to be given a chance to participate from the earliest stage possible (SAIEA 2005). They indicate that people will only participate constructively if they know their contributions will influence and add value to the process. When there is a common agenda and creation of partnerships, the local empowerment is not only via the outcomes of the project but also through local partnership and leadership in the participatory process.

The role of the interventionist in a participatory process is to facilitate the process of change (Pretty *et al* 1995). Other authors also indicate that full community ownership of the process is central to any participatory process (Moyo & Hagmann 2000). This is further supported by Leeuwis (2004, p.53-56) who indicates that, the role of the interventionist in such a process is to facilitate critical learning and dialogue. It requires the facilitators to have confidence in the local authority and 'handover the stick' as much as possible (Chambers 2005). The involvement of the community allows them to practice their skills in participation (Messerli and Abdykparov, 2008). This is crucial in sustainability of the projects.

The participatory process has equal partnership between the farmers, researchers and extension agents who can learn from each other and contribute to knowledge

and skills (Moyo & Hagmann 2002). The same is echoed by Chambers (2005, p.110-115) that there should be reversal of learning where the researchers and extension agents also learn from the local people. Pretty *et al* (1995,p.56-57) emphasize that the group learning process should involve the local people who he calls 'insiders' professionals from different sectors who he calls 'outsiders'. The whole is summarized by (Vernooy & McDougall 2003, p.136-137) that the participatory process applies 'triangulation principle' i.e. bridging knowledge from the three worlds (farmers, research and extension).

The Participatory process contributes to concerted planning for the future and social change (Vernooy & McDougall 2003; Pretty *et al* 1995). Pretty indicates that the participatory process should lead to change as the process of joint analysis and dialogue helps to define changes which would bring improvement and seeks to motivate people to take action to implement the defined changes. This action includes local institution building and strengthening which would increase the capacity of people to initiate action on their own in the future.

The project and process benefits should continue beyond the programme window including their being a plan for how the project staff and resources can withdraw without undermining the momentum that has been developed. This is a critical indicator, because if the development programme addresses an on-going issue, but does not successfully 'work itself out of a job' at the local level, then it can be argued that it has either created/contributed to dependency during its work or that it has developed a process that does not accrue sufficient net benefits to the participants for them to be interested in continuing it after the withdrawal of the external agents (Vernooy & McDougall 2003, p.128).

The participatory methods should be used in a way that contributes to human capacity building and empowerment, and not just to extract information on behalf of outsiders (Chambers 1994; Pretty *et al* 1995). They argue that new knowledge and improved insights can indeed empower people in that, it enhances agency (having access to relevant and adequate information).

A participatory process need to recognize that communities are not homogenous 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 negotiations of interest among these groups and by providing space for the poor (Moyo & Hagmann 2000). The same is voiced by SAIEA (2005, p.31-34) that the PA should make special efforts for marginalized communities. They've argued that the participation of the marginalized groups can be limited by a wide range of factors such as powerful bodies or organizations acting as gate keepers, language and culture.

From the literature review done the researcher developed a framework indicating the principle and the criteria for good practice against which the practice of PA in the organization will be analysed, see table 1 below.

Table 1 Regularly recognized principles and criteria of participatory approaches

Principle	Criteria
<p>The extension approach reflects a clear and coherent common agenda among stakeholders and it contributes to partnership building</p>	<p>The development agenda is set collaboratively and transparently</p> <p>The approach design allows space for meaningful participation of all stakeholders and especially the beneficiaries It takes into account potentially different perspectives and interest based on gender, class and age.</p> <p>Partnership among stakeholders have been created and strengthened through dialogue, joint action and mutual benefits</p> <p>The role of the extension worker is facilitation not dictated training</p>
<p>The approach links together the different knowledge world (Research, farmers and extension)</p>	<p>There is interactive learning between the farmers and the professionals</p> <p>The process links local, traditional, scientific knowledge world. Information generated is based on multiple sources</p> <p>Every group of stakeholders view is taken into consideration</p>
<p>The extension process is based on interactive learning and feedback loops.</p>	<p>Involves regular exchange and critical reflection involving key stakeholders There's participatory M&E</p> <p>The outcome of monitoring activities are translated into revised action</p> <p>There is continuous learning leading to people's ability to solve problems</p> <p>It involves joint analysis and dialogue to define change for improvement ,which should motivate people to take actions to implement the defined changes</p>

<p>The process lead to social change</p>	<p>It increase capacity of local people to initiate their action on their own in the future</p> <p>It leads to formation of local institutions or strengthening old ones.</p> <p>There should be a sustainability focus and exit strategy built in from the onset.</p> <p>It enhances people's local agency (having access to adequate and relevant information.</p> <p>The project benefit and process should continue beyond the research project window</p>
<p>The approach addresses and integrates the complexities and dynamics of change.</p>	<p>There is group learning and analysis involved</p> <p>It encourages creativity in problem solving</p> <p>The approaches are flexible</p> <p>Allows local people to learn through experimentation</p>
<p>A supportive organizational culture.</p>	<p>Mistakes are embraced as a away of learning</p> <p>Employees strongly identify with the organization and its beliefs</p> <p>Wishes and desires of the client are more important compared to applying procedures collectedly</p> <p>Teamwork is embraced</p> <p>Information and experiences are freely shared within and outside the organization</p> <p>Responsibility is more personal relying on discretion and judgment and less o manuals and rules</p> <p>Members are given space to experiment.</p> <p>A reward system in place</p> <p>Communication is two way</p>

Source: This model is based on the work of (Vernooy & McDougall 2003), with improvement by the researcher.

2.4 Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Conventional monitoring has been criticized for its characterized orientation solely to the needs of donors and policy makers (Estrella et al 2000; Leeuwis 2004). Due to the criticism and problems associated with the convectional M&E, new ways of monitoring have evolved which aim to make the process of M&E more participatory and effective by including a wider range of stakeholders at every stage of the

process. These stages have been defined in Estrella (2000, p.5) as planning, (determining objectives and indicators), gathering data, analysis and using data to take action and finally documenting, reporting and sharing of the information. Emphasis is now shifted away from externally controlled data-seeking evaluations towards recognition of locally relevant or stakeholder based process of gathering, analyzing and using information (Guijt 1998; Leeuwis 2005).

The key features of this participatory monitoring and evaluation as stated by Estrella (2000) include shared learning, joint decision making, co-ownership and empowerment.

Key elements in PM&E includes an emphasize on monitoring and evaluation for the purpose of learning and negotiations other than for control and justification, M&E on the basis of emergent rather than pre-determined objectives, taking on board different stakeholders perspectives, objectives, criteria and indicators in the monitoring and evaluation process and a more emphasis on internal continuous M&E as opposed to external M&E (Leeuwis 2004)

In Estrella (2002, p.5), common features that contribute to good practices in PM&E have been identified which include participation, learning, negotiation and flexibility.

2.5 The gag between participatory rhetoric and practice

According to Leeuwis (2004, p.248-250), there is often a 'wide gap between participatory rhetoric and practice, as the practice hardly matches the normative theories and definitions of participation'. He observes that there has been a mechanical or ritualistic practice of PA in development, to an extent that participatory intervention follows pre defined steps, procedures and methodology, making it fall into the same trap as 'top-down' approaches by assuming that change is something that can be planned. Leeuwis notes that lack of skills and understanding of the exploratory methods which may include the misconception that methods and methodologies can be treated as mechanical procedures for inducing change, has lead to change agents frequently simply following the steps and procedures described in some form of manual applying the methods without knowing whether they fit the situation or not. He cautions that change cannot be achieved so mechanically and the idea of using or developing predefined steps reflects a certain amount of blueprint planning.

The same is echoed by Pretty (1995,p.62-65) who states that one of the main challenges that face institutions today is how to train sufficient number of staff to use the participatory methods properly and effectively as part of their standard working practices . He further points out that it is one thing for an organization to discover the power of PA, but quite another to be able to train its own staff to tap that potential and use it with some sensitivity and consistency. He further says that field based training alone will not make the field staff have a satisfactory grounding in the basic concepts principles and methods to use them competently in their work let alone to train others. He attributes this to the fact that the training happens within a particular policy context and organizational culture with its own management structures, professional norms and field practices.

The gap between the rhetoric and practice has also been indicated to be due to lack of an interactive learning environment due to the fact that the PA are normally applied within rigid and standardized hierarchies and organizational cultures that constrict decision making, limiting the possible options of development and ultimately diminishing the effectiveness of the efforts (Pretty et al 1995; Chambers 2005; Leeuwis2004).

Chambers (2005, p.207-211), has attributed the gap between the rhetoric and practice of participation to power relationships within and by the organizations. He says 'power over' (especially which implies control) when exercised crudely, inhibits or destroys trust, deters initiative, creativity and local diversity. He says it also prevents relationship of learning together and can generate resentments. Chambers also feels that this kind of power weakens and prevents actions that are pro poor through orders, controls and sanctions from the top which prevents responsiveness to the priorities and needs of poor people below. The same view is supported by Bainbridge et al (2002, p.10) who draws attention to power domination and subordination within and by organization, which has been a challenge in institutionalizing PA in bureaucratic organizations.

Donor demands has been pointed out by some authors as the reason why participation remains only rhetoric in development organizations. Pretty et al (1995,p.65) argues that donors are promoting PA in their project while at the same time they set short term physical targets which have to be achieved (e.g. number of groups formed ,length of roads rehabilitated) and use financial indicators (e.g. amount of allocated funds spent in a financial year). Pretty argues this makes it difficult for programmes to apply PA appropriately as development agents are expected to initiate visible projects almost as soon as funds are allocated. Chambers (2005,p.30-50) too has indicated that excessive demands placed on field staff by donors especially for information in form of reports has put pressure on them usually at the expense of the poor as they provide the reports at the cost of performing productive work in the field.

Staff attitude and behavior towards farmers has been frequently cited as reason why participation rhetoric and practice do not match in most development organization. In his experience with institutionalizing PEA in Zimbabwe, Hagmann et al (1997, p.8) comments that one of the challenges was the staff attitude and behavior such as superiority, dominance and a belief that farmers are 'empty vessels' to be filled with knowledge or merely told what to do. The same has been echoed by Mwajuma, (2003) in Chambers (2005:156) that 'without changing attitude and behavior in our institutions and without putting our interest last, participation will only be a dream'.

Leeuwis (2005,p.57-58) is optimistic and states that despite these challenges we should not discard the approaches but instead focus attention not only furthering the quality of process facilitation, but also improving our insights into the factors that affect the productiveness of the interactive process and for the conditions that may have to be in place for this to happen.

2.6 Institutionalizing participatory approaches

An organization that aims to institutionalize PA must recognize that training alone does not convert a conventional, technically-oriented institution into a more people centered one, the existing structures and procedures must also be reviewed if their role is to be transformed to one that supports local people (Pretty et al 1995; Bainbridge et al 2002) .The same is echoed by Hagmann et al(1997,p.2) who says that institutionalizing of PA involves more than training staff in participatory methods. He calls it a 'highly complex intervention' which requires high commitment of all actors, sound strategies, flexible methodologies, and a favorable atmosphere for learning and a focus on human relationships.

According to Pretty et al (1995, p.62-64) any institution that aims to institutionalize PA must tackle three areas which he identifies as:

- Introducing PA and methodologies for field work level work that support local innovation, respects diversity and complexity, and enhance local capabilities,
- An interactive learning environment for professionals and rural people that encourages developing capacities, open –minded sharing attitude, creates interest and commitment, and contributes to agreed course of action.
- New institutional environment including improved linkages with other institutions which encourages spread between and within institution of PA.

Pretty et al (1995, p.62-64) points out that when there is institutional support for PA it is liable to remain only rhetoric unless expressed through a participatory learning environment and/use of participatory methods. On the other hand participatory methods are likely to be abandoned unless there is institutional support or a favorable learning environment. Creative and interactive learning environment without institutional support or participatory field methods is typically marginal, vulnerable short lived, he says that Institutionalization therefore can only occur where the three areas fully interact, in such a situation Pretty et al (1995,p.64), says support within institutions exist at the top, and authority is more decentralized. Linkages are encouraged within other institutions which include NGO, Government and local organizations. The learning environment focuses on problem solving, and is interactive and field based. Responsibility is personal more than procedural relying more on discretion and judgment and less on rules and manuals. Behavior and attitude are democratic, stressing listening and facilitation not dictated teaching. Local groups and institutions are supported, and encouraged to conduct their own experiments and extension and to make demands on the system. Organizations aiming to Institutionalize PA need to learn to share ideas and work together with other stakeholders, change their evaluation and reward systems to focus more on quality of the participatory process other than the quantity of the output and improve on feedbacks loops (PM&E) (Menter 2003). This is further supported by (Bainbridge et al (2002,p.11-15) and Leeuwis (2005,p.306-320) who imply that such organizations that aims to adopt PA much become learning organizations that can assimilate and respond to information and change. Bainbridge et al (2002, p.8-10) further suggests that in order to institutionalize participation in bureaucratic organizations needs to transform them to prevent their tendency to dominate the people within them and served by them. She warns that organizational transformation is unlikely by top down decree, but it's more likely to be successful if staff is involved in managing change and defining their work. Chambers (2005, 207-210) indicates that 'power over' (implying control) can be turned 'to power to empower' referring to the unique potential for every person to shape his or her life or world.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the researcher describes the context under which the research was carried and the steps that were taken to come up with the data. The research project was carried out for a period of three months starting July to September 2008.

