

Modernization of Guyana Extension Services – Phase I

Partners of the Americas - Farmer to Farmer Program Trip Report

April 22 – May 5, 2007

Tom Cadwallader and John Preissing

Background

Our task was to scope out the need for a longer term, more thorough review of the extension services, including who should be contacted for such a review and how they should be contacted and how the current system should be analyzed. Simultaneously, we were to gain an initial understanding of the Guyana Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), both how it is organized and how it functions, other extension function providers, and other agriculture extension/extension serving institutions. Finally, we asked to work with the local Partners of Americas Farmer to Farmer leaders (Kelvin Craig, Project Director and Shaun Francis, Project Coordinator) and the MOA officials to establish a realistic timeframe for the second and third phases of the project.

Over the course of the two weeks we met with several Ministry of Agriculture, NARI, USAID, and NGO leaders. We also met with farmers in various regions of the country. Our base of operations was at the Rainbow Forest B&B, operated by Manager Syeada Manbodh and Administrator Jerry La Gra. The location was a great respite from the city and long days in the field. The hosts were also very knowledgeable on Guyana and Guyanese development efforts.

We will provide a detailed description of our visit under the Activities section. We will also provide a summary of our findings, by visit. Since our task was primarily to complete an initial needs assessment and to develop the next steps for phases II and III, our range of recommendations for making a more effective and efficient extension system is provided as our chief results. We also present concrete recommended next steps in the follow through section. We will also provide some additional Farmer-to-Farmer possibilities that complement the Modernizing Project but are specific items. Please note that like the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and MOA concept papers, we have drawn from Qamar's Modernizing Extension Services FAO document, a well-recognized resource used in the evaluating Extension services around the world.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Review of the Extension Services assignment was to contact Guyanese and international agencies to explain the modernization goals of the Ministry of Agriculture's extension efforts and learn how Partners and others could assist them. We were to identify realistic partners, strategies, and timetables for the overall modernization project, which will come in phases II and III of the project. Prior visits by extensionists and specialists such as Otto Weigand and Bill Olsen greatly aided this effort

as our credibility and usefulness was accepted. The reputation of the Partners of the Americas Washington Office (Erin Means and Peggy Carlson, specifically) was also quite strong. Finally, the local Farmer to Farmer office staff professionals (Kelvin Craig and Shaun Francis) were quite well respected in country for their ability to understand issues and provide possible assistance. We both believed that the previous Farmer to Farmer work provided an ample foundation for moving ahead with this project.

Over the two week period we met with 48 agriculture and extension professionals, rural development agency heads, and local farmers. We met with approximately seven national organizations that deliver rural or agriculture development services in the country. We interviewed the US Ambassador, USAID Director, US Peace Corps Director, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture Director, and the local head for the Guyanese Trade and Investment Services project. We also met 100 extensionists at a professional development conference where we presented on our model of extension delivery. We visited four regions of the country to meet with farmers, agriculture extension professionals, and local officials. Our major accomplishments include gaining a more complete understanding of the extension service providers in Guyana, mapping out a strategy for their modernization goals, sharing several current extension practices and strategies with local professionals, and establishing concrete next steps for the modernization project to move forward.

In our recommendations section we outline Macro-Institutional, Inter-Institutional, and Micro-Institutional actions that we believe can enhance the performance of the Guyanese extension services. All these recommendations were shared with top Ministry officials before we left and there was agreement on the validity of them. We did change the focus of the upcoming Phases II and III based on our observations and conversations. The focus is still on modernization of the services, but with slightly different potential participants from the initial project strategy and background document. Nine assignments or areas of support are listed: 1) Senior Extension official on policy, mission, vision, and institutional actions; 2) Extension specialist and senior agriculture extensionist for commodity-based team development (Preissing recommends that Tom Cadwallader continue in his role); 3) An organizational development and strategic thinking extensionist for community-based and institutional-based planning efforts; 4) Agriculture Economics and/or Business Development specialist to assist with feasibility studies, impact analysis, and entrepreneur decision making; 5) Senior extension agent to share current extension practices, skills, and methods; 6) Associate Dean, District Director, or Human Resources professional to share staff development and entire range of personnel management; 7) Program Development specialist to share our work in program development and evaluation; 8) Information Technology specialist to share our work on practical applications of technology for extension work; and 9) Youth and intensive gardening practices. This could be through 4-H YD, Agriculture, or CRD extension staff. It is possible that some Wisconsin extension staff could fulfill more than one of the roles/assignments. Finally, our recommendations include attempting to bring Guyanese Extension professionals to Wisconsin to learn first-hand about current practices. Opportunities for this could include when state, regional, or national meetings are planned.

Our University of Wisconsin Extension International Committee will work with the Partners of the Americas to coordinate the exact timing and scope of assignments by upcoming volunteers. We understand that the Ministry of Agriculture is keen on having these assignments move forward quickly and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Activities: Daily Notes and Key Observations

April 22

- Travel to Guyana, arriving at the Rainforest Bed & Breakfast

April 23

Preliminary meeting with Kelvin Craig, Coordinator, Guyana Partners of the America's Farmer to Farmer Program and Shaun Francis, Field Officer to review the history of the Guyanese Extension Service and discuss the reasons behind the project.

