

Session: Smart technologies for effective partnerships in Rural advisory services (RAS) by Prof Elliot Zwane University of Limpopo, South Africa

My Contribution to this discussing include the identification of technologies as practical tools to strengthen partnerships in advisory services. The question is who are these partners? why do they have to be strengthen? More insight can be found in the overview of work done in this regard.

Overview:

During the era of new dispensation in South Africa in 1993, a team of 6 extension *experts* constituted a committee which carried a vision that was envisaged for advisory services in South Africa. This team looked for sponsorships and it was supported by GTZ who sent a short term consultancy in Polokwane. This happened at the time of amalgamating the different advisory services in the Province. Workshops were organized to create the vision of future advisory services that would be desirable which would detach itself from the tendencies of transfer of technology philosophy. The new department was formed and a long term consultancy finally conceived and the formal programme of reorientation was started in 1998 with a new consultancy to guide the process.

Two pilot areas were identified based on the stability of the districts namely Capricorn and Vhembe in Limpopo. Using the experience from Chivi Village in Zimbabwe, a new strategy was developed by the new "BASED" Team whose objectives were to ensure that the change which was introduced would be sustainable. Among the various issues that were developed and tested, this pager presents the learning tools which were used to draw in partners in the change process in advisory services. Among the learning tools the following are discussed, the bus code, the river code, the knotty robe, and the unity sticks.

What work: The purpose of this inputs is to share our experience in strengthening our partners in rural advisory services. In line with the philosophy of advisory, which seek to create self-reliance in the partners. Evidence showed the benefits such as improved yields, team spirit, unity of purpose e.g. seed producers.

What are the challenges faced by Partners?

Problem	Tool to use
• Dependency	The river code
• Uncoordinated vision,	The bus code
• Conflict (inward looking)	Knotty robes
• Conflict (disunity)	Unity sticks

What is the implication for extension in implementing the technology?

We used these tools, in pilot sites and they have helped to strengthen our partnerships. Advisors played big role when they applied innovative ideas and were in line with the characteristics such as being: **flexible, persistent, confidence, sociable and have discipline**. **Question for discussion:** who are these partners for Rural Advisory Services? What are the advantages of the learning tools to strengthen partnership? What are the disadvantages in their potential to strengthen partnership?