3.1 Research context

3.1.1 Study area

Mwingi district lies in the Eastern province of Kenya. The district is classified as arid and semi-arid and is characterized by bimodal, erratic and unreliable rainfalls.

The local community in Mwingi district consists mainly of small holders' subsistence farmers and pastoralists. These are faced with several challenges that hinder them from progressing further in their farming activities. These include high poverty levels, food and water deficiencies, high incidences of HIV/AIDS and poor access to timely and relevant information.

Mwingi district was selected as the area of study because the researcher has worked in the district for a period of two years which was hoped to make the arrangement of field logistics easier and give a chance to maximize on the sources of data e.g. knowing which document to look for and where to find it. It was also hoped to make the analysis of the results easier through reflections of experiences.

3.1.2 Organizational context

The Mwingi District Agricultural office is a branch of the larger Ministry of Agriculture Kenya. It is at the implementation level of the Ministry. The organization is guided by the overall vision of the MOA Kenya which is, to be a leading agent towards the achievement of food security for all, employment creation, income generation and poverty reduction in Kenya.

It oversees the performance of the core functions of the Ministry at the district level which includes provision of agricultural extension services and the development, implementation and coordination of programmes in the agricultural sector.

The organization is a technical ministry and has a typical government administrative structure with headquarters at the district level devolved further to the divisions and locations. It is headed by a district Agricultural Officer (DAO) who is assisted by a team of six district Subject matters specialists. The DAO coordinates the development, implementation and monitoring of Agricultural programmes and projects in the five administrative divisions of the district namely Central, Migwani, Nguuni, Nuu and Mui. Each of the division agricultural offices is headed by a Divisional Agricultural Extension Officers (DAEO) who coordinates all agricultural activities in that division. He is assisted by a number of Divisional Subject Matter Specialists (DivSMSs) and the Frontline Extension Workers (FEWs). The latter oversees the implementation of Agricultural activities at the locational levels.

As earlier indicated the organization has endeavored to promote and embrace partnerships and participatory processes in the implementation of its activities. The participation of stakeholders, especially the private sector and local communities has aimed to enhance ownership of programmes and projects, which in turn would lead to improved performance in production and marketing activities related to agriculture. Through this move, the Ministry also aims to create synergy and avoid duplication of

efforts and to enhance a holistic and integrated approach to service provision to its clients.

3.2 Methods of data collection

3.2.1 Strategy

The research project was carried out in a single case study in order to gain insight into the practices of PA in the MOA Mwingi District of Kenya.

3.2.2 Sample selection and size

Fifteen field extension staffs were strategically selected to represent different levels of implementation and different gender. These have been directly involved with implementation of Focal Area Approach (FAA) under NALEP at the field levels and the experiences they have lived through provided a wide diversity of information on the research issue. They constituted 3 district subject matter specialist who were involved with planning, supervision and M&E of the NALEP programme in the district, 5 Divisional Agricultural Extension officers(DAEOs) who implement and coordinate the NALEP programme at the divisional levels ,4 Divisional subject matter specialists who implement the programme at the division level and 3 Frontline Extension Workers (FEWs) who also implement the programme at the location levels and are in closer daily contact with the farmers. Out of the fifteen extension staff, four were female.

Five focused farmer group discussions were held each constituting of 10 farmers. The groups of farmers were strategically selected from one focal area per each division with the help of a divisional subject matter specialist. The strategic selection ensured the views of all the categories of farmers in the focal area were represented in the discussion. These categories included the men, women, community based organization leaders including FADCs and CIGs, the vulnerable (either the very poor, female/ child headed households, disabled or HIV/AIDS affected or infected). Interviewing a number of different farmers on the same topic did reveal a wide range of opinions, attitudes and strategies. The group discussions were done with the aim of finding out what changes have occurred in practice since the introduction of the participatory FAA through NALEP which would be analysed to see whether the organization met the regularly recognized good practices of PA and what conditions need to be put in place to improve the quality of participation. The distribution of farmers interviewed is summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2 Distribution of farmers interviewed

Category of farmers	Number present
Men	29
women	22
Youth	10
Focal area development committee members	8
Common interest group members	30
Vulnerable groups	5

Source: Field results

Five representatives of collaborating organizations (2 from CBOs, 1 from NGO, and 2 from line Government Ministries) were interviewed. They were selected to represent organizations that had collaborated with MOA in the implementation of activities in

the focal areas. These representatives were strategically selected to take a member who had represented the organization in a Focal area activity implementation or in the stakeholders' forum.

The interviews with the collaborating organizations were done to find out their perception on the participation as practiced by the MOA, Mwingi, and their views on conditions that could be put in place to improve the quality of the participation.

3.2.3 Data collection

Data was collected in two stages; first a literature review was done in form of a desk study to provide a background understanding on the current knowledge on the topic of the participation paradigm. This helped to come up with relevant information that would support the research objective and methods of data collection. The research review helped to generate table 1 which was very helpful in constructing the checklist for interviews and observations. It also helped to come up with a framework that would be used in interpreting the results and information that would refute or support the researchers' specific arguments.

Literature review was followed by a field study (data collection) of the research issue that took a period of six weeks. This aimed to explore the views of the field extension staff, the farmers and collaborating organizations and also look at organizational documents that would shed light on the research issue.

3.2.4 Sources of data

Triangulation of data source was highly done to ensure validity. The data sources included people (field extension staff, farmers and other stakeholders) and the documents within the organization. The latter included the NALEP project document, Impact assessment reports, annual reports, minutes of various staff and stakeholders meetings, policy documents, project documents, monitoring and evaluation reports. These were readily available and in wide variety and gave a lot of insights on the research area.

3.2.5 Accessing the data

Triangulation of methods of accessing data was also done in order to ensure validity of the results. Methods used to access data included;

Interviews

Open questions were administered through face to face interviews with the extension workers, the farmers and the collaborators. These questions were guided by the research objectives and had to provide answers to the sub questions. The data collection was carried out wholly by the researcher. The discussions were done using checklists as indicated in annex 2-4. During these interviews the researcher practiced creative ignorance, asked appropriate questions as per the checklist, did good listening and practiced the art of probing during the open questions. Informal interviews were also done with farmers in the focal areas and also with some extension staff.

Observation

During the study open observations were done by the researcher on the field extension staff, situations and process. This aimed to generate data such as behavior and attitudes, interaction patterns, processes of power and control, communication patterns etc. The observable data was gathered in an open way where the researcher had a number of points of interest at the back of her mind.

Observation of body language during interview, listening to what people were saying during informal talks, observing how staff interacted among themselves and with the

farmers (during staff meetings, farmers trainings etc) gave reliable data on behavior and attitude and also the culture of the organization than any other source.

Content analysis

A qualitative content analysis was used to generate data from the documents in the organization and from relevant literature. This was done through use of category system i.e. a list of points of interest extracted from the research issue.

Content analysis had been chosen as a method of extracting data because the documents available were diverse and abundant were relatively easily accessible and could be consulted as many times as possible for the purpose of data verification. There was added advantage as the risk of data distortion from strategic answers was minimized. The materials that were used during the content analysis e.g. annual reports and minutes of meetings materialize without the involvement of the researcher hence was assumed provided reliable information.

A disadvantage of the content analysis was that most of these documents could have been over edited e.g. the minutes hence certain information could be lost and that the actual behavior could not be studied. To overcome such limitation during the study triangulation of methods was employed.

3.2.6 Data analysis

The research findings were interpreted based on the researcher's own experience and based on the framework developed earlier from the literature review.

Analysis on changes that have occurred in the organization helped to know the extent to which the organization was meeting the regularly recognizes principles of participation. Analysis of the factors that has hindered this change and the conditions that needs to be put in place for the organization to be more participatory helped to understand the conditions that affect the productiveness of the participatory process and develop strategies for improvement.

3.3 Research framework

Based on the opinion of different authors' on participation (see chapter 2) the researcher developed a framework against which the PA as practiced by the Ministry of Agriculture Mwingi through the FAA would be analysed and judged.

These principles have been based on the definition of participation on the level of 'interactive participation' (Pretty et al 1995, p.65). He says that at this level "stakeholders participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of the existing ones. It involves interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning process". Leeuwis (2005,p.250-251) has called this level of participation 'collaboration' and which he explains that participants are partners in a project and jointly decide issues with the project staff.

The researcher preferred this definition because it enables people to take control over local decisions hence more ownership, sustainability and commitment in taking the jointly agreed actions. Moreover there is also joint learning involved which empowers the local people to solve their problems and steer their own development in the future. This definition of participation encourages partnership building.

In the opinion of the researcher and also supported by authors like Pretty et al (1995, p.p60-62), the lower levels of participation i.e. receiving information, passive information giving and consultation are not good enough participation as they do not involve joint decision making or interactive learning and analysis among stakeholders which is the level the researcher would wish to see apply in the organization.

Self mobilization which is the highest level of on the topology of participation (Pretty et al, 1995) has been defined as people participating by taking initiatives independent of external institutions. They develop contact with external institution for resource and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used (Pretty et al 1995, p.61).For the government organization under study this level of participation would not be achievable or desirable because the government has to lay a final decision on how its funds have to be used. Donors also who fund the programmes have their criteria to that determines how their resources are put into place. This doesn't interest the researcher as there is no joint actions, no partnership building and no interactive learning is involved.

In order to understand the practice of PA in the organization the study looks at the changes in practice that have occurred since introduction of the FAA. These changes are then analysed using the theoretical framework to see to what extent the practice meets the regularly stated principles of participation. The study then looks at the factors that have facilitated and hindered these changes and the conditions that needs to be put in place to improve quality of participation the analysis of which the strategies for improvement is based.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter gives the opinion of the respondents obtained through the interviews with the field extension workers, the stakeholders and the FGDs with the farmers. It also includes information obtained through studying the organizational documents.

4.1 Definition of participation as used by the Ministry of Agriculture

From the organizational documents read Republic of Kenya (2006, p.13-19) Republic of Kenya (2005, p.42-45) participation as defined by the MOA refers to involvement of stakeholders (beneficiaries, and secondary stakeholders in the Agriculture sector e.g. NGOs, CBOs, Private sector, Government Ministries) in planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of projects. These documents further state that participation will involve clientele in decision making and actions that they can have a strong voice in deciding their priorities and are able to exert influence on services they receive.

According to the fifteen field extension staff interviewed all stated that participation as used by the organization refers to involving the farmers and stakeholders in decision making regarding the implementation of the projects. When asked exactly how the organization involved the farmers and other stakeholders varying responses were given as shown in the figure 1 below.

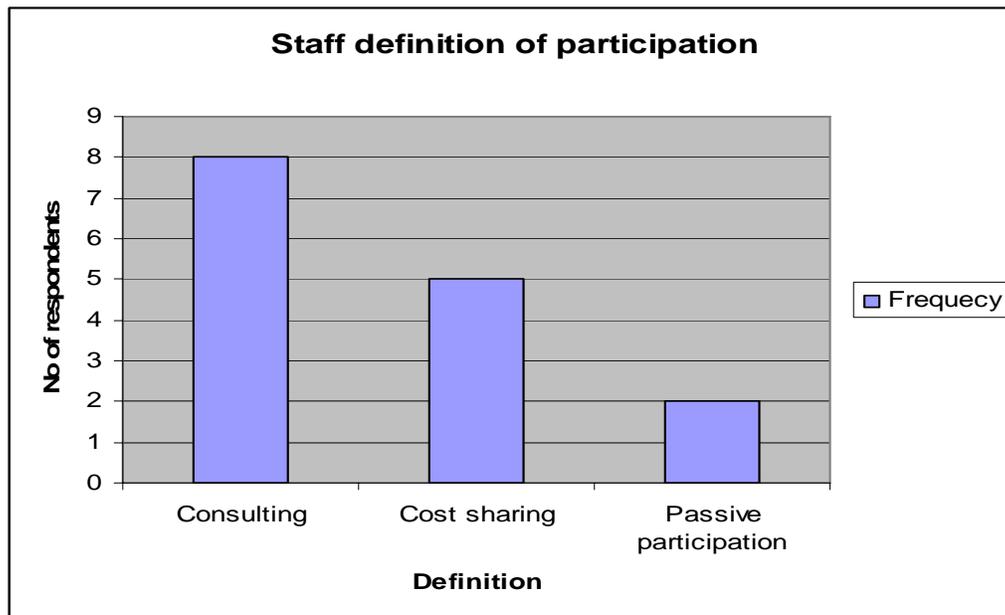


Figure 1 Staff definition of participation
Source: Field data

Consultation was explained to mean asking their opinion e.g. what to be trained on, time and venue of trainings. Costs' sharing was explained to mean providing labor or contributing money to met some percentage of the project cost, in order to create ownership of the projects. Inviting them to take place in activities was explained to mean giving stakeholders or farmers information of a planned activity inviting them to attend.

According to the five collaborators interviewed (1 from NGO, 2 from CBO and two from other line Government Ministries) participation as used by the MOA is invitation to implementation of activities. This was confirmed by the internal progress reports as these collaborators contribution was documented was attending the stakeholders meetings or facilitating already organized farmers trainings.

4.2 Changes in practice that have occurred in the organization since the introduction of Focal Area Participatory Approach.

It was learnt from the interviews and the organizational documents that a number of changes had occurred since the introduction of PA. These changes and their practice are given below.

4.2.1 Involvement of farmers at different stages of planning

a) Appraisal

According to the project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.57) other collaborators and the divisional extension team will mobilize the community through a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which is to involve thorough data collection, including poverty mapping. It is at this stage that the community action plans, formation of the farmers groups is to be done.