- The Guyanese Extension Service as it is today has evolved out of the British model common during the British colonial period. Immediately following their independence in 1966 the Guyanese government maintained the system that had been in place. Both prior to and after independence the Extension Services primary goal was producing enough to sustain the colony. Also, the historic export crops of sugar and then rice were considered apart from the Extension Service charge.
- As is the case with many Extension services around the world, the Guyana Extension Service is housed within the Ministry of Agriculture and its responsibilities range from regulation to education.
- Several changes or iterations of reform have occurred over the years. It originally began as a highly centralized Extension Service and then it moved to a regionalized model. The regional model was eventually seen as less effective, because of local political influence and lack quality control over programs, so today the Extension Service has swung back toward being a more centralized system, headed by a Chief Crops and Livestock Officer. Technical specialists are also housed centrally and all staff training, coordination of animal and plant disease control activities, soils testing, etc, come from the MOA offices in Georgetown.
- Kelvin Craig made the point that in the past work as an Agricultural Officer or Livestock Officer (equivalent to our Extension Agent) was a well-respected career and people sought out the positions. However, salaries, work conditions, lack of training and professional development opportunities, operating budgets, and transportation have all languished – resulting in a less than effective and efficient extension service.
- As the quality and national commitment to an effective extension service waned, farmers began to lose confidence in the Extension Service's ability to meet their needs.
- Since the mid to late 80's privatization issues have come to the forefront, resulting in a shrinking or stagnating governmental mandate; the MOA has been affected.
- Simultaneously, as the effectiveness of the Extension Service declined other agencies, departments and NGOs began doing their own extension work to fill that void. The agencies that are housed within the government, and actually linked with the MOA, who are performing extension type activities include the new Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC),

the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI), and the National Dairy Development Program (NDDP).

- There are also two commodity focused programs that do a considerable amount of extension work, the Guyana Sugar Corporation (Guysuco) and the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) in association with the Guyana Rice Producers Association (GRPA).
- Besides the government and commodity extension activities there is also a limited amount of extension work being done by input supply stores, which are obviously tied to the sale of their products.
- An important agricultural related group that does virtually no Extension work but does influence what happens in agriculture is the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA). Much of the productive agricultural land is just at or below sea level so the NDIA is very important.
- There are also several project driven outreach and agricultural improvement efforts that operate through international donors, governmental organizations and NGOs. (e.g. Poor Rural Communities Project - PRCSSP and Agricultural Sector Support Program - ASSP)
- Craig pointed out that the Minister of Agriculture, Robert Persaud, the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Parmaul, and the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Brian Greenidge, are quite sincere about their desire to modernize the Extension Service. The Minister directly asked the Partners of the Americas, on the occasion of a courtesy call to him by Partners' Washington DC-based Director of the Farmer to Farmer Program, if they could assist them in their modernization efforts. However, at the time of our meeting with Craig he was not aware of a coherent, strategic national plan for agricultural development, for the MOA, or for their Extension Service.
- It was also important for us to understand the governmental and political structure that the MOA must work within. Much of the information that follows was gleaned from questioning throughout the two week visit:
 - In recent history, the last half of the 20th century, the country divided itself up into 10 regional governments. The political units of government are:
 - National Government – A parliamentary procedure in which the citizens vote for the party of their choice and the President and Prime Minister come out of the winning party. Ministers are appointed by the winning party and its leadership.
 - Regional Democratic Congress (RDC)
 - As with the national government, citizens elect the party and the regional leader, the Regional Chairman, is selected by the winning party. Each region also has a Regional Executive Officer (REO) who is appointed by the national ruling party with the consent of the regional party. These are administrative career professionals.
 - Neighborhood Democratic Councils (NDC)
 - The NDCs are intended to take care of the local administration of community focused services.
 - For a number of reasons, that seemed to be political in nature, the national government has suspended NDC elections for the last 12 or so years.
 - Although they aren't supposed to be elected by party, the elected counselors can wield, and often times abuse, their local authority.
 - There appears to be a parallel structure of accountability for the agriculture professionals in the MOA - the Minister and the Permanent Secretary report to the President and Assembly; the Regional Executive Officer reports to the RDC and the Chairperson; the senior Agriculture Officer and the senior Livestock Officer report to the Regional Executive Officer (as well as to their technical

units in the MOA). The local NDC can complain about the services they receive to the Regional Chairperson and the Regional Executive Officer.

- Local Extension workers are employed by the national government but they need to be aware of the local politics in order to stay employed. Currently their activities are reported to and cleared by the REO.

Key observations from preliminary F2F-POA Visit at St. Stanislaus

- *There is frustration with the current situation and a hope that a more effective and efficient extension service can be created.*
- *There appears to be a genuine lack of focus on the farmer, farm family, and rural community in the changes that are being proposed by the MOA. Many of the changes seem to be structural in nature and seem to meet a short term need without looking at the system. The focus seems to be much more on commodities.*
- *There is a belief that the upper level of management is committed to making positive changes but there is a concern among the mid-level managers and field staff over that expressed commitment. They are very uncomfortable with what the future may hold for them.*

April 23

Meeting with the Upper Management of the Guyana Ministry of Agriculture

Present were: Oudho Homenauth, Director of NARI; Michael Welch – Technical Manager, Livestock Division; Dr. Kenrick Elias – Chief Veterinary Officer; Dr. Nicholas Waldren – Program Director NDDP; John Woolfod – Head, Hinterlands Development Program; Beverly Sumners – Chief Crops and Livestock Officer; Cecil Seepersaud – Head Agricultural Project Cycle Unit; Brian Greenidge – Deputