

## Info Note: Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) Program

The Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) Project implemented by a University of Illinois-led Consortium has an objective of defining and disseminating good practice strategies and approaches to establishing efficient, effective and financially sustainable rural extension, information, and advisory service systems. Future food security, poverty reduction, adaptation/mitigation of environmental change, and people's empowerment will depend on rural innovation. Improving rural productivity, profitability, and sustainability will require rural people to adopt changes in use of technologies, management systems, institutions, and environmental resources.

### Rural Extension and Advisory Systems:

Expanding capacity for rural innovation involves strengthening extension systems, broadly defined as including varied extension, advisory and information services that:

- Provide advice to farmers on problems or opportunities in agricultural production, marketing, conservation, and family livelihood
- Facilitate development of local skills and organizations and links with other programs and institutions
- Transfer new technologies to farmers and rural people



Extension systems throughout the world have been in decline. Many past approaches proved unsustainable or ineffective. Extension must go beyond traditional approaches and integrate the various reform strategies MEAS promotes. These must be tailored to country conditions and program objectives. There are no “silver bullets” in the form of standard program approaches or organizational models. Programs and organizational arrangements must be tailored to fit country and program needs. To effectively serve food security and economic development needs of resource-poor men and women farmers new extension approaches must draw on full breadth of resources in public, private and civil society organizations and utilize available advanced information and communications technologies. MEAS seeks to be a Network of Excellence to promote and support such endeavors.

### MEAS Approach:

As a strongly demand-driven service project, MEAS will bring the resources of US universities and their partners to bear on extension system development. The project will help USAID Missions and partners transform and modernize extension systems. The project emphasizes participatory approaches and collaboration with host countries and other development practitioners. Activities fall under three components:



1. **TEACH** - Disseminating Modern Approaches to Extension through user-friendly materials for dissemination and training programs that promote new strategies and approaches to rural extension and advisory service delivery.
2. **LEARN** - Documenting Lessons Learned and Good Practice through success stories, case studies, evaluations, pilot projects, and action research.
3. **APPLY** - Designing Modern Extension and Advisory Services Program through assistance to selected host country organizations – public and private – for the analysis, design, evaluation and reform of rural extension and advisory services.

Modernizing extension and advisory services may mean different things in different countries. Often, this involves expanding the role of private sector entities, integrating ICTs into rural extension systems, ensuring extension service accountability to farmers/clients, and redefining roles of government. This requires program design for “best fit” of organizations and approaches to the country context.

Principles emphasized in new approaches to extension include: local planning and implementation, institutional pluralism, private sector approaches, demand-driven response to client needs, participatory planning and implementation, cost sharing, effective use of mass media and ICTs, market-orientation, linkages with other government services, and results orientation.

Initial support has gone to Bangladesh, Mali, Liberia, and Rwanda.

### **Consortium Partners:**

The MEAS Project Consortium includes the following members, all of which are available to implement Associate Award activities.

- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Michigan State University
- University of Florida
- University of California Davis
- Cornell University
- North Carolina A & T State University
- Catholic Relief Services
- Cultural Practice, LLC
- Winrock International
- Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education
- Sasakawa Africa Association with the Global 2000 Program
- The International Food Policy Research Institute
- Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

### **Options for Mission Access to MEAS Services:**

USAID Mission and offices have various options for accessing MEAS support. Extension and advisory service system development is particularly relevant to initiatives for improving food security, nutrition education, value chain development and environmental adaptation/mitigation/conservation programs. MEAS assistance to development of local institutional capacity may support *USAID Forward* local procurement strategies.

1. **Core Program Support:** Core program resources are limited, targeting largely definition and dissemination of good practice options for improving extension services. Missions may draw from good practice notes, analytical work, and training materials developed by the project. Limited centrally-funded support is available for country scoping assessments, case studies, and other activities.
2. **Buy-ins to the Leader Award:** Country Missions may buy-in to the Leader Award for in-depth assessments of extension needs/capabilities, training, design work, evaluations, or pilot projects. Missions develop scopes of work for such buy-ins in conjunction with MEAS. Funding can be for planning or support to public or private extension reform/development or for extension programs targeting specific value chains or thematic areas.
3. **Associate Awards:** Missions can fund Associate Awards for expanded analytical work and training aimed at local extension capacity building, reform and development of national extension systems, or implementation of public or private extension programs. Programs must involve rural extension services for agriculture, rural development, nutrition, or capacity development. Advantages of Associate Awards are: No further competition required for Mission Associate Award, simplified Mission award documents, simplified certification by the recipients, and reporting directly to the Missions.



### **Contact Information:**

Missions may contact the MEAS project through contact information on the website: <http://www.meas-extension.org/home>.

For procedures for Associate Awards contact BFS: ([galex@usaid.gov](mailto:galex@usaid.gov) or [menis@usaid.gov](mailto:menis@usaid.gov) or see ADS 303.3.26 Leader/Associate Awards (<http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>).