The interviews with the 15 extension staff indicated that farmers had been involved in the poverty mapping through the PAPOLD exercise to give information to the PRA teams. It was also learnt through these interviews that only 48 out of 2000 farmers in a focal area were invited to take part in the PRA exercise. This they said was in line with the FAA implementation guidelines. The extension staff also indicated that only 16 farmers who were selected by the 48 farmers mentioned above were involved in the preparation of the community action plans jointly with the extension staff. From the focused group discussions only a handful of the farmers indicated that they took part in the PRA exercise.

Interviewer "What was your role in PRA"

One farmer: "They (extension staff) wanted information on our area e.g. Crops grown, problems we face, so we gave them".

Only 15 farmers out of the 50 farmers in the focused group discussion were aware of the existence of the community action plans. These were members of the FADC or who had been involved in their preparation.

Out of the five collaborators interviewed 2 from the government line ministries had been involved in the PRA. It was observed from the divisional resource registers that these were not involved continuously through out the process but some days and that their role was to help interview the key informants. Only one of the 2 collaborators had been involved in the preparation of the community action plan.

b) Planning

All farmers in the 5 FGD and all 5 collaborators interviewed indicated that they had not been involved in the planning of the focal area activities. They were informed of the programme when the work plan budget and implementation procedures were already in place. The interviews indicated that they were invited to implement the work plan when need be.

Interviewer: "Have you ever discussed the budgets and work plan jointly"?

Farmer: "In the first farmers meeting they (the extension staff) told us that some money had been set aside assist in developing our area but we did not know how much or what it was supposed to do".

All farmers and collaborators interviewed indicated that they had never seen the work plans.

All the 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that the farmers and other stakeholders were not involved in the planning the activities of the focal area. The budgeting is done by the extension staff which is in line with the budgeting format and guidelines issued by NALEP. They said that the schedule for activity implementation came already provided in the focal area implementation guidelines and was uniform nation wide. Asked why they did not involve the farmers and stakeholders in budget planning alone the extension staff response was as shown table 3 below

Table 3 Extension staff reasons for not involving the stakeholders in planning

Response	Frequency (n=15)
NALEP does not provide a platform for this	10
Planning with farmers would consume a lot of time as the process is complicated	4
It would not add any value to the process	3

Source: Field results

10 extension staff indicated that during the district planning meeting the programme did not give an allowance for inviting the farmers or other collaborators.

3 extension staff said that involvement of farmers and other stakeholders in the budget planning would not add value.

Interviewer: "*Why would it not add value*"?

Respondent: "What we are doing is not planning but budgeting for an already made plan, everything is already decided from above (referring to ministry headquarters), so what value would it add to involve farmers in calculations"?

From the project document (Republic of Kenya 2006) it was indicated that lack of joint planning among all stakeholders had lead to poor collaboration.

c) Implementation

According to the NALEP project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.42-44) all stakeholders and the beneficiaries shall be involved in the joint implementation of focal area activities but it was not clear how actively the programme intended them to be involved.

Interviews with the 15 extension staff revealed that some farmers and other collaborators had been involved in the implementation of NALEP activities. All 15 indicated that the farmers had been involved in the forming the common interest groups, attending the trainings, and in providing labor and financial contribution for the community projects. Other collaborators had participated in facilitating farmers trainings. Probing further the interviewer asked one staff informally

Interviewer: "So what would you say influence of the farmers and other collaborators is on how NALEP implementation should proceed in the FA"?

Respondent: "Minimal, even us extension staff have minimal influence, we stick to the already set implementation procedures. "

From the 5 FGDs most farmers said they had been involved in the focal area activity implementation by forming the groups and attending the groups training when the extension staff calls them, and provide labor e.g. in one group discussion one farmer said that they were digging a hardpan sponsored by the organization and they were providing labor and being paid for it.

From the FAA implementation guidelines, it was observed that NALEP had very explicit implementation procedure stating what is to be done by whom, when and how (Republic of Kenya 2004).

Out of the 5 other collaborators interviewed only 3 (2 from government and 1 from NGO) had participated in implementation through invitation to facilitate planned farmers trainings. All said that they were regularly invited for the stakeholders meetings.

An informal talk with some farmers outside the FGDs indicated that there are many farmers within the focal area who are not aware of what the FAA under NALEP is all about or have not taken part implementation of any of the activities.

One farmer said "They (referring to extension staff) called us for a public Baraza once but I have not known what happened after that".

Another had a different story

Interviewer: "In what ways have you been involved in the NALEP activities"?

Farmer: "NALEP? I sometimes see that Government vehicle written on it 'NALEP' passing around here, but I have never known what they come to do".

d) Monitoring and evaluation

According to the NALEP project document Republic of Kenya (2006), PM&E will be introduced as a component of the FAA with clear roles and responsibilities by staff and farmers and other stakeholders for ownership of the process. This M&E system will have systematic linkage to the logical framework indicators and that M&E teams will be formed at the district and divisional levels. M&E activities are scheduled to be done quarterly and should use indicators jointly set in the community and groups' action plans. The M&E information is meant to be shared among the farmers, staff and other stakeholders.

According to the 10 out of 15 field extension staff interviewed farmers and other stakeholders are not involved in M&E .However 3 out of the 15 extension staff felt that farmers are involved in PM&E through giving information to the monitoring teams on the status of their projects. All 15 extension staff said the results of the M&E were never shared with the farmers or other collaborators.

The fifteen extension staffs opinion was sought as to why farmers were not involved meaningfully in PM&E and results are shown in table 4.below.

Table 4 Reasons from extension staff why farmers are not involved in PM&E

Response	No of respondents n=15
Farmers lack skills on PM&E	6
It would be very time consuming	5
To avoid criticisms and conflict	1
Staff lack skills and knowledge on PM&E	3

Source: Field results

Farmers and staff were reported to lack skills in PM&E. But others had a different story.

Interviewer: "Why are farmers not involved in the PM&E"?

Respondent: "We do not involve the farmers as it would look like we are creating an avenue for them to criticize the extension staff".

All the 15 extension officers indicated that the other collaborators were not involved in M&E. one respondent put it "These people (referring to collaborators) have not shown any commitment in implementation of the programme, so what would they be monitoring? All the five collaborators confirmed they have not been involved in M&E. When asked why, all said that they were not informed or invited to participate.

Most farmers in the 5 FGDs interviewed did not seem to understand M&E but when this was explained further they said they do their own informal monitoring and evaluation during their group meetings and forward information to the organization when requested, but one farmer said "the area extension staff at times comes with visitors who ask us many questions regarding our group e.g. what the group is doing problems faced,, is that what you mean M&E?".

Interviewer: "And what do the visitors do with the results"?

Farmer: "I don't know they just write it down".

4.2.2 Stakeholders collaboration

From the organizational document reviewed it was revealed that the FAA intended that partnership collaboration and networking among the Extension service providers ,clientele and other stakeholders be strengthened through the formation of harmonized stakeholders collaborative forum at the district and division levels ,which will promote joint programme planning implementation, information sharing, PM&E and impact assessment and be a catalyst in promoting transparency and accountability in resource utilization (Republic of Kenya 2006a).

The interviews conducted on the extension staff revealed that stakeholder's forum had been formed in all the division levels and at the district level. The district stakeholder's forum had been legalized (registered with the Ministry of social services) where as only one out of the five divisional stakeholders forums had been legalized.

The stakeholders involved included farmer representatives, Government department, community based organization, private sector and Government agencies. The NALEP programme facilitates four stakeholder forums in a year where stakeholders can meet to discuss their mutual needs and agree on working modalities.

It was learnt from the interviews with the extension workers that and number of stakeholders in attendance and number of meetings held were an indicator in monitoring. Probing further the researcher wanted to know more and so asked,

Interviewer: "And what do you feel about this"?

Respondent: "Well, at times this leads to meetings being held just to meet targets and utilize allocated funds".

By going through the minutes of the stakeholder's forum it was observed that the research was noticeably not members of the district or all the divisional stakeholders' forums and that generally the members were very few and constituted of the government departments and farmer representatives. The farmer's representatives were leaders of local institution in the communities and were mostly men. One staff commented that,

Interviewer: "I miss prominent stakeholders in the district in the stakeholders meetings, why"?

Staff respondent: "The stakeholder forum has not attracted serious membership that would steer development in the district".

All the 15 Interviews with the extension staff revealed that the vulnerable or resource poor farmers (Female headed households, youth, elderly, HIV/AIDS and the disabled) were not represented in these forums .Asked why this was the case they gave different responses as indicated in table 5 below.

Table 5 Staff responses as to why the vulnerable farmers are not represented in the stakeholder's forums

Response	Frequency (n=15)
Poor did not have any resources to contribute to the forum so were not stakeholders	4
The vulnerable were shy and could not push an agenda to the end	3
They lacked fare to the venue of meeting and programme did not provide for that.	5
Their interest was fully represented by their local leaders.	5

Source: Field results

A look at the stakeholder's meetings agenda for all division revealed that what goes on in the meetings is information exchange on what each stakeholder has been doing and that the process is dominated by the MOA who mainly give the progress of focal area activity implementation and their other programmes. There was noticed to have been no discussion of a common agenda or joint activities done.

The stakeholder's forum is chaired by a farmer representative but interviews with the extension staff showed that the agendas are set by the MOA. (The implementation guideline outlines what is to be discussed in each meeting).

All the fifteen extension staff interviewed revealed that about 90% of the stakeholders are not committed to the stakeholder's forum which was confirmed from the small numbers of stakeholders present from the list of attendance and also the inconsistency of their attendance at different stakeholders meetings. One impact

assessment report Republic of Kenya (2006b) also indicated lack of commitment to attend stakeholders meetings as one factor that limited fostering collaboration.

In the entire 5 farmer FGDs it was mentioned by 6 people that collaboration in the field during implementation was poor as the other collaborators were not visible in the focal area implementation.

Interviewer: "Why do you say so"?

Farmer respondent: "We made a community action plan but other stakeholders have not done their part".

Interviews with the five collaborators all revealed that collaboration with the organization was actually weak. This was further confirmed by the impact assessment reports Republic of (Kenya, 2006a & 2006b) and also frequently indicated in the project document (Republic of Kenya 2006).

4.2.3. Farmers research extension linkage

According to NALEP project document NALEP facilitates research workshops which is hoped to bring together farmers, researchers, and extension staff to discuss pertinent emerging issues that would be the basis of formulating a research agenda (Republic of Kenya 2006). Two research extension meetings had been held for that financial year according to the extension staff but the minutes could not be traced.

An interview with the 15 extension staff revealed that what happens in the meetings is that the researchers gave information on recently developed technologies and also a research area is identified by the farmers representatives and the extension staff and mandates is given to researchers to go and research on it and give feed back to the staff and farmers.

By looking at the list of attendants invited it was noted that the vulnerable groups or the resource poor farmers were not fully represented.

Interviewer: "The vulnerable farmers do not seem represented, why?"

One staff: "The research extension meetings are technical and we require a farmer who has some literacy level and can be able to express himself in the Swahili or English languages".

Interviews with the fifteen extension staff and through the 5 farmer FGDs all indicated that no joint activities were currently done in collaboration with the researchers. The impact assessment reports Republic of Kenya (2006a, 2006b) and the project document Republic of Kenya (2006) indicated that one of the factors hindering collaboration was the weak-research-extension linkage and failure of the researchers to attend meetings. The latter was confirmed by the three district extension staff who said that researchers did not attend one out of the two farmer research -extension -meetings held for that financial year.

The NALEP project document Republic of Kenya (2006) also indicated that the research extension linkages have been poor despite the programme having made provisions in the budget for extension research workshop. It further indicated that the extension research workshops only became a means of exchanging information rather than discussing pertinent emerging issues that would be the basis for formulating research agenda.

4.2.4 Participatory monitoring and Evaluation.

The NASEP implementation framework indicates that PM&E shall be strengthened where all stakeholders will share responsibility for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment (Republic of Kenya 2006c)

According to the NALEP project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.56) the divisions and the district are expected to monitor and evaluate implementation and prepare progress reports on monthly basis.

An interview with the 3 extension staff from the district level revealed that regular M&E is done on quarterly basis to the division. These follow-ups are aimed to see the progress of project implementation and mainly monitor how well implementation guidelines are followed; utilization of programme resources according to the work plan and if the implementation targets are being meet. Normally a checklist is used for the exercise of PM&E.

This monitoring and evaluation, which all the extension staff referred to as “supervision” is done by the district team or provincial team from the Ministry. All 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that monitoring and evaluation did not involve other collaborators .12 out of 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that farmers are not involved in PM&E but 3 felt some farmers are involved by giving information to the monitoring teams.

An interview with the 12 divisional extension staff confirmed that the monitoring and evaluations are done in form of follow ups or supervisions. However all 12 indicated that the style of the monitoring and evaluation did not add much value to their work. When asked why this is so different responses were given as shown in the table 6 below.

Table 6. Responses on why M&E does not add value to the extension staff work

Response	Frequency (n=12)
Used not to guide but to control and harass staff	12
Timely feedback was not given	10
The feedback once given was in form of scanty reports	3
Theoretical and impractical solutions given to issues	4
It concentrated on quantity not quality of work	5
Monitoring results were not shared with other stakeholders	6
It was too shallow and done in a hurry.	4
It lacked a feel of teamwork between the district team and divisional teams.	7

Source: Field results

The division teams are supposed to monitor the programme activities at their level on monthly basis (Republic of Kenya 2006). Interviews with the 12 extension staff indicated that the PM&E in the divisions were not active and that they never did any formal M&E. 10 said that they were just too busy with the implementation to have time for M&E while 2 indicated that the division staff lacked skills in PM&E. Five of 12 divisional staff indicated that at times M&E was done informally during farmer’s

trainings or when we meet the farmers informally or farmers do it and give in reports to the extension staff.

