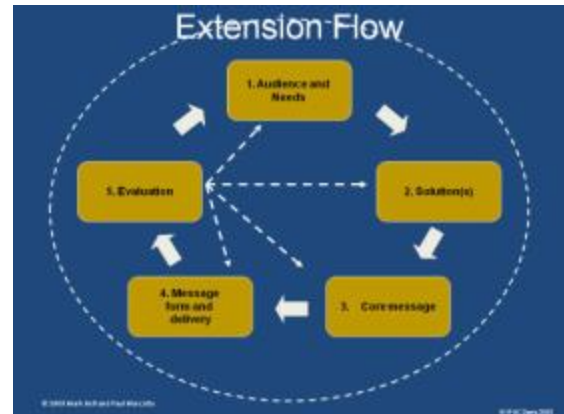# Skills required for successful extension

Mark Bell and Paul Marcotte

Extension – which can be defined as:

getting knowledge to farmers, so that they will make a positive change
and can be presented as a 5-part framework
(Figure at right - Bell and Marcotte, 2012)

1. **Audience and Needs -** Who are the audience and what do they need?
2. **Solutions** – What are the viable, appropriate solutions?
3. **Core message** – Which part of the solution message do farmers need to hear (to understand and be able to change)?
4. **Packaging and delivery** – What is the best way to package and deliver the message to help farmers make a positive change?
5. **Evaluation** – How can you collect information to improve both the extension process and the message while also identifying emerging needs and opportunities?

The elements required for a successful extension system are:

1. **Technical** – Extension workers need sufficient technical knowledge to be able to identify problems, suggest potential solutions and/or know who to contact for more technical expertise.
2. **Delivery** - Extension workers need to understand how to package, deliver and communicate with farmers and providers of technical content.
3. **Institutional** - Extension workers need adequate institutional support and structures to be sufficiently motivated and able to effectively work with farmers.

Good Extension requires a wide range of skills and expertise from running farmers meetings to field diagnostics and providing sound recommendations (Photos Andrea Bohn).

The table below outlines a number of key skills required for successful extension.

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Steps in extension and skills and understanding required

1. Identifying Needs

Collect and assess Secondary data	Recommendation Domain development	Work with farmers. Focal groups; planning:
Prioritize problems	Identify true Cause	Audience analysis
Participatory assessment	Field technical evaluation	Technical knowledge

2. Solutions

Assure credibility of source	Assess relevance and credibility	Technical knowledge to know what makes sense
Role of farmers in early assessment	Field testing	Prioritize solutions/options

3. Core Message

Understand your audience	Technical knowledge	Prioritize content
Break down the message	Communication skills	

4. Message Packaging and Delivery

Field demonstration implementation	Poster development	Fact sheet development
Design and implement events	Presentation skills	Cell phones as a tool?
Radio and TV as tools	Work with farmers	Farm walks & test strips
Web/repository development	Communication skills	Video development
Persuasive writing	Adults as learners	Understand dissemination options

5. Evaluation

Collect feedback on technical, process and forms of material	Iterative learning	Event evaluation

General Extension Skills

Plan and prioritize	Meeting management	Budget management
Time management	Facilitation	SWOC
Understand the extension process	Prioritize skills	Conflict resolution
Proposal and report writing	Presentation skills	Communication skills
Team management	Assign work	Resource allocation
Use of ICT	Audience analysis	Market awareness
Choose partners	Build consensus	

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