

Uganda Case Study

Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of a joint DFID, FAO and ODI fact-finding mission to Uganda in October 2001, which interviewed a wide range of government and non-government staff from organisations involved in communications or information on agriculture at National, District and Sub-District levels.

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Background

Economic and Agricultural Development Policies

Uganda is amongst the 20 poorest countries in the world but has achieved successful macro-economic reforms contributing to an economic growth of 6% per annum over the last ten years. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries, account for approximately 43% of GDP. The government of Uganda has prepared and is implementing a Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) aiming to reduce the number of people living in absolute poverty to less than 10% by 2017 through maintaining the economic reform process, broadening economic growth and economic opportunities (particularly in agriculture), improving the provision of basic social services, and improving the country's capacity to respond quickly to economic problems. The World Bank, IMF and other donors recognise the PEAP as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Uganda.

The Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), an important component of the PEAP, aims to increase rural incomes through increased farm productivity, increased marketing of agricultural products and increased on-farm and off-farm employment in agriculture-related activities. The PMA has seven components: improved agricultural research and technology; the establishment of a national agricultural advisory service (NAADS); improved rural finance; improved agro-processing and marketing; agricultural education; sustainable natural resource management; and improvements in physical Infrastructure. The plan also seeks to integrate programmes to improve health, general education and general rural services throughout government and local government programmes, and explicitly recognises the importance of improved information services and knowledge.

The PEAP has a well-developed communication strategy, and the PMA and many of its subsidiary components are developing communication strategies to help coordination and integration, to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the programme activities and are able to participate in planning and local budgeting, and to deliver the information needed by stakeholders at all levels.

National Telecommunications and Internet Policies and Regulation

Uganda has a well-developed set of policies on telecommunications and ICTs. The **Policy on Communications 1996** and **Uganda Communications Act 1997** separated Posts and Telecommunications, established the Uganda Communications Commission and opened the way for private investment. MTN was licensed in 1998 as the country's second fixed line telecoms supplier, and Uganda Telecom was privatised one year later. The two companies are guaranteed a 2-provider system for 5 years, with the condition that they must install a certain number of lines in every administrative county. There are three cellular providers – MTN, UT and CelTel.

Information Systems and ICT

The Government of Uganda has prioritised the development of information and communications infrastructure through privatisation over the last few years. The establishment of the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) to oversee the privatisation of Uganda Telecom, and the introduction of private sector competitors to provide fixed and mobile telecommunications infrastructure has resulted in dramatic improvements, especially in urban areas. The current teledensity of 1 telephone per 100 people on average however disguises wide regional disparities, although all Districts should be connected by 2004. The Rural Communication Development Fund financed by a 1% tax on all suppliers will establish telephones in every sub-county by 2005 and internet Points-of-Presence in all Districts (allowing local rate charges for internet access at District level), each with a Cyber-Café and Telecentre, as well as providing internet training to one secondary school in each District. The Fund will also provide some money to pay for the

generation of appropriate content. Multi-purpose telecentres have been introduced by donor programmes and are being piloted in a range of sectors such as health, education and agriculture, and private sector cyber-cafes and internet services are emerging in most major towns.

Opportunities to improve information for livelihoods

The importance given to communications in the PEAP and sectoral strategies, recent establishment of the Uganda Communications Commission, and expansion of telecommunications infrastructure by MTN and UTC creates a very favourable context for work to improve communications and information services in Uganda. There are a number of opportunities to address the key themes identified in the desk study.

1. The need for coherent, coordinated policies

The need for improved information highlighted in the PEAP, and addressed through its communication strategy, has spawned a rash of communication strategies in sectoral programmes (e.g. the PMA), and their component parts (e.g. the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS) communication strategies). Most are driven by the organisation rather than information users, some are weak or fail to focus on disadvantaged groups. Most stakeholders stressed the need for greater coherence and coordination within and between these strategies, for agreed procedures and standards, and for effective monitoring and evaluation of communication activities. Specific opportunities exist to:

- Work with UCC, UNCST & others to help ensure that appropriate strategies for rural information technologies are incorporated into national policies.
- Help the PMA Secretariat, partners at all levels and donors to develop coordinated strategies and capacity for communication.
- Help specific agencies e.g. Agricultural Statistics; NAADS, NARO and NGOs to develop their own communication strategies.

2. Strengthening partnerships and linkages between national and local-level institutions.

The parallel processes of privatisation of communication infrastructure (coordinated by the UCC), commercialisation of public sector broadcasting (through the establishment of Uganda Broadcasting Agency), rapid growth of private FM radio stations, reorganisation of agricultural research, and promotion of multiple agricultural service providers, while potentially increasing the flow of information to farmers, has also complicated the process. Appropriate partnerships will need to evolve between all stakeholders to ensure the development and delivery of appropriate messages.

Decentralisation should strengthen links between communities and government, allowing local government to develop, or encourage the private sector to develop more appropriate services, but has removed many of the structural links between national-level organisations (e.g. NARO, or the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)) and district institutions. New, informal mechanisms will be needed to ensure that local-level institutions can benefit from national-level capacity and that national-level planning is based on accurate local-level information.

Many institutions lack resources, or the capacity to identify, obtain, generate and deliver appropriate content, and there is a gap between national and local institutions. Specific opportunities to improve this include:

- Strengthening MAIF and UBoS to collect and disseminate agricultural statistics (building on existing FAO systems – eg FIVIMS), for monitoring the PMA process.
- Strengthening the capacity of NAADS and its partners (e.g. NARO Outreach, Local Councils and NGOs etc) to develop and deliver appropriate and cost-effective information to advisors and farmer groups.

- Strengthening the capacity of the media in Uganda (e.g. Radio Uganda and/or private FM stations etc) to develop and deliver appropriate information.

3. Building capacity

Stakeholders at all levels stressed the need for greater capacity in assessing information needs, developing information strategies, transforming and delivering information. Specific opportunities to build capacity include:

- Building a coalition of individuals who have practical experience of innovative approaches to communication (e.g. CBS Radio, MTN Mobile Data Services, FFS, COARD project etc), to raise the profile of communication activities, publicise successful approaches and address specific issues.
- Helping PMA and NAADS to develop appropriate internal information systems to help them manage their diverse, multi-partner information activities more coherently (using e.g. intranet / www – based systems) and understand audience needs better (eg by using Steadmans to conduct audience surveys etc).
- Working with UCC to help develop appropriate content to promote the roll-out of internet points of presence at District level and/or MTN to develop and test mobile-phone text message systems for farmers.
- Working with NAADS, DAO, SAARI, Voice of Teso and the Farmer Field Schools in Soroti District to capture, scale up and share farmer-level information (see Soroti example below).
- Working with NARO and NAADS to explore new methods to transform research results to extension and farmer messages (e.g. by scaling up the CABI project).
- Working with farmer organisations and/or research institutes to develop and test electronic mechanisms for information sharing (e.g. FarmNets or VERCONs).

4. Access and Empowerment

While a number of agencies are involved in providing information directly to farmers, many informants stressed the problems of media and scale. Farmers prefer face-to-face communication, and few receive much information through other routes. Even the relatively large-scale Farmer Field School programmes in Soroti and Busia Districts reach fewer than 5% of farms, and there is some evidence that programmes providing market information benefit traders more than farmers. There is an urgent need to find new ways of ensuring that useful information reaches poorer farmers.

5. Content and context

Many government and non-government agencies in Uganda are generating potentially useful information on agricultural production and livelihoods (e.g. NARO, Makerere University, MAIFF and others), but much is too academic, too specific, or just in the wrong language for farmers. Incentive systems for staff involved in producing this information encourage them to produce academic information for scientific journals rather than practical materials for farmers, and few have farmer-oriented communication skills.

6. Building on existing systems

Uganda has much useful experience of providing information in support of sustainable livelihoods, including practical extension, farmer field schools, rural radio, telecentres, and the internet, and interesting experiments in the pipeline for mobile-phone based text messaging. The challenge over the next few years is to build these up into a sustainable informal network of partnerships delivering multi-media information to the whole spectrum of stakeholders involved in sustainable livelihoods.

A District-level intervention

The field trip to Soroti District, provided an opportunity for the team to develop a more detailed example of how a programme to improve information for livelihoods could build on existing systems.

The FAO/IFAD-funded Farmer Field Schools programme, being implemented by the Department of Agriculture, has effectively introduced new approaches to integrated production and pest management, but the process is very labour-intensive and has only so far covered c.5% of farmers in the District. The key to the programmes success is a process of facilitated 'farmer learning' that both provides new information and skills, and motivates farmers to apply the new approach on their own farms. If it were possible to capture and communicate the results of this 'farmer-learning' directly to other farmers the new approaches could benefit more farmers more quickly.

There are many agencies already involved in these activities, including:

- The District Agricultural Office – which is responsible for coordinating agricultural development efforts in Soroti.,
- The Local Councils, especially at District (LC5) and Sub-County (LC/3) levels – which are responsible for implementing government policy and programmes.
- Serere Agriculture and Animal Research Institute – which is involved in research and information provision on dry-land crops, including integrated production and pest management.
- The Soroti Agriculture and Rural Development Centre – which will (when it becomes operational) provide demand-driven agricultural research and extension in the dry-land areas of Uganda.
- The DFID-funded Client-Oriented Agriculture Research and Dissemination project (at Serere) – which is exploring mechanisms to increase client-orientation and dissemination of the results of agricultural research.
- NAADS – which will be piloting new approaches to agricultural service provision in Soroti districts.
- IITA/FoodNet – a regional agricultural research and development network which is developing a decentralised market information service for policy agents, producers, processors and traders.
- Uganda National Farmers Association – a national farmer's organisation which undertakes advocacy on behalf of farmers, and provides a range of practical services to members including training, information and marketing.
- Local NGOs.
- Voice of Teso – a private FM radio station with a mission "development through radio" which has already been involved in some interesting development-related broadcasting for small-scale enterprises funded by private sponsors.

A modest programme working with these partners could substantially enhance the availability of information for farmers. Activities could include:

- An initial workshop for all stakeholders to generate enthusiasm, develop clear objectives, identify tasks and linkages with other related processes (e.g. Credit, inputs etc).
- Capacity-building materials and events for partners.
- Development of an information strategy including an assessment of information needs, messages and media, and responsibilities.
- Collaborative and independent work to develop appropriate information materials and mechanisms.

- Implementation of the information strategy in Soroti, including feedback and evaluation.
- A workshop to review lesson-learning, and develop plans for institutionalisation and wider dissemination in Uganda and elsewhere.
- Work by FAO to make the lessons available to other member states through technical departments, the FAO web site and information materials.

The presence of SAARI, the ARDC and the DFID-funded COARD project, in a District that has an innovative District Agricultural Office which operates the FAO/IFAD Farmer Field Schools, which will be a pilot District for NAADS provides a good opportunity to further develop methodologies and processes to disseminate client-oriented research results and capture FFS information and experience which can be replicated through NAADS. Voice of Teso offers the possibility of widespread dissemination of information, success stories, and locally-developed solutions to local problems throughout Soroti District.

Organizational profiles

Box 1 - The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC),

The UCC is responsible for implementing the **Uganda Communications Act 1997**, including monitoring licensing and regulating communications services, allocating radio frequencies, controlling tariffs, setting national communications standards, promoting research into development and use of new communications technologies, promoting competition, establishing and administering a fund for rural communications development, and establishing and operating a communications services training centre.

Box 2 - The Uganda Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)

UNCIST was formed in 1990 from the National Research Council, and is responsible for developing Uganda's ICT policies.

Box 3 - MTN Uganda

MTN is an upbeat efficient-looking private sector telecommunications company providing fixed and mobile voice services, bandwidth for ISPs and mobile data services. MTN already covers 70 towns, and will cover most of the country by the end of the initial license period. With a year's head start on Uganda Telecoms (UTL), and an efficient commercial sector approach, MTN had over 200,000 mobile phone customers by January 2001, compared to UTL's 60,000. As well as providing telecommunication infrastructure, MTN is working with the USAID Compete Project to develop a mobile phone based text-message information system to provide information to farmers about coffee, cotton and fish.

Box 4 - Uganda Telecoms Ltd (UTL)

MTN's main competitor provides a stark contrast - still looking and operating like a government department. Before privatisation UTL ran 3 rural telecentres to provide internet and other information to rural communities, but they were very expensive to establish (c \$60,000 each), and difficult to sustain. Since privatisation UTL have become less involved in development activities – focusing on expanding its fixed and mobile phone network to cover every District except in the far north of the country. They have established a mobile phone network covering the whole but have fewer subscribers than MTN. UTL On-line runs the county's only internet gateway and leases access to other providers.