4.2.5. Local institutions

From the organization documents reviewed the focal area approach will promote the formation and strengthening of two local institutions within the focal areas (Republic of Kenya 2006). These are -

- *The Focal Area Development Committees (FADC):* A farmer representative committee which constitute of 16 farmers (men, women, youth and vulnerable farmers) shall have a role of coordinating the activities agreed upon in the community action plans. They are also expected to assist in coordinating individual farmer's efforts as well as in organizing the community to carry out major tasks that require the combined efforts of the community members.
- *Common interest groups (CIGs)-*These are farmer groups formed through the divisional staff flagging opportunities and later enlisting farmers and farmer groups with a common interest on developing same enterprise. These opportunities are identified by the extension staff for farmers and are advertised using the promotion of opportunity posters. According to the FAA these farmer groups are expected to be the driving force in triggering demand for extension services. Being enterprise based CIGs are expected to be means by which specialist extension service providers get exposed to producers hence creating demand for their expertise (Republic of Kenya 2006)

Interviews with the 15 extension staff and a look at the divisional and district progress reports indicated that in all the focal areas in the division FADCs are formed at the community mobilization stage and that all had been trained in various fields such as PM&E, resource mobilization, leadership and Management skill etc

A look at the membership of the FADC in the divisional annual reports showed that women were members of the committees but membership had a higher male percentage and that the vulnerable groups such as the youth, the very poor, female headed households and the elderly were not represented.

An interview with the 15 extension staff revealed that some FADCs were not active and soon broke up or some members dropped out after the staff withdrew from the focal areas. 6 out of the 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that the FADCs had not really understood or effectively performed their intended roles. This was also indicated in the project document (Republic of Kenya (2006.p.27) that the potential of the FADCs had not been exploited fully. It was observed through the annual reports and interviews with the staff that no FADC in the district had an income generating activity or some joint actions.

An interview with the 8 farmers in the FGDs who had once been or were members of different FADCs indicated that that the committees were active during the initial stages of focal area implementations but later inactive or broke up after the focal area activity period. They reported that many members dropout of the committees. These farmers were asked their opinion as to why these committees broke up and they gave different responses as shown in the table 7 below.

Table 7. Responses as to why FADCs are dormant

Response	Frequency (n =8)
Lack of resources for their activities.	8
Members expected tangible benefits which was not forthcoming hence they dropped	8
The groups are left at a young stage when the extension staff withdraw from FA	4
Their roles have not really been understood by the members or the communities.	3
It took so much of our time to attend trainings and coordinate farmers with nor incentives	3

Source: Field results

The 8 farmers indicated that lack of resources to facilitate their activities was a big contribution to break up of the committees.

Interviewer: *“How? Please explain”.*

One farmer: “We were using our own scarce resources to meet the cost of co-ordinating the focal area activities e.g. in transport to attend meetings, members did not really see the benefits, so most left”.

Interviews with the 15 Extension staff indicated high dropout of farmers from the CIGs. This was confirmed through the divisional annual reports which showed high figures in registration but very few farmers maintaining their membership or attending the trainings. The project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.16) indicated few numbers of farmers were reached during trainings.

Asked why this dropout happened the 15 extension staff gave different responses as indicated in the table 8 below.

Table 8. Opinion of extension staff on why farmers drop out of the CIGs

Response	Frequency (n=15)
Expectations of 'handout 'not met	15
Lack of money to contribute to group activities	7
Busy schedule of farmers in other activities	3
Farmers persuaded or influenced to join groups but not out of their interest	9
Farmers lazy and irresponsible	2

Source: Field results

From the 5 focused group discussion with the farmers it was confirmed that actually many groups formed in the focal areas had broken up and that the number of farmer's members was very low compared to initial registration. Asked why this could be the case the FGDs revealed that most farmers joined these groups expecting material benefits from the organization and that when this was not forth coming they left, that the programme implementation within the focal are was so fast by the time

the farmers came to understand the FAA and its possible benefits the financial year was over and staff shifted to new focal areas.

The impact assessment indicated the success rate of CIGs to be somewhere between 30-50% in the country (Republic of Kenya 2006). The interviews with the extension workers also revealed that in FA the extension staff had withdrawn only about 10% of the CIGs survived. It was observed through field visits that those groups that survived were those that had registered in CIGs as already existing groups before the NALEP intervention.

Interviewer: “why do these groups survive as compared to others”?

Staff respondent: “These were formed out of farmers felt needs and they had already matured and focused before the NALEP programme came in, so they requested trainings based on the group’s felt needs”.

The 15 extension staff were asked why they thought most groups soon broke up different responses were given as summarized in table 9 below.

Table 9. Reasons given by extension staff for CIGs breakup

Response	Frequency
Poor FA exit strategy	15
Poor collaboration	4
Formation of the groups was too rush	10
Concept of CIGs not understood well	2
Lack finances for inputs	8

Source: Field results

It was noted through the interviews that rarely did any new Common interest groups emerge in the Focal areas where the NALEP had exited.

On the membership of these Common interest groups it was noted through the 15 interviews with the extension staff that the vulnerable within the community rarely joined these groups. This was also indicated in the impact assessment reports (Republic of Kenya 2006a, 2006b) and also in the project documents (Republic of Kenya 2006).All indicated low membership of the vulnerable groups in the CIGs.

Asked whether other stakeholders had offered any services to them, out of the 30 CIG members in the farmers FGDs 5 indicated that they had interacted with other collaborators in their groups while 25 said they had only received services from the programme extension staff. This confirmed the project document Republic of Kenya (2006) and impact assessment report Republic of Kenya (2006a) that indicated the that there was poor interaction of the common interest groups and other stakeholders.

4.2.6. Sustainability and Replicability

According to the NALEP documents studied Republic of Kenya (2006, p.73) & (2006a, p.32) the FAA has planned various sustainability measures.

The formation and registration of common interest groups and other groups at the division will strengthen the bargaining power of the farmers and that these groups will attract other extension service providers who find it easy to introduce interventions in groups rather than individuals. NALEP plans that these CIGs will coalesce into federations and other apex bodies with the capacity to advocate for their member’s rights.

By facilitating the formation of stakeholder's forum at the divisional and district levels a platform and favorable environment are created for co-ordination of actors in Agriculture and rural development.

Building the capacity of the clientele communities on PM&E will ensure that farmers will be able to identify the value of their efforts in all activities they carry out as individuals, groups or as community.

The project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.58) indicated that the planned gradual phase out was meant to ensure sustainability of focal area approach.

Interviews with the 15 extension staff however indicated weak, non functional stakeholders' forums and loosely formed CIGs that hardly survived past the focal area implementation period.

Through the interviews conducted eight out of the fifteen extension staff said that some technologies introduced in the focal area had been replicated in the other areas or to farmers outside the common interest groups. Such were cited to be utilization of traditional food crops, dairy goat keeping and improved Mango production. However the remaining 7 out of fifteen felt that NALEP had not introduced any unique technologies that were spread to other farmers outside the focal areas.

All out of the fifteen extension staff interviewed stated that although the plan was for a gradual exist, in Mwingi the phasing out process was very poor. They indicated an almost sudden withdraw from the focal areas. All the staff attributed this to be due to the low staffing level which made staff to completely move to start targeted activities in the new focal areas. They indicated that these old focal areas were mostly left even without a frontline extension staff.

4.2.7. Inclusion of the vulnerable farmers

In the project documents Republic of Kenya (2006,p.47-55) it is stated that the Focal Area Approach shall emphasize and reinforce the pro poor, human rights and livelihood dimensions of extension as an integral part of demand driven extension to create confidence and social capital among the poor and the vulnerable to become self empowered. The vulnerable are indicated in the document as the women, extreme poor, disabled, and elderly, single headed households, farmers infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, the youth. This document further says that the voices of the poor and vulnerable and their local representation will be considered in targeting the farmers.

Asked what efforts has the FAA employed to targeting the resource poor it was learnt from the 15 extension staff that during the community mobilization stage of implementation the poor were identified and categorized through the Participatory Analysis of Poverty and livelihood dynamics by the extension staff and other collaborators. All the 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that the focal area approach had not put a mechanism in place to encourage the participation of the marginalized groups who were underrepresented in the stakeholder's forums, the FADCs and the CIGs. The same was indicated in the NALEP project document Republic of Kenya (2006, p.56) which indicated that the limitation of the FAA in terms of outreaching the resource poor had been a subject of criticism and scrutiny.

It also was stated in the impact assessment reports Republic of Kenya (2006a, p35), which recommended that NALEP should work further in improving the extension approach to vulnerable farmers. All the 15 extension staff reported that they had not been able to successfully reach out to the vulnerable farmers in the focal areas.

When asked why this was so different responses were given were as summarized in the table 10 below.

Table 10. Reasons for failure to initiate participation of vulnerable farmers by extension staff.

Response	Frequency (n=15)
The time in focal area too short to mobilize these farmers	6
Staff lacked skills required e.g. dialogue and counseling.	9
Bad attitude by staff e.g. biased targeting leaving out the vulnerable	4
Weak collaboration with stakeholders	6
They were not sure exactly how to assist them	6

Source: Field results

Out of the 15 fifteen staff 6 cited lack of time as the main constraint to working with the vulnerable.

Interviewer: "Time? Please explain what you mean".

Staff respondent: "You see it requires more time and patience to deal with this group of farmers in order to bring them out of their cocoon, with so much work and so many targets to meet extension workers do not have that time".

4.3. Factor facilitated the change

All the extension staff agreed that the FAA had introduced some changes that had made it possible to move towards being participatory especially during implementation. These are summarized in the table below.

Table 11. Views of Extension staff on factors that have facilitated the change.

Response	Frequency (n=15)
Improved facilitation	15
Better collaboration	3
Improved accountability	15
Capacity building of staff	8
Increased participation	4
Demand driven extension	3
Team work	3
Project ownership	3
Farmer empowerment	4
Increased professionalism	8
Group approach	8

Source: Field results

The most frequently mentioned facilitating factors were improved facilitation and accountability. All 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that the FFA brought resources closer to the division as the divisional staff plans and influences the budget, so there was now improved facilitation to reaching the farmers. The strict financial monitoring by NALEP was mentioned to have improved accountability. It was observed from the divisional resource registers that every coin spent has to agree with the activities as per the work plans.

Some extension staff felt that the FAA facilitated forums in which farmers, stakeholders and extension staff could meet and share information. They cited better collaboration than before and better relationships between farmers and extension staff than before which in turn was mentioned to have encouraged farmer participation.

The staff indicated increased capacity building of the staff through trainings and interactions in professional group meetings hence professionalism had increased. They also felt that the FAA had led to empowerment of farmers through the CIGs trainings which they reported to have improved interaction of these farmers with other service providers e.g. other government ministries ,NGOs and the commercial service providers. The group approach also mentioned to have facilitated contact of the staff and farmers.

Other factors that came out of the interviews to have facilitated change were improved team work in some divisions and the promotion of demand oriented extension which they said enabled services to be adjusted according to the changing preference among the farmers.

From the five FGDs with the farmers it was indicated by 27 out of the total 50 farmers that the focal area had facilitated participation of the farmers. Asked why they felt that it was indicated that the staff are now more frequent in the focal areas and that due to the free interaction between the staff and the farmers it was possible to put their demands to the staff.

One farmer: "Now it is possible to contact the area staff when I have a need, before we never used to see them".

Farmers said that those who attended the trainings had benefited through learning about more technologies and the opportunities that they never knew existed. Trainings were indicated to have also improved their confidence.

Interviewer: "How has that improved your life as a farmer"?

One farmer said "We are more confident and aware of our rights and that we can enter any government and ask for services"

4.4. Factors in the organization that have hindered this change

All 15 extension staff interviewed indicated that the FAA had only slightly managed to promote meaningful participation among the farmers and other stakeholders and that a lot more needed to be done. When asked what factors within the organization had hindered this change to being more participatory, the 15 interviews yielded different results as shown in table 12 below.

Table 12. Factors identified by staff to hinder change

Response	Frequency (n=15)
Few number of staff	15
Inadequate skills in facilitating participatory approaches	10
Low collaboration among stakeholders	7
Scarce resources	4
Unsuitable mode of transport for female staff	4
Too many projects implemented	14
Conflict and lack of teamwork	12
Too much documentation	13
Rigid procedures of FAA	15
Poor attitude and behavior of staff	6
Culture of organization	5
Low staff motivation	15
Corruption (diversion of programme resources)	6
Short period in focal area.	15
Delayed facilitation	12

Source Field results

Of the highest limiting factors mentioned were too much documentation in terms of reporting, short period within the focal area, low staff motivation, rigid implementation procedures of the NALEP programme, lack of teamwork, and low numbers of staff and limited knowledge of the staff on PA. It was noted that the same factors had been mentioned as limiting in the project document (Republic of Kenya, 2006) and the impact assessment reports (Republic of Kenya, 2006a & 2006b) and also some in the district internal annual reports and M&E.

Low collaboration was also indicated by the staff and conspicuous in all internal and external NALEP documents.

Unsuitable mode of transport was mentioned by only 4 respondents but this could be because the number of female staff interviewed who seems to be affected by the problem most was small.

