

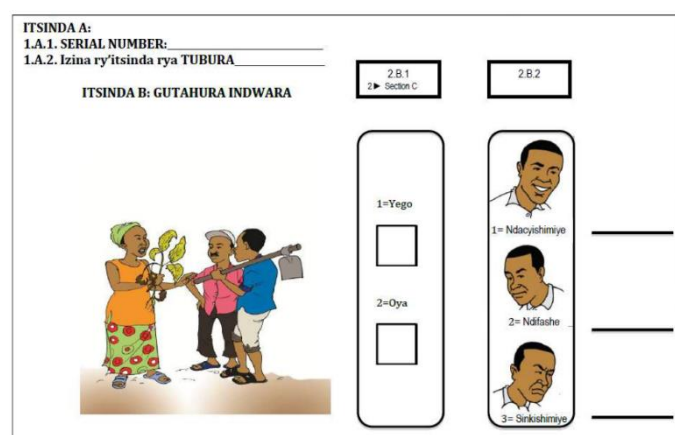
## Context

The question on how to make extension services work is particularly relevant in the context of traditional public agricultural extension services. Given the high rates of understaffing and low levels of accountability in many systems, privatization of extension services may be a way to improve cost-effectiveness. However, private services may lack incentives to tailor their services to the poorest, making them an unsatisfactory substitute for a public system of extension. This issue is particularly salient in sub-Saharan Africa, where markets for agricultural services are typically thin.

Rwanda's Land Husbandry, Water Harvesting, and Hillside Irrigation (LWH) project served as a pilot for understanding these potential tradeoffs with the option for farmers to purchase agricultural services (inputs and extension) from One Acre Fund (OAF).

## Partnership

The World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) team worked with OAF and the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) to design, introduce, and test innovative farmer feedback tools. Together, we set up a large field experiment, in which we randomly assigned two types of feedback tools to groups of OAF clients. We added a twist to learn more about the underlying mechanisms: to separate out pure monitoring effects from user empowerment effects, we announced to some extension workers that their work is being monitored, in both treatment groups ("true" announcement) and control groups ("false" announcement). We also tested the cost effectiveness of different feedback modalities.



A simple tool to elicit feedback from farmers for services they receive

## Findings

### Offering feedback channels is a meaningful way to combat dropouts and increase attendance in extension trainings.

First, feedback tools help sustain demand for the service among current clients. Farmer groups offered the opportunity to provide feedback were half as likely to have members leave the service the following year as control groups.

### Feedback tools retain farmers but also address constraints to adoption among non-users.

Second, and more surprisingly, this demand effect spills over to non-users in the vicinity of the treated groups, who are more likely to sign up in the following season. Farmers groups who have access to feedback tools are 28 percentage points more likely to attract new members, relative to control farmers groups that have a 8 percent chance to attract new members. This implies an increase in group size of up to 3 additional members in the subsequent season (0.69 SD). These effects are robust to multiple hypotheses testing.

**This is not a simple monitoring story.** Randomly announcing the presence of scorecards to extension workers allows us to rule out a pure monitoring story. Extension workers do not overwhelmingly respond to our intervention by exerting more effort in villages where additional monitoring was announced. We therefore conclude that the large impacts feedback tools have on farmers' demand for agricultural services are primarily attributable to farmers' empowerment, or taste for respect.

### Offering feedback is particularly effective in getting women to start interacting with a field officer.

Given female farmers have access to smaller plots, this is in line with the idea that, in the absence of a strong feedback loop mechanism, private extension services exclude the more modest producers.

## Scaling Up What Works

The most cost-effective feedback mechanism piloted (a hotline) was adopted and scaled up by OAF throughout Rwanda the following season. In the years since, OAF has piloted and implemented the hotline in other countries where they operate.