Box 5 - The National Organisation for Agricultural Research (NARO)

NARO has Research Institutes and Agricultural Research and Development Centres (ARDCs) in all agro-ecological zones in the country. Until recently focusing mainly on research, NARO is increasingly involved in information provision and training, through **NARO Outreach**. Most of NARO's information systems (eg ARIS, and publications etc) are managed in Kampala although they will soon be decentralised to the Research Institutes and ARDCs. Over the last two years, NARO has attempted to become more farmer-led, and produce information more immediately useful for farmers. NARO is working on a general communications strategy and has prepared a number of proposals for donors to improve its information provision. But it is proving difficult to re-orientate the organisation, partly because there are as yet few incentives for researchers to provide useful information. Professional development still depends on getting scientific papers published in refereed journals.

Box 6 - Client-Oriented Agriculture Research and Dissemination Project (COARD)

NARO is implementing a DFID-funded **Client-Oriented Agriculture Research and Dissemination Project (COARD)**, which is designed to increase the number of farmers adopting poverty reduction approaches, and strengthen the client-orientation of all Research Institutes in Uganda. The project includes a competitive agricultural research Fund open to any researcher in Uganda. The scheme has clear funding criteria, which include the need for partnerships between Research Institutes and Extension Agencies, a focus on poverty reducing technologies, use of participatory approaches, and a clear information dissemination strategy focused on farmers and other end users rather than for other scientists. COARD has been in operation since 1999 years, but the Fund has only been active since 2000. Although COARD emphasises dissemination, most projects approved through the Fund still use traditional written media as opposed to video, radio and drama.

Box 7 - The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)

NAADS is a multi donor programme (World Bank, DFID and others) to reform agricultural extension services under the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture. Its vision is "A decentralised, farmer-owned and private sector serviced extension delivery system contributing to the realisation of the agriculture sector development objectives". NAADS will strengthen farmers and farmer associations, strengthen private sector agricultural service agencies, increase farmer access to technology, develop information, communication and marketing systems for farmers, and establish participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery systems. The key NAADS institution is the Farmer Group at Parish level. These will be represented in Farmer's Fora at sub-county, district and a National Farmers Forum. At least 75% of the estimated budget of US\$108 million, will be devoted to grants to Farmers Groups with which to purchase agricultural advisory services, from government or private sector suppliers (including Farmer Field School Facilitators – see later). NAADS is also working on a communication strategy, trying to define what information it should provide to whom (policy makers, Intermediaries or farmers) and how to build in cost recovery to information and advisory services. Another problem is where to find useful information. There are many potential sources including Universities, donors and NGOs as well as NARO, but few produce information in the right format.

Box 8 – The Uganda Bureau of Statistics

Formerly the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the **Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBoS)** was established in 1998 as a semi-autonomous agency to coordinate, monitor and supervise the development of the national statistical system. Through dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, consensus emerged that the bureau should seek to work through networks and partnerships rather than establish its own systems. In September 2000, the Bureau published a **Framework for the Development of Agricultural Statistics in Uganda** following a process including an in-depth data needs assessment and stakeholders workshops. The integrated framework aims to be user-oriented, wide-ranging, flexible and pragmatic, long-term, built on partnerships, integrated and cost effective and will build capacity throughout partner agencies to ensure sustainability. Framework components will include a national database, institutional capacity building, a census, annual agricultural surveys, other household surveys, a village agricultural reporting system, and a national early warning system. Partner organisations will include the UBoS, Dept of Meteorology, MAAIF Early Warning and Statistics Section, Forestry Department, Fisheries Department and Livestock Department, The Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Makerere University, the Ministry of Health, and the Chief Administrative Officer. Implementation of the framework will be coordinated by a new National Agricultural Statistics Coordination Committee, with technical guidance by a new National Agricultural Statistics Technical Committee.

Box 9 - The Uganda Spatial Data Infrastructure Concept (USDI)

The USDI concept describes a process to establish a Uganda Spatial Data Infrastructure and National Information System. The concept has been developed by an EC supported inter-ministerial task force set up after a WB study of progress with the PEAP identified the lack of available and consistent data as a major obstacle, and subsequent WB study to develop a GIS information system for government to help capture and measure the multiple dimensions of poverty, and provide geographically disaggregated information to programme managers, planners and policy-decision makers. The concept includes an electronic network, and a set of organising principles, so that users and producers of different sectoral data can all access and record the necessary data. It is designed as a transparent system to provide all stakeholders and the market with the information necessary to identify new development opportunities, services and products.

Box 10 - The Uganda National Farmer's Association (UNFA)

UNFA has more than 100,000 members, and fully staffed offices with telephones and photocopiers in all Districts. The membership fee is c \$1 (includes wife and one child), for which farmers get access to information and 3-levels of certificate training. UNFA is a member of PMA and NAADS committees and will help farmers to "demand" services from NAADS, but it may also try to become a service provider itself. UNFA also works closely with NARO and has representatives on the boards of all the Research Institutes and Agricultural Research and Development Centres. There is a political dimension to UNFA's work so it may run into confrontation with NAADS, especially if it doesn't win enough contracts. Nevertheless UNFA is an important source of agricultural information for farmers – but only to members.

Box 11 - International Institute for Communication and Development

IICD is a Dutch NGO involved in a number of communications projects in Uganda – e.g the District Administrative Network Programme which will introduce voice and data communications links and electronic data processing in financial management, data communication, data storage and analysis in 4 Districts, between the District HQ and one sub-county council.

Box 12 - Foodnet

Foodnet is a regional agricultural research and development network set up by IITA, focusing on market-oriented research and sales of value-added agricultural products. Foodnet works with a wide range of partners in Uganda and other countries to undertake market research, post-harvest research and commercial agro-enterprise activities including UNFA, NARO, ACDI/VOCA, CLUSA, Radio Works Incorporated, World Space, CEDO, World Food Programme, FAO, IFPRI and others. Over the last two years Foodnet has established a market information service using a variety of media that reaches almost all parts of the country covering more than 7 million people. In October 2001, Foodnet submitted a proposal describing a **Strategy for Implementing a National Decentralised Market Information Service for Policy agents, Producers, Processors and Traders in Uganda** to the Committee for Marketing and Agro-Processing of the PMA Secretariat. The 5-year strategy will expand the existing Foodnet through the development of a new media strategy, (likely to include information dissemination through radio-broadcasts, e-mail, fax, telephone, the internet and national newspapers), routine collection of data on 28 commodities in 20 Districts, training District Information Officers, and Farmer Trainers, integration of local, regional and international information; and the provision of expert advice.

Box 13 - The Council for Economic Empowerment for Women of Africa (CEEWA) - Uganda

CEEWA Uganda is a chapter of CEEWA, a regional body, which was initiated at the NGO forum that preceded the Beijing conference in 1994. CEEWA is an NGO involved in training, research, documentation and advocacy aimed at male and female economic decision-makers responsible for economic policy design and implementation to promote the economic empowerment of women. CEEWA works directly with women's organisations in four programme areas: Women and Agriculture, Women and Finance, Gender and Economic Decision-Making and Women and Entrepreneurship Development – which includes a programme promoting the use of ICTs by women entrepreneurs, which has established the Women's Information Resource Electronic Service (WIRES) Centre providing information to rural women through ICT sites in Buwama and Nabweru.

Box 14 - The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)

DENIVA was founded in 1988 by representatives of 21 NGOs in Uganda and has since grown into a large national network with members all over the country. Its mission is to enable the NGO sector to provide appropriate socio-economic development services and influence policies for people-centred national development through exchange of information, knowledge, skills and collective action. DENIVA provides a forum for NGOs to exchange information and ideas, promotes collaboration and partnerships between members, maintains a resource centre and strengthens members own resource centres, and helps with project identification, design monitoring and evaluation. Programmes include: NGO self-Understanding and Management, Strengthening NGOs In-Country Training, Information Exchange and Management and Policy Analysis and Advocacy Programme.

Box 15 - The FAO Farmer Field Schools

The (FFS) project is a 3-year programme funded by IFAD and FAO to improve farm productivity through farmer-to-farmer. Each FFS typically has 25 members, all local farmers, who explore new approaches to integrated production and pest management by working together on a communal plot under the guidance of a trained facilitator. Each FFS lasts for one full year, during which time members undertake some basic agro-ecosystem analysis, run experimental plots testing varieties and husbandry methods – based on farmers' own prioritisation - and analyse and record the results. Other farmers in the area often start copying the approach before the results are finalised because they can "see the benefits with their own eyes". The project gives the FFS resources to pay for the facilitator, for other speakers and other expenses. All FFS include equal numbers of men and women, and many are starting to explore non-farm related issues such as home economics and HIV/AIDS. The programme has been very successful. Farmers adopt the new approaches quickly, and pass the information on to their friends. The project is now training its own facilitators – graduates from FFS – who can facilitate other groups for a small fee, dramatically reducing the cost of setting up the schools. They offer potential to become a focal point in the community for access to information from other agencies. Some already belong to the Uganda Cooperative Alliance, or to the Uganda National Farmers Association. The first FFS facilitators (who were all Government Agricultural Extension Workers) produced their own materials and curriculum using information from the National Agricultural Research Organisation and other sources including the internet and their own personal experience. Now the farmers are also producing information based on their experience with the FFS, and the programme is developing material for local FM radio.

For an example of FFS in Asia see <http://www.communityipm.org/Concepts/ipmffs01.html>

Box 16 - The Uganda Broadcasting Agency (UBA)

The UBA has been established recently by the Ministry of Information to start the process of privatising television and radio broadcasting in Uganda. While still part of the Ministry, Uganda Television (UTV) ran programmes on Farming, Health, Environment, Rural Development and Poverty Reduction, but has not been able to recently, due to lack of funds. They can only broadcast now if the programmes are sponsored by development projects (eg FAO/UNFPA Family Life series). Although it is possible to receive UTV over more than 50% of the country and TV is a good medium to reach policy makers, planners and decision makers, educational programming is being pushed out by more popular entertainment programmes that have greater capacity to generate income.

Box 17 – Radio Uganda

In much the same boat, **Radio Uganda (RU)** lacks funds for everything except salaries. They do not have telephones, computers or internet access, still use old analogue equipment and don't even have a portable tape recorder. They depend on newspapers for material, and they cannot talk to farmers except when they go home. There used to be a coordinating office in the Department of Agriculture, and there used to be Department of Agriculture staff based in Radio Uganda. NARO and donors have sometimes sponsored programmes e.g. SG2000. One disgruntled employee told us "The government seems to have left information to the dogs". Radio Uganda has 5 regional channels and broadcasts in 22 languages. Despite all the problems, Radio Uganda still produces one 30-minute programme each week called "Calling Farmers", and although they don't actually know how many people listen, they get lots of letters, and claim to reach the rural poor better than the commercial FM stations which are listened to more by urban audiences.

Box 18 - The New Vision

The New Vision is one of Uganda's oldest English language newspapers and is still going strong. Journalists with the New Vision have been involved in an innovative programme with SG2000 to raise the profile and generate enthusiasm for agricultural journalism among journalists, agricultural scientists and trainers, which has resulted in a marked improvement in the quantity and quality of agricultural journalism. The Uganda Christian University, at Mukono now includes agricultural journalism in their journalism course. To improve information outputs from research institutes, they need to employ press or media liaison officers and provide rewards for researchers for producing useful information.

Box 19 - Buganda Central Broadcasting Station (CBS)

CBS is a commercial private radio station belonging to the Buganda kingdom which has broken the rules of the FM format, by broadcasting in Luganda, emphasising Buganda music and introducing educational programmes. It has also worked with a number of development projects to produce drama series and talk shows which are educational, yet get audiences large enough to attract commercial sponsorship. The ILO/FIT programme promoting small and medium enterprises came to CBS for help to put programmes together. They had already done an audience survey of information needs and radio preferences. CBS helped develop a programme format, put together a demo programme and found sponsors. Now the programmes are 100% owned and run by CBS, with content from small businesses, and "experts" on air to answer questions – who can then be contracted for training by listeners. CBS has developed a network of four FM stations, which broadcast in local languages, but share information produced in a central production unit which can collect and supply material over the internet. CBS is now working with the USAID Compete programme to find sponsors for programmes to make "Ugandan coffee, cotton and fish products more competitive on the world market" (The Compete programme is also in discussions with MTN about the possibility of Mobile-phone-based information services).

Box 20 - Steadmans Uganda

Steadmans is a well-established media service company providing a wide range of services including market and social research, media monitoring, media consultancy and management and staff training. Steadmans has undertaken work for a wide range of government and private sector companies, donors and development agencies including DFID, ILO, Ministry of Justice, the World Bank etc.

Box 21 - The Chief Administrative Officer's Office

The Chief Administrative Officer's office in Soroti coordinates all sectoral government offices in the District. Although providing public information is one of their key tasks, and they have some physical resources including a mobile cinema, they have only one Information Officer who is responsible for covering all the sectoral offices. There have been many initiatives to improve information provision in the District, for example through the Voice of Teso, and a wide area network established by the Central Bureau of Statistics, but there are inadequate funds. There is one private sector development centre in Soroti, which provides information on business opportunities to farmers, but this is not accessible to poor farmers because they charge for services, and few can afford it. The Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture, and the National Agricultural Advisory Service will include substantial investment in improved communications and information, but staff doubt this will be successful unless other components are put into place, for example better access to Rural Finance and the District will need improved information systems to link the components together.

Box 22 - Soroti District Agricultural Office

Soroti DAO is responsible for agricultural development in Soroti District. Extension systems have changed dramatically over the last few years. The training and visit system was modified, then central-level extension was scrapped and devolved to Districts which had to establish their own systems. Soroti focused on farmer-led systems – established groups at Parish level and tried to capitalise on farmer-to-farmer systems. The Farmer Field School system was very complimentary to this, and built on the new emerging village level groups. The National Agricultural Advisory Service has chosen Soroti as a pilot District because it is considered better prepared than others for the new approach. Agricultural service staff were initially very nervous about the implications for their programmes, but now understand and support it as a result of various consultations and stakeholder workshops, although they fear that the proposed grants to Local Councils may be managed inefficiently because capacity is weak. Past experience shows that public funded systems don't operate smoothly and NAADS complicates this further by using public funds to support private delivery. Local Councils will need to be strengthened to respond to the demands and farmer groups will need to be strengthened to demand services. There is also an urgent need to stimulate and build capacity of the private sector service providers from whom Local Councils will contract services. Agriculture staff are also concerned about their capacity to provide information to all of the stakeholders. There used to be an information officer in the agriculture department, but that post was lost in the reforms, leaving only the District Information Officer who has to cover all the departments as well, and doesn't have specialist agricultural knowledge. The District Agricultural Office has 25 professional staff, 4 in the District HQ, the rest posted at Sub-County level. Core funding from government covers salaries, but only 50% of operational funds, with the remainder coming from District sources and externally funded projects including the Farmer Field School programme, IFAD, DANIDA and SG2000. The Department would like to mainstream all programmes through the existing 86 FFS groups. Some graduates of FFS have formed a sub-country network of FFS "alumni" to discuss how they can become service providers. There is some rivalry between the FFS groups and UNFA, which tends to set up parallel structures.

Box 23 - Serere Agricultural and Animal Research Institute (SAARI),

SAARI is one of NARO's National Research Institutes is in Soroti District, and focuses on dry land issues through 5 programmes: Livestock improvement and nutrition (cattle, smallstock and chickens), Legumes (Cowpea, pigeon peas etc), Oil Crops (Peanuts, sim-sim, sunflower), Cereals (Sorghum, millet, para-millet), and Cotton. SAARI also multiplies seeds (eg cassava and sweet potato) from other institutes, for distribution to farmers. In addition to strategic research, and on-farm testing of developed technologies, the institute is becoming involved in a wider range of activities with local farmers including farmer training, NGO extension service training, the production of brochures and leaflets, field days and open days, and exhibition stands at agricultural shows. Serere will be the site of an Agricultural Research and Development Centre, but this has not yet been staffed, and it is not clear whether this will run as a separate organisation, or will be integrated within SAARI. The DFID funded Client-Oriented Agriculture Research and Dissemination Project, as described above is based at Serere, and has undertaken some research into rural information needs and preferences, and is developing an information strategy for SAARI.

Box 24 - Voice of Teso (VoT)

VoT is the only radio station in the region, and the only FM station in the country with an explicit mission to promote “development through radio”. It covers several Districts within a distance of 150km from Soroti. It is a commercial station, and people have to pay to get things broadcast. Although there is no requirement for public service broadcasting in their license, VoT is producing educational programmes, including “I work for myself”, a package of programmes for small businesses supported by CBS in Kampala and the ILO/FIT programme. The programmes are made by a private sector programme maker in Soroti, who was trained by CBS and DW. It is very popular and has attracted sponsorship. VoT staff are confident they could do the same with a programme on agricultural development provided the package was very attractive, with lots of interaction with small scale farmers, local music and drumming. Although they are interested in the CBS idea of a central production centre in Kampala, the material would need to be reworked for the Teso audience. They have an internet connection which they use to gather material for news broadcasts, and each of their 7 daily programmes has a “community awareness” section. Staff at VoT believe that radio is a very effective medium for dissemination of information even in very remote areas where few people have radios, because people who hear it will pass it on to others.