All 12 divisional staff indicated delayed facilitation from the district office was a frustrating factor that killed their morale and wasted a lot of time. This slow facilitation as reported included delay in procurement of stationary, repairs of motorbikes and in processing the financial claims. A look at the minutes of the district management team meetings confirmed this as the issue of delayed facilitation appeared in 4 minutes out of the 4 meetings held.

Poor attitude and behavior of the staff towards their work and also when dealing with the farmers and other stakeholders was reported by some extension staff as a hindering factor.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Respondent: "you see, most of us want to control farmers and I think it starts with our education system, our lectures say and we listen so when we go to the field we say and expect farmers to listen."

The researcher observed a very demoralized staff, not committed to what they are doing. From listening to informal talks they were not proud to be part of their organization. What is discussed in the staff meeting is only work related; no social staff issues are discussed. From the informal talks commitment towards work is based more on the financial benefits a staff can get. Some staff were observed to be too defensive, justifying mistakes as opposed to accepting them.

Farmers opinion was sought through the 5 focused group discussions on the factors that have lead to the organization being less participatory. Their responses are summarized in the table 13 below.

Table 13. Farmers' views on factors that hinder collaboration.

Responses	Frequency (n=5)
Farmers views were not listened to	5
Too frequent change of extension staff	2
Lack of transparency	1
Poor attitude and behavior of staff	3
Very short time in focal area	5

Source: Field results

Areas mentioned to contribute to poor attitude and behavior included rushing, coming late for meetings, not honoring agreements and biased targeting which excludes the poor.

Some factors mentioned by the staff also are mentioned by the farmers which are attitude and behavior and short time of focal area implementation.

Interviews with the five collaborators trying to seek their opinion as to what they think are the reasons for the poor collaboration gave different responses as indicated in figure 2 below.

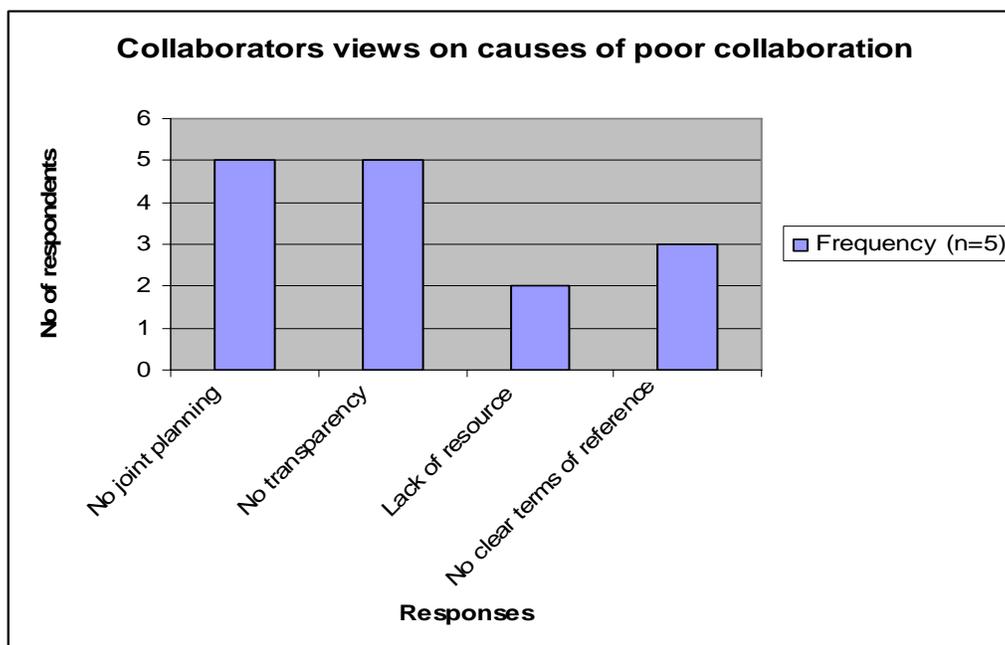


Figure 2 Collaborators responses on causes of poor collaboration
Source: Field data

Lack of honesty was explained to be inadequate information sharing e.g. on the budgets and work plans. Lack of joint planning was reported to cause clash programmes as the other collaborators had their own targets to be met and caused lack of ownership un the process.

The NALEP programme was reported not to facilitate other collaborators to implementing their part of the focal area activities and so they said they were asked to spend money which they had not indicated in their budgets.

4.5. What conditions need to be put into place to improve the practice of participation in the organization

Out of the 15 extension officers interviewed all agreed that they could do better if certain conditions in the organization were improved. Their responses have been summarized in the table 14 below.

Table 14. Staff responses conditions that need to be in place to improve quality of participation

Response	Frequency (n=15)
Improved staff motivation	15
More involvement in decision making	6
Increase the number of staff	15
Improve quality of staff	3
Minimize documentation	15
Improve staff capacity on PA	12
Improve quality of M&E	6
Increase period of working in the focal area	15
Improved collaboration	5
Address social welfare of staff	3
Have flexible programme procedures	15
Enhanced teamwork	9
Involvement of stakeholders in joint planning	10
Develop right attitude and behavior towards work and the farmers	5

Source: Field results

Of the most important factors mentioned that needed to be improved were increasing the implementation period of the focal area, more flexibility of the programme, improved staff motivation, minimized documentation and increase number of staff. This was mentioned by all staff interviewed.

The fifteen agree staff motivation needed to be improved in order to improve the commitment and the morale of the staff. When asked how they would wish to be motivated all fifteen staff said that the salaries need to be improved to match the heavy work that they do, improved working conditions e.g. better office facilities, telephones computers that would make documentation of field activities easy. All fifteen agreed that promotion in the organization should be done on merit depending on the output of the staff. A reward for job well done.

9 out of the 15 extension staff stated that they would wish to be involved more in the decision making on how the focal area approach should be implemented.

Interviewer: "Why do you feel so"?

One staff respondent: "We are the people implementing these projects on the ground and we know what has worked and failed to work, we can give valuable advice".

3 out of the 15 extension staff felt that other than increasing the number of the staff the organization should also post qualified staff who can be able to implement the

complicated procedures of the FAA and who have a higher education level to be able to articulate issues faster.

The staff stated that there was urgent need to train the staff on how to facilitate PA in the fields and to develop right attitude in doing so.

Interviewer: What exactly do you mean?

Staff: “College I was taught the technical aspect of Agriculture and the impression I got is that in the field, I tell farmers what to do, no one prepared me for the field realities, its frustrating and one can easily give up”.

Some staff interviewed indicated an urgent need to improve M&E done by the district team and for the social welfare of the staff to be improved.

When asked how the MOA could improve the participation of farmers in the five focused group discussion revealed as follows below (table 15).

Table 15. Farmers’ views on improving quality of participation by ministry of agriculture.

Response	Frequency (n=5)
Increase period of focal area implementation	5
Avoid frequent change of staff	2
Involve farmers in planning	5
Cater for needs of all categories of farmers	3
Improve transparency hence trust	1

Source: Field results

Catering for all categories of farmer’s was explained to mean targeting all farmers poor and rich equally e.g. to attend meetings to hold demonstrations etc. All FGDs indicated the need to involve farmers in planning and to increase the period of focal area implementation.

The other collaborators were asked their views on how the organization can improve the quality of participation the 5 stakeholders their responses as summarized below

Table 16. Collaborators views on Ways of improving participation by MOA

Response	Frequency (n=5)
There should be joint planning involving all stakeholders.	5
Collaboration should start at higher levels in the organizations	2
Capacity build the stakeholders on the Implementation of FAA	5
Have written commitment with the office.	4

Source: Field results

All collaborators suggested a joint planning and capacity building for them on NALEP concepts for better understanding of the FA implementation and what their roles and benefits would be. One respondent said “I do not understand it (meaning NALEP) and what my role and benefit as a stakeholder is”

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter the researcher analysis the changes in practice that have occurred using the theoretical framework. The main focus being to see to what extent these changes meet the principles of good practice of participation. It also gives the researchers' interpretation and opinion on factors that have influenced the changes and the conditions suggested to be put in place for participation to improve.

5.1. Definition of participation as used by the Ministry of Agriculture

The definition of 'participation' given in the NALEP project document seems a good one as it can lead to joint action and commitments on course of actions agreed upon. It indicates all the key stakeholders being involved in setting a common agenda hence can lead to commitment of agreed course of action. Since it suggests joint planning and M&E it can lead to group learning and improved creative problem solving. The fact that it indicates joint action means that relationships can be developed among the stakeholders and allowed to mature for the mutual benefit of all. It's noted this definition emphasis participation of beneficiaries hence can lead to empowerment of the beneficiaries in steering their development in future. Following the levels of participation adapted from Pretty et al (1995) that were earlier mentioned in chapter 3 this definition falls in the level of "interactive participation" which he says leads to sustainable development. It also agrees with the definition of participation the researcher has adapted for this study.

The definition of 'participation' given by the extension workers and other collaborators as used in the field contradicted the participation defined in the project document. According to Pretty (1995) levels of participation, their definition falls at the level of passive participation, consultation and participation for material incentives. These are poor levels of participation that do not focus on collective change or co-coordinated actions. The stakeholders here are not active participants and the process involved does not lead to the process of social learning, problem solving, network building or negotiation.

5.2 Changes in practice that has occurred in the organization since the introduction of Focal Area Participatory Approach.

5.2.1. Levels of stakeholders involvement in the stages of programme cycle

As earlier reported the NALEP project document has indicated that the programme will promote involvement of all key stakeholders actively in all stages of the programme cycle. Results however indicate that stakeholders are only passively involved in appraisal and implementation stages and hardly involved in the planning and M&E. This practice can hardly give the clientele a stronger voice on deciding their priorities and influencing the kind of services they receive as NALEP intended.

An effective project appraisal offers significant benefit to partnership and most importantly to the local communities. Meaningful local participation at this level may help in setting priorities and secure community consent and ownership, but if the farmers are involved only to give information then this potential benefit to the project can not be achieved.

The fact that only 15 out of 50 farmers in the focused group discussions were aware of the community action plans, which seems to have been developed by only 14

elected farmer representatives also, indicates that the overall coverage of the number of farmers who were involved at the appraisal stage was very small. It could also have not represented the various interest within the focal areas because the 'community representatives' might mean the influential leaders, successful farmers, the rich and vocal according to the community's definition ,and mostly men, which leaves out the vulnerable groups.

A community consists of diverse groups of people who have different viewpoints on community problems. In order to tackle the common problem, the concerns and needs of these groups should be addressed in full. So all stakeholders of the community (local leaders, students, teachers, the poor, men, women, youth etc) must be identified to take part in the PRA. The collective action of implementation of a community plan is possible only when all stakeholders develop a clear common understanding about the issue, lack of which leads to community actions plans that the community and other collaborators do not own and will never be implemented.

The appraisal stage needs to be taken as a stage where the extension staff and other collaborators can learn with and from the rural people and gain from the physical and social knowledge. But this learning seems not to have occurred in the FA appraisal since the community's role was answering predefined questions, maybe to satisfy the organizations bureaucratic needs or to make the NALEP programme appear like its considering the local people's concerns.

It is very important to actively involve other collaborators in this appraisal stage. Farmers' problems are multisectoral and will require inputs from different sectors other than Agriculture. They require good roads, clean water, health services and these will always come up in the prioritizing of problems and in the community action development. Agriculture alone cannot solve these problems and if other collaborators are not involved actively in this stage these problems remains unaddressed causing loss of faith and farmers seeing like their time has been wasted. Lack of involving collaborators actively at this stage might be the reasons as to why the community action plans are never implemented.

NALEP intends stakeholders' involvement in planning of the focal area activity but it does not seem to provide space for them to participate. A creation of a forum e.g. a joint planning workshop and use of flexile budget formats would show commitment to achieving these intensions in practice. NALEP preaches accountability which should be two way but it seems more like accountability down wards is missing or very poor. It also preaches transparent which one would take to mean information is shared freely among partners but the budgets details, FA work plans and other information about decision making seems to be kept confidential to the organization.

The highest response as to why farmers were not involved in PM&E was that they lacked the skills required and that it would consume a lot of time, the least important response was to avoid criticism of the farmers on the extension staff. This in itself indicates the limited knowledge of staff in understanding PM&E and its relevance as an avenue for joint learning and analysis of which could greatly increase the impact of the FAA. It appears more like the limited knowledge of the staff is the reason for not involving the farmers in PM&E and not the other way round.

The results also indicates how attitude and behavior of the staff has stood on the way to allowing the involvement of the farmers. Assuming that farmers do not know or have little to contribute to the M&E process indicates the limited value given to the wide, rich local knowledge of these farmers.

Passive to no involvement of farmers in the different stages of the programme that is; appraisal, planning ,Implementation and PM&E seems to indicates that the focal

area development agenda is not collaboratively and transparently set and the partnership among key stakeholders have not been created through dialogue, joint action, and mutual benefits. This could indicate why the commitment of the farmers and the other collaborators in implementation of focal area activity continue to be reported as poor

NALEP was reported to be guided by strict explicit implementation procedure which indicates that the programme has already defined levels at which farmers and other stakeholders can participate at different stages of the programme. This then indicates that the FAA does not allow space for meaningful participation of all the stakeholders involved especially the beneficiaries and so does not take into account the potentially different perspectives based on the gender, age class etc. This strict implementation using pre defined goals and objectives do not encourage interactive learning or allow experimentation by the farmers.

5.2.2 Stakeholders collaboration.

As reported earlier theoretically the FAA intended there to be a link between the research, extension providers and the farmers. To encourage this it has facilitated various forums in which these three sources of knowledge can meet for joint analysis and learning. These forums were observed to be the stakeholders' forums and the Farmer-research –extension workshops.

Despite the stakeholders having been formed at district and divisional levels their intended potential to coordinate development has not been effectively used. They appear not to have been taken seriously which is indicated by the low and inconsistency attendance of the collaborators to the meetings and the absence of serious development agencies in the district that would play a crucial role in coordinating development in the district.

The stakeholders' forums do not seem to be representative of all categories of farmers as the vulnerable were not represented. This means the forum does not give a chance to them to voice their views and concerns. The FAA does not seem to have made a deliberate effort to encourage the participation of these farmers either. A simple effort like holding the meetings in a more accessible venue other than the agricultural office can go along way in encourage their participation.

The education system that the extension officers go through makes them believe that their knowledge is superior in domains where it might not be. It has made them behave in a superior manner neither listening well nor showing value or respect for farmers wealth of knowledge. This Power and dominance creates bad attitude which make it difficult to learn. An attitude indicated in a response such as “the vulnerable are shy and cannot push an agenda to the end” (one wonders whose agenda anyway) could have lead to biased targeting of farmers during invitations to these forums hence blocking their chances to participate. The issue of who is or is not a stakeholder doesn't seem to be understood by some staff because response like “the vulnerable farmers are not stakeholders because they have no resources to contribute” is rather unfortunate. It only confirms the deficiency on the part of the staff on skills and knowledge in participatory process.

From the minutes of the stakeholders meeting these forums seemed to be on information exchange but not avenues for joint planning, reflection and interactive learning. There also seemed to be to be no common agenda by the stakeholders as no joint activities or joint plans are discussed. This seems to be understandable considering that from the research findings these stakeholders are not involved, (at

least meaningfully) in any stage of the programme. The lack of a serious common agenda could be the reason why stakeholders are not taking them seriously.

It can also be noted that these forums are dominated by the MOA who decides when to call them and what it to be discussed. Their role does not seem to be a facilitator of the forums agendas but a dictator of the process. This could explain why other collaborators are ignoring these forums and the implementation of stakeholder forums. This finding agrees with (SAIEA 2005), the implementation in a participatory process is more likely to be accepted if contribution of all stakeholders is seen to be considered other than when interest party dominates.

When individuals and organizations work together it's more beneficial for the process as they complement each other and learns from each other's experience hence create synergy. Partnership building encourages relationships in which there is valuing of all partners' perspectives, such relationship foster open communication development of shared history, common goals and honest exchange of ideas and resolution of conflicts. Partnership among various stakeholders in NALEP seems to be lacking. Relationship among the stakeholders was noted to be poor and unsustainable. Among the factors identified by stakeholders to hinder this collaboration is lack of joint actions and lack transparency and honesty and unclear terms of reference.

The NALEP programme has facilitated farmer research extension workshops for interactive learning between the farmers and professionals (research extension) but it appears these forums too have not been productive as it was intended.

The farmer research extension workshops seem to be avenues for information giving (mainly research passing the information) but not avenues for joint reflection interactive learning and experimentation among the actors. The fact that the research is conducted by the researchers without involving the farmers and extension could mean that the local traditional and scientific worlds are not linked.

These meetings seems not to have yielded any impact to the farmers for the three years of NALEP in Mwingi district, which makes one be tempted to think there is no commitment of the researchers to what is discussed or that they are held out of routine ,maybe because funds are availed by the programme and the target on the number of workshops held have to be met, otherwise farm trials or demonstrations or a technology emerging from the joint action of the farmers, researchers and extension staff are lacking.

The meetings also lacked the presentation of the vulnerable farmers and the marginalized including the women and also other extension service providers e.g. NGOs, Private sector who are also meant to be stakeholders in the FA .There exclusion means that their perceptions are not taken into consideration hence reducing their commitment to the agreed course of action.

5.2.3 Participatory monitoring and Evaluation.

NALEP documents and the NASEP policy have emphasized the use of PM&E regularly which shall involve key stakeholders. As indicated earlier the district team does regular M&E which however was reported not to add much value.

The monitoring and evaluation done appears not to be participatory as it does not include farmers or other stakeholders in setting of the indicators, questions to be asked, data collection analysis and documentation of the results. This indicates the FAA does not allow for regular exchange and critical reflection or interactive learning involving key stakeholders. It is also sad to note that stakeholders directly involved or

affected by the very development activities meant to benefit them have little or no input in the M&E even in defining the measure of success.

It appears that the M&E carried out by the organization is an externally controlled data seeking evaluation instead of a stakeholder based process of gathering, analysis and using information. By failing to involve farmers and other stakeholders or involving them only at data gathering stage where they only give information fails to promote self reliance in decision making and problem solving hence failings to strengthen the people's capacities to take action and promote change.

The results of M&E under NALEP were reported not to be shared with key stakeholders. PM&E strives to be an internal learning process that enables reflection on the past experiences, examine present realities and revisit objectives and define future strategies by recognizing the different needs of key stakeholders and negotiating their diverse claims and interests, if then the results are not shared it could most likely mean that the outcomes of the monitoring activities are not translated into revised action and that there is no joint analysis and dialogue to define changes for improvement which could motivate people to take actions to implement the defined changes. It could also mean that the flow of information sharing is one way mainly from the farmers to the staff and never reciprocated. This does not encourage learning.

The PM&E as carried out under the FAA was observed to use predetermined indicators, much as this is important for monitoring resources and achievement of the programme it would be also productive to make it flexible and content specific by allowing the stakeholders and beneficiaries to measure change and 'success' according to their own criteria and indicators depending on their own reality. Basing PM&E on predetermined targets may discourage staff from investing in PA which require more time and energy and are usually slow. It also may hinder critical reflection of the practices (e.g. goals and procedures) and creativity by the extension staff in seeking alternative ways of doing things. Leeuwis (2005,p.316) has stated this 'blueprint M&E may at best only foster single loop learning or even worse define projects as 'successful' while from view of beneficiaries or other stakeholders may not qualify for continuation or scaling up'.

5.2.4 Local institutions

The insight gained on the focal area committees is that as a tool for mobilizing the participatory process within the focal area and introducing group work they have been universally introduced by extension staff in each successive new focal area. There however seems to be some confusion about the roles of the committees with some members indicating that that role has not been clear to them.

A look at the membership of these committees indicate that unlike what was intended in the project document they are not a full representation of all categories of farmers in the FA, the youth and the vulnerable farmers are not fully represented. These committees are elected by farmers who normally will elect known community leaders who are usually the innovative and successful in farming or other activities. Maybe more guidance from the extension staff during their formation would ensure a more balanced representation otherwise the vulnerable will not have space for meaningful participation in decision making and leadership.

The FADCs are reported to be very active during the initial community mobilization stage but most tend to be dormant once the staff withdraw from the FA which means that they are not sustainable. This reasons for this dormancy is indicated to be that groups lacked resources, unmet expectations and that it took much of their time and

energy. This finding agrees Leeuwis (2004, p.253) that 'Participation is a scarce resource from the participant point of view several factors may affect people's motivation to participate e.g. a need to be compensated for 'opportunity cost'. A sustainable incentive system and a clear definition of their role could encourage the FADC members to yield more results.

The common interest groups which are another local institution under the FAA groups is a form of community and farmer mobilization with a huge potential for impact but for various reasons it appears that this impact has not been achieved.

The flagging of the opportunities seem to be the sole responsibility of the extension staff. The farmers who are supposed to benefit from the groups and the other stakeholders who ironically are supposed to support them are not involved in identification and analysis of these opportunities. Then it seems the agenda of the CIGs is not collaboratively done and that there is no partnership built in these CIGs right from the start.

The common interest groups seem to be formed through what could be termed as a "participatory top-down-methodology ". Though membership to these CIGs is not compulsory farmers are actively encouraged or persuaded to belong to these groups by the extension officers. This seems to be prompted by the fact that an extension staff is given targets on the number of groups to form. Then farmers could be joining the groups not from a perceived common interest but because the extension staff expects them to. This could explain why the farmers soon drop out of the groups anyway.

The fact that extension staff are given targets on the number of groups to form and to show tangible achievements of the groups within that one year makes them to be concerned more with meeting the targets than facilitating social learning ,problem solving , network building and negotiations in these groups. It appears to be turning their role to 'social engineers' whose intervention goal is to realize given programme objectives. This finding is supported by the views of Pretty et al (1995, p.65) who indicates that the short term targets set by donors and organization is an issue in institutionalization of PA.

Unless deliberately structured to avoid it, a PA may run the risk excluding the poor and the vulnerable whose participation can be limited by a number of factors including lack of resources to contribute to the group activities. This seems to have happened in the FFA where it's reported that the number of vulnerable farmers joining the CIGs and hence benefiting from the trainings is very low. Though lack of resources has been sited as a major reason for excluding the poor from CIGs a dialogue with the group could come up with suitable investment for them.

The CIGs have been reported to lack sustainability once the extension staff withdraw from the focal area which could mean that the groups do not yield much benefits for the farmers to want to continue investing in them after the programme period or that the members are not empowered enough through the trainings to be able to steer their own development in future.

The rate of failure of these local institutions seems high which could mean they have not meet farmers' expectations for them to be interested.

The one year period of the focal area as blamed by most staff to be the cause of the poor survival of the CIGs. This short period of working together leads to lack of continuity, for by the time lessons are learnt from what works and does not and how mistakes can be rectified the staff have moved on.

The CIGs are reported to have a very weak link with the other stakeholders who could play a very important role in their success either in marketing, provision of information or access of credit. The way these groups are formed excludes the other stakeholders and most groups have not had any tangible output which could attract other services like credit providers. Setting the agenda of these groups in a collaborative way would help to build partnership with the groups from the start through dialogue and joint action leading to mutual benefits of all involved.

5.2.5 Sustainability and Replicability

NALEP has a sustainability focus and exit plan that is built in from the onset. As indicated earlier this is explicit in the project document however this sustainability focus does not seem to have been put in place effectively for various reasons.

The most important foundation for the programme sustainability is expected to be the impact, profit and improved livelihood that NALEP trainings through the CIGs might have on farmers. The CIGs can strengthen the bargaining power of farmers and would also attract other service providers who find it easy to introduce interventions in groups rather than individuals, this seems to be still a dream because as earlier discussed the potential of the CIG concept in the district has not been understood or exploited. The low number of farmers joining them indicates that this benefit has not yet been conceived in the minds of the farmers.

Agriculture extension alone can hardly lead to adoption of innovations without the accompaniment of extension facilitating factors such as credit, markets and good infrastructure among others, which are provided by other service providers. Through the stakeholder forums facilitated by the NALEP at the divisional and district levels, a favorable environment can be created for coordination of actors in Agriculture and rural development. This is a good sustainability measure put in place by NALEP but for its potential to be realized other collaborators and service providers have to be encouraged to invest and collaborate more in these forums than is currently the situation.

The exit plan of the NALEP programme in the district does not seem to favor sustainability aspect. There are no structured activities that bring the activities to a carefully planned conclusion while laying a foundation for project benefit and process to continue afterwards. The sudden withdraw of the staff and the poor follow-ups lead to breakup on the immature partnerships that had been formed and does not leave the farmers empowered enough to solely handle their future activities.

NALEP seems to have benefited other farmers outside the focal area through the spill over of some technologies. This could have been higher if some of these activities were documented and shared out with other stakeholders and neighboring farmers unlike what seems to be the current case.

Building the capacity of the farmers in PM&E can encourage their creativity in problem solving and an ability to identify value of their efforts, an important element in ensuring sustainability. NALEP has not yet managed to build this capacity.

5.2.6 Inclusion of the vulnerable farmers

The focal area approach awareness of the necessity of including the vulnerable in the focal area activities is noted to be high. As noted earlier the more vulnerable farmers are identified and categorized in the initial baseline surveys. This attention given to vulnerable farmers during the poverty mapping exercises only raises expectations that have not been met hence creating mistrust and resentments.

The staff are aware that they are not doing enough to stimulate participation of the vulnerable farmers and do not seem to know to go about it. Working with the poor requires an initial period of gaining confidence as they tend to shy away from offers of technical advice, are not used to being viewed as valuable part of the community, lack simple things as clothes viewed as decent enough for public meetings or the ability to sacrifice a days income in order to attend a training workshop or meeting. To get this category of farmers on board of the focal area activities needs extra skills like dialogue and counseling which were reported to be missing among the staff. It also requires ample time to be able to create confidence and relationships which the short period in the focal area and the obsession with tangible outputs than building relationships NALEP does not seem to offer.

The extension staff biased attitude especially the belief that the vulnerable farmers are not capable, may greatly contribute to this category of farmers being blocked from participation. The attitude that 'we know' and 'they do not know' farmers or 'they cannot' prevents learning on the part of the extension staff. If only this attitude could change to believing that these vulnerable farmers have wide potential in terms of knowledge, ability to innovate, and their capability in complex analysis in whatever language and forms they best understand and their wide experience we would stop leaving them out in research meetings, as members of the stakeholders forums and as leaders of CIGs.

It would require Special efforts (which do not just end in categorizing farmers) to involve vulnerable farmers who may be hard to contact because they live in accessible areas, do not speak English, had little or no schooling and have no resources to contribute, otherwise the FAA will not be giving space for their meaningful participation or gain any benefits from their diverse perspectives.

5.3 Factor that have facilitated the change

NALEP transferred the responsibility of the focal area activities to the divisional implementation teams which can be a good strategy for stimulating organizational learning. In a group people with different qualities and competencies can learn a lot from each other and are better equipped in dealing with emerging problems.

PA is more demanding in terms of resources required. The decentralized planning system introduced by NALEP where the divisional staff plans and controls the resources was seen by the staff to have increased their facilitation to the field. NALEP has a strict financial control measure and demands accountability of funds, this was seen by the staff to prevent misuse of resources hence more facilitation.

Some farmers' response in implementing the PA during the learning process was reported to be good. They had taken ownership and responsibility e.g. they could pay there own expenses for an exchange tour or contribute money towards an agreed group project. This indicated that the process of self organization and development of a demand oriented extension is well under way.

One of the core capabilities needed by the extension staff in facilitating the PEA is the technical knowledge needed to advice farmers on solving their immediate production problems. NALEP is reported to have invested a lot on capacity building of the farmers hence increasing their confidence and professionalism.

The NALEP project has also invested a lot in the capacity building of the farmers in form of CIGs trainings. A number of farmers in the FGDs indicated these have empowered them up in terms of getting to know about new technologies and access to information. Farmers also indicated that the NALEP programme had brought the extension staffs closer for that period and they were now more free. This freeness has motivated farmers to contact the officers any time even on phone to ask for services a thing that was reported not to have been the case. Farmers reported that sensitization and trainings had built confidence in them and they were more aware avenues they could use in case they needed information. Overall the interviews highlighted improved communications and relations among the two groups which are building blocks for institutionalizing PA.

5.4 Factors that have hindered this change

As indicated earlier the most highly indicated factors that hinder the changes to the organization being more participatory included the short period within the focal area, low staff motivation, the rigid procedures of FFA, too much documentation (required reports), too many projects implemented, few number of staff. The least important scarce resources and poor mode of transport which were cited by only 4 out of the fifteen respondents.

The staff farmer ratio in Mwingi was noted to be very low. Most staff in the district had taken a double or triple role to cover for the vacant posts. This situation does not favor the practices of PA which require more time, energy and commitment of the facilitating staff. It can put a lot of pressure on the staff causing the approaches to be counter productive. A staff lacking the time will tend to rush the process or turn to dictation other than facilitating the process. This finding is supported by views of Chambers (2005, p.32) that 'for each individual and organization, output is finite and beyond a certain pressure output may drop through a combination of overwork and demoralization'. Overworking of the staff could also have contributed to their low motivation and poor performance, as it does not allow time for reflections and learning from the participatory practices.

PA can only work well if they are carefully planned and correctly applied. Correct application requires the staff to master the skills of applying them with sensitivity and consistency. These skills were reported lacking. Their practice seems to be concerned more with following the step by step explicit implementation procedures of the NALEP a fact that could have lead to routine and mechanical applications of the methods without taking time to reflect on these rules and procedures. An example is PRA which has been used as a data gathering rather than a joint learning and analysis process. This agrees with views of some authors that one of the reasons why participatory rhetoric and practice hardly meet is the Lack of skills and understanding of the exploratory methods which may include the misconception that methods and methodologies can be treated as mechanical procedures for inducing change. (Leeuwis 2005; Pretty et al 1995; Leeuwis 2004).

The organization was reported to be implementing eight major programmes or projects each with its own implementation procedure, demand for reports, resources to be controlled, meetings and workshops to attend and other different donor demands. For a district with such low staff capacity this could excessively overload the staff at the cost of the poor and the rural development it preaches. This finding agree with Chambers (2005,p.39-42) who says that fragmentation of aid (referring to number of donors in a receipt country) has affected the administrative

capacity of those receipt countries by making demands on them in terms of reports and information, workshops to be attended, visitors etc.

Too much demand for information through numerous, huge format reports can hinder participatory practice. Over demand for documentation means that an extension staff spends much more time in the office writing up reports or in the field gathering the information required for those reports and less time on doing directly productive activities in the field. It could also mean the staff spends more time documenting activities done and less time implementing activities which have to be reported in the next round of reports and so fabricates information which could explain the inconsistency noticed in the divisional progress reports. Reports are meant to inform a programme on achievements and challenges which could be a basis for laying new strategies but if the reports give incorrect or polished information then they can only misinform, which could explain why implementation of NALEP seems to be poor because failures are never reported and so do not provide a chance for learning. Too much demand for information can lead to de motivation of the staff which agrees with Chambers (2005,p.32-33) who says 'the demoralization of Agricultural extension staff so much often found in poorer countries can be attributed to partly to the flood of instructions and poorly articulated demand on information which flows successfully from capital cities'.

PA are meant to be flexible, where goals and objectives are modified as the team realizes what is or is not relevant. The new generated information used to set new agenda for the future actions. This involves 'learning as you go principles'. However the FAA seems to be guided by rigid operational procedures which have been reported to be constantly monitored to ensure they are followed. Too rigid procedure can have negative effective on the performance of the staff by reducing motivation, reducing innovativeness and a loss of focus by concentrating too much on following the procedures right to having time to question the procedures. This is not productive for a PA .The procedures which are mainly control procedure only succeeds to turn the extension staff into a trainer or dictator imposing what is to be done to farmers other than a facilitator to promote social learning. This view is supported by Leeuwis (2004,p.248-250) who indicates that there has been 'mechanical or ritualistic practice of PA in development , to an extent that participatory intervention follows pre defined steps, procedures and methodology, making it fall into the same trap of as 'top-down' approaches'.

Proper attitude and behavior are essential to successful application of PA in the field. Extension staff in the organization were reported and observed to behave in a superior manner to farmers, lecturing, criticizing, instructing being in a hurry not keeping promises, assuming farmers are incapable etc. Such practices do not favor the learning process intended in the PA. This view is supported by Hangman et al (1997, p.8) who report that attitude and behavior was found an issue in institutionalizing PA in extension in Zimbabwe.

When people work closely together there is likely to be experiences of personal irritations and frictions. If this is not recognized and acted on early before it blows up, it can threaten the interactive process by spoiling the atmosphere for free exchange of ideas and undermine the spirit of teamwork.

Staff motivation is a pre-requisite for a well functioning system as it influences individual's degree of willingness to exert and maintain an effort towards organizational goals. Among the factors mentioned to cause low staff motivation was poor remuneration of the staff. If the staff salaries do not meet the basic needs staff is likely to find ways to compensate for this e.g. they will be concerned with earning

enough to cover their basic needs in other ways than to work hard for their public services.

The PA are expensive not only in terms of time and energy but also in terms of money spent. When staff shares motorbikes they have to fit into each others programme. This makes them rush the participatory process to avoid inconveniencing the others waiting. More demand in terms of time is put the officer who has to ferry others to the field.

The female extension staff indicated that the motorbike design purchased was too big and inappropriate for them. Inappropriate modes of transport can de motivate the staff hence reducing performance.

To increase the efficiency of the staff the resources needs to be availed in a timely manner. If procurements are not done on time or staff allowances not paid in time it breaks staff morale hence performance. It also wastes a lot of time staff having to constantly travel to the district headquarters to follow up on the resources instead of committing that time to productive activities in the field.

5.5 What conditions need to be put into place to improve the practice of participation in the organization

An effort to increase the length of the programme in the focal area to more that one year would go a long way in making NALEP more effective in poverty alleviation. This will give the key players incentives and opportunity for vital learning and reflections and for relationships to be built and mature through continuous dialogue, joint actions and mutual benefits. This view is supported by chambers (2005,p.19) that a project tend to achieve more in the third than the first two years by which time much will have been learnt and relationships will have been given time to mature.

Encouraging staff to stay longer in a station other than frequent transfers would enable working relationships are developed and allowed to mature. It also enables the staff to gain experience with the area which can help improve practice. It can be argued that moving staff enables them to learn new things and may help stop 'inappropriate behavior that may develop if staff overstay in one area (like getting into private business) but the cost of frequent movement on participatory process should always be weighed. Creating attractive incentives for work well done can discourage staff from the inappropriate behavior. Frequent transfer of staff hinders the organization to build capacity on PA, because staffs that have been trained soon move on.

Managing staff and reducing demands on them can go along way in improving the impact of the FAA. Increasing the staff numbers and quality at the implementation level can reduce the excessive demands currently placed on the staff which could increase there morale and motivation .Demand on the staff can be reduced through reducing the degree of control and the burden of reporting and substituting this with trust, good relationships , reflection and review. Chambers (2004, p.46-47) has also indicated that there is a need to move to optimize not maximize meetings workshops and other demands on staff bearing in mind transaction and opportunity cost.

All stakeholders need to be given opportunity to participate more meaningfully and from the earliest stage of the programmes possible, and definitely before final decisions are made. This agrees with SAIEA (2005, p.28) that people will only participate constructively and add value to the process if they know their contributions can still influence and add value to the process. If the perspectives and

interests of key stakeholders are equally considered, implementation is more likely to be accepted than if one interest group dominates.

Transparency and honesty are fundamental principles to good participation. Mistrusts hinder effective collaboration and bring conflict that can hinder interactive learning. The mistrust need to be through the development of a shared understanding of the situation through joint fact finding or learning and improved communications to establish transparency and demonstrate honesty.

People will participate more in a process if there is a sense of purpose and direction. It is also impossible to facilitate a participatory process without clearly stated overall process objectives. There should be agreed ground rules which can provide power and legitimacy to the learning and negotiation process.

To improve motivation and therefore increase staff performance various motivating factors need to be put in place. Improved motivation improves job satisfaction for the staff who in turn gives more output to the organization. This view is supported by Dieleman (2003, p.5) who says, a prerequisite of a well functioning system is a well motivated workforce.

A well organized PM&E system can provide a platform for interactive learning and critical reflection of events by all stakeholders. The M&E in the district needs to emphasize on group learning and the need to make it participatory. The monitoring and evaluation also need to be based on emergent rather than pre-determined objectives. This agrees Estrella (2002, p5) that the PM&E system should strive to promote participation, learning, negotiation and flexibility.

The PA do have potential to empower farmers and bring sustainable rural development but this potential cannot be used unless staff are trained how to apply the participatory methodologies. This view is supported by Pretty et al (1995,p.65) who says that for this potential to be realized field staff need to be trained on how to use the participatory approached effectively and consistently. PA should be flexible and not guide by predefined goals and procedures. Too much procedure places a lot of control on the staff that may hinder innovativeness and reduce the motivation of the staff. It also controls the participation of the other stakeholders. Chambers (2005, p.46-47) also agrees 'there is need for empowerment through minimum rules and conditions for local diversity, complexity and autonomy'.

The field staff in the organization needs to unlearn by abandoning behavior and attitudes and working that has become routine and habitual, and have fundamental changes in operational procedures, reward and incentive system and culture. This agrees with Mwanjuma (2003) cited in Chambers (2005:156) that "Without changing attitude and behavior in our institutions, and without putting our interest last, participation will be a dream".

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter the researcher gives a brief summary based on the results and discussions, and synthesizes this information. Proposed course of action in form of recommendations are also given.

6.1 Conclusions

The definition of participation in the organization theory varies very much with the definition in practice. The former promise an interactive participation while the latter indicates participation at low levels, which cannot lead to the empowerment of beneficiaries or sustainability. This shows how the participatory paradigm written in the official policies can mean very little if people decide to ignore it or no institutional support is given to practice it. It also explains why the some programmes labeled 'participatory' do not bring the intended benefits, as the levels that the stakeholders are involved are too low to bring any empowerment, ownership or sustainability. With such low levels of involvement the beneficiaries become mere recipients who cannot influence the services they receive, a fact that leaves the accountability of programmes being upward (to the donors and the policy makers) while downwards (to the beneficiaries) it is poor or lacking..

The focal area approach has failed to meaningfully involve key stakeholders in (including the vulnerable and marginalized) at the different stages of the project cycle as promised in the project documents. This means the stakeholders lack a shared agenda and ownership which explains why their commitment to the focal area activities is poor. It has failed to give an opportunity to various categories to air their views or set their priorities according to their own realities, which explains the low turnout by farmers to the trainings and the low memberships in the CIGs. Beneficiaries cannot be empowered with this kind of 'top-down' which in rhetoric we claim to abandon but we practice it in a different name. They need to be given an active role to enhance their participatory skills. We (development agencies, donors and policy makers) cannot preach empowerment and continue imposing condition on the locals.

The FAA under NALEP promised to recognize the needs of the poor and marginalized but this has not been achieved. Despite its discourse on inclusion of the vulnerable, the way NALEP was designed and is implemented intentionally or unintentionally excludes the poor. Look at the one year implementation period, the speed at which it is done, the style of forming the CIGs, this style of planning and working can not encourage the poor's participation. Our practices, guided by inappropriate attitude and behavior are also excluding the poor that we claim to serve. What justice are we doing to these vulnerable farmers by only being so possessed with them in our talks about pro poor development yet we continue to oppress them through our decisions or indecision? It calls for more responsibility and a realization that the poor deserve much more. In the efforts to address the needs vulnerable farmers may be the following quote from Mahatma Gandhi can guide all those in the development arena.

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or the self becomes too much in you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest or the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate taking is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything from it? Will it restore him to control over his own destiny? In other words will

it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away. (In Chambers 2005:261).

In contrast to what is indicated in the MOA theory on participation, the FFA practice has not met the regularly indicated principles of participation. See table 1.

i. The FAA approach has not reflected a clear and coherent common agenda among stakeholders and has not lead to partnership building

The study reveals that NALEP is designed, planned, and mostly implemented monitored and evaluated by the Ministry of Agriculture with little or no input of other stakeholders. Yet a lot of expectation is placed on the stakeholders through the stakeholder's forum. When one source of power dominates the process and appears to be manipulating and controlling other actors then it can likely result to resentments and mistrust that leads to lack of commitment to the course of action. It explains why community action plans are never owned and so hardly implemented by the stakeholders, and why collaborators hardly interact with CIGs. How can one expect them to be interested if they were never part of setting this groups agenda in the first place?

ii. The approach has not managed to meaningfully apply the 'triangulation principle'

This has failed to link the local, traditional and scientific worlds. The top down passing of information by researchers through the extension to the farmers fails to give interactive learning approach to rural innovations which means research innovations developed cannot meet the realities of the farmers and so their uptake is low. It also often ignores the local knowledge of the community, which undermines the esteem and confidence that drives development.

iii. The approach has not created interactive learning and feedback loops.

The quality of the monitoring and evaluation in the organization is very poor. This means that the organization does not take time to learn from mistakes or success and use them to improve on future plans, documented and shared with others within and outside the organization. This could explain why same mistakes or failures in the programme continue to be repeated and pointed out in report after report, year after year or an issue discussed in every meeting in one year. This lack of reflection and learning explains why procedures that have been noted to be unproductive are still imposed on the staff and farmers. Why can we not accept failure and take this as a golden opportunity to learn?

iv. The approach has not led to meaningful wide social change. Social change can only occur if the approach empowers people to steer their own development in the future, to be able to put demand on the extension system. For this FAA needs to be used as an end not as a means to only achieve the goals of the organization.

v. The approach does not integrate the complexities and dynamics of change.

The implementation of NALEP is guided by pre set goals, objectives rigid implementation procedures and strict budgets. Participatory processes which are normally fluid cannot be productive if implemented this way.

The NALEP FAA has some factors that have facilitated some changes towards the organization being more participatory like the improved communication between the farmers and the other institutions and the formation of the common interest groups which have encouraged farmer participation and creation of forums for exchange of ideas e.g. farmer research extension workshops. These are positive factors that can be built on to increase the impact of the FAA. It also shows PA have the potential towards farmer empowerment if only conditions are suitable for their practice.

Various factors were identified to have hindered the productiveness of FAA in Mwingi despite its great potential. These agree with the literature on participation. They include lack of skills on applying participatory methods and the organization environment that does not favor their use. The latter indicates very well that if an organization want to move to being participatory it has first to change certain ways of working, which includes its culture, procedures and relationships within and with others outside it. It needs to take a critical self reflection and be ready to un learn. Such an organization needs a repackage, to be adaptive and creative in order to cope with changing environment, otherwise it stands a risk of being obsolete.

6.2 Recommendations

The researcher proposes the following strategies to improve the conditions within the organization and make the PA more productive.

6.2.1 Staff training and empowerment

Facilitating PA is highly demanding and requires and requires professional and experienced staff, who can manage the dynamic complexities which is the opposite of the linear, mechanical and rigid teaching scheduled of the old type of extension agents. Certain competencies need to be developed at the cognitive, Behavioral/attitude, emotional and professional levels for the extension staff in the organization in order to build capacities of individual personalities to act in different ways. Programs proposed include

- At cognitive level critical self reflection and analysis and challenging of own mind-set and mental frames need to be encouraged. Creativity and mental flexibility needs to be enhanced through experimentation with new ideas and action learning.
- At emotional levels there needs to be mentoring and counseling to help build confidence and self esteem which are some of the factors needed to manage complex participatory process.
- At behavioral/attitude level the organization needs to invest more on staff trainings that will facilitate a critical review of the prevailing values and social norms. To facilitate change these social norms, values, attitude and behavior need to be made visible to the extension agents so that they can discover them in their self analysis. This can be done in workshops and meetings. In this analysis the staff needs to be confronted with the consequences of the status quo so that alternatives can be sought.
- At professional level certain capabilities required for an extension agent to effectively facilitate PA were found missing in staff. Capability to facilitate complex and dynamic learning process in the community can be improved through trainings in areas like social learning, network building, problem solving and negotiation.

6.2.2 Restructuring the organization

The problems indicated in the results e.g. low staff motivation, high staff turnover deteriorating performance calls organization restructuring with a goal to facilitate clear open communication that enables organizational learning. This will bring the advantages of increasing effectiveness and efficiency, increase staff morale and productiveness and reduce staff turnover.

The organization needs to become a learning organization that continuously learns how to learn together, this can be done through decentralized decision making, giving opportunities to learn from experience, leaders model calculated risks and experimentation and encouraging team work among others. The organization should adapt a system of 'planning, doing, checking and acting together'.

There is need for the organization to develop a motivation scheme for its staff to encourage them put their efforts towards the organizational goals. Results revealed that the staff lack of motivation was a major factor preventing change. A well motivated staff has greater job satisfaction and for the organization, quality work is given. Under performance of a staff is expensive for the organization. Various strategies can be employed to motivate staff some of which have no financial implications e.g. involving staff in decision making, avoid overworking them, avoid routine work, maintain a positive workplace environment, demonstrating trust in staff or just saying 'thank you'.

6.2.3 Network building

The collaboration with other stakeholders is poor. For effective application of PA networks need to be made and strengthened so that various actors can come together and learn from each other experiences and expertise. It gives farmers, professionals, Stakeholders and management insight and involvement. Relationships among the actors can be strengthened through regular dialogue and negotiations. Mistrust can be minimized in way of joint fact finding.

The organization needs to put extra effort towards the strengthening and legalizing the stakeholder's forum. Currently the stakeholders forums seems are just informal gathering whose membership is voluntary and with no mandate and capacity to perform its role. It needs to be a legal entity. A clear, jointly agreed memorandum of understanding or a national policy strengthening the stakeholder forum.

6.2.4 Changing the organizational culture

An effective organizational culture needs to be developed as the current culture is ineffective. Change required include adopting a client oriented attitude, a shift from control oriented to performance oriented management which focuses more on discussion, negotiation and agreements on principles, process and direction, with the subject of review, reflection, learning and adaptation. A focus on experiential learning and the importance of values, ways of being and relating with others should be a key concern of the organization if it aims to change the practice on PA to becoming more process oriented and people centered.

The change of a culture involves changing its underlying assumptions, values and beliefs. Staff members need to be involved in this change so they can identify with the decisions. A reward system can be put in place to encourage positive culture.

Without such organizational change the benefits of participatory approaches will be just on paper

6.2.5 Critical review of the FFA implementation procedures.

The organization needs to unlearn and change how implementation of FA activities is done. e.g.

l) The CIGs which are meant to be the channel of farmers to demand services and also a measure taken to ensure project sustainability are noticed to be ineffective and unsustainable. Forming of the CIGs can be more yielding if this period is increased to make the formation and development of the CIGs a step-by step experience where farmers are first allowed to perceive that they indeed have a common interest other than someone from outside 'seeing' this interest. Greater ownership of the groups

could be created this way. Also NALEP could use the already existing groups within the communities which were reported to be doing better when they register as a member of CIG other than those loosely forming new ones.

ii) Though the NALEP FAA is ambitious on covering large number of farmers, a careful balance needs to be found between achieving quick results in terms of numbers and moving on at a learning speed. Targeting to a focal area for only one year with a bid to cover more areas has blocked interactive learning and experimentation as the implementation of activities is done in a hurry and time for experimentation is not allowed. This period needs to be increased to a minimum of about three years which will allow for learning, reflections and relationship building. This is especially important when targeting the vulnerable farmers, as building of trusting relationship is important if they have to open up.

iii) From the results it's noted that the evaluation system through the performance appraisal systems mainly relies on quantities. This has been found as indicated in the discussion to discourage use of participatory process that take longer and staff become more concerned with achieving targets than encouraging learning. A strategy to change evaluation and reward system towards quality of work rather than quantity with an evaluation criteria set by the staff themselves. Self evaluation by the staff is an important tool that can be used to improve performance.

v) The extension staff needs to be encouraged to own the participatory process. From the results some extension staff felt frustrated and disempowered when unable to adapt the participatory methods. One strategy that can be used to achieve this would be giving them more control allowing them to adapt the methods to suit their own needs. A more flexible control would motivate them and they will feel the wide knowledge they have in working with the communities is respected. To avoid the misuse of this control the extension staff need also be trained not only on the methodologies but also the underlying principles of participation.

6.2.6 Future research

More research is required to provide insights on how the organization can go about building and influencing or changing its current culture which is ineffective and is blocking the organization performance. Relevant questions may include:

- I. How does culture influence network building, social learning and negotiation in the context of PA. How does culture affect and shape the process of organizational learning?
- II. How and why do extension workers deal with the organization culture and how does this impact on the quality of extension services delivered?
- III. What practical implications and guidelines can be derived from this?

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Primary references

1. Ministry of Agriculture, Mwingi District NALEP annual reports 2005/2007.
2. Ministry of Agriculture, Mwingi District NALEP Monitoring and Evaluation 2005/2007.
3. Minutes of the district and divisional stakeholders meetings 2005/2007.
4. District Management team meeting meetings 2007.
5. Divisional resource registers 2007/2008 financial year.

Annex 2: Extension officer's checklist

1. How does the ministry of Agriculture interpret and use the term 'participation'?
2. What drove the organization to adopt participatory Approaches?
3. What changes were introduced into the organization?
4. What avenues exist for sharing knowledge among the different stakeholders?
5. What issues are discussed in the programme management meetings? Do they allow critical reflection of what is being done?
6. What measures have been put in place to ensure the vulnerable are also able to participate?
7. Who constitutes the stakeholders forum? Is it inclusive?
8. What issues are discussed in the stakeholders' forum?
9. What has been the sustainability of relationships between stakeholders?
10. To what extent have stakeholders been committed to the action plans made?
11. What is the sustainability of the farmers groups and other local institutions that have been formed over the years?
12. What affects the sustainability of these groups?
13. How are the local institutions representative of all categories of farmers (vulnerable, women, men, youth)
14. How often are monitoring done? Who does it and what is monitored?
15. How the monitoring and evaluation done is there a format to fill out?

16. How are the monitoring results shared and put into use?
17. What criteria does the organization use to know if you are doing your job well?
18. If you really wanted to know if your colleague is doing a good job in empowering farmers, what would you look for? Why?
19. What changes have occurred within the farmers in terms of access to information and ability to make demands on the extension system?
20. What has been the role of farmers and other stakeholders at different stages of the NALEP programmes (project identification, planning, implementation ,monitoring and evaluation)
21. What guides you in implementing NALEP? (farmers' demands or organizations' demands)
22. How is the exist plan of NALEP? Has this exit plan succeeded in Mwingi?
23. Are farmers able to carry on the initiated projects own development after the staff withdraw from the area under NALEP?
24. In your opinion , have you succeeded in achieving NALEP aim of advocating for involving the beneficiaries and other key stakeholders provision of extension services?
25. What is it within the organization that has enabled you to achieve this?
26. What factors within the organization has made it hard for you to apply effective participation with the farmers and other stakeholders?
27. What is your involvement within the organizations' decision making on how NALEP should be implemented?
28. What conditions to be put in place to enable the extension staff to involve farmers and other stakeholders more in the FFA activities?

Annex 3: Farmer's checklist

1. What extension programmes were implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture before NALEP?
2. What is the major difference between these programmes and the NALEP?
3. How have the farmers been involved in the various stages of the NALEP programme? (Appraisal, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation)
4. What avenues exist for sharing knowledge among the farmers and other stakeholders?
5. How are the views of the farmers represented in these forums?
6. What has been the involvement of other collaborators in NALEP in providing services to the farmers?
7. How would you access the participation of the different categories of farmers (rich poor, men, women, the very poor, single headed households)?
8. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the vulnerable farmers also take part in the NALEP activities?
9. NALEP has used the common interest groups to mobilize farmers and deliver extension services, how are these common interest groups formed? What is the farmer's role in their formation?
10. What have been the achievements of these groups within the programme time and after the programme exit?
11. What has been the benefit of farmers from the NALEP?
12. In your opinion has NALEP succeed in involving the farmers meaningfully in the FAA process?
13. What factors has made this possible or not possible?
14. In your opinion what conditions need to be improved to allow NALEP address the needs of the farmers more?

Annex 4: Other stakeholders

1. How would you define participation as used by MOA in the FAA?
2. What has been your involvement at the different stages of the NALEP programme? (Appraisal, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation?)
3. What avenues exist for sharing knowledge among the different stakeholders?
4. How have you been involved in these forums?
5. What would you say is the working relationship between your organization and the MOA?
6. What activities have you been involved in with farmers in the NALEP areas?
7. What can you say has been your benefit as a stakeholder in NALEP?
8. What is your perception on the involvement of collaborators by MOA in the focal area activities?
9. What factors would you say has hindered collaboration between MOA and your organization in the FA activities?
10. What conditions need to be improved to encourage this collaboration?

Annex 5: Checklist for content analysis from the organizational documents

1. What is the theoretical definition of participation as used by the ministry of agriculture?
2. What drove the Ministry to adopt Participatory approaches?
3. What changes in practice have occurred since the introduction of PA in the organization?
4. What organizational factors have hindered these changes?
5. What factors in the in the organization have facilitated these changes?

Annex 6: Checklist of things to observe

1. Commitment of the staff to their work
2. Attitude and behavior when dealing with the farmers
3. How does staff identify with the organization beliefs?
4. Social interaction within the organization.
5. Other factors that may hinder the effectiveness of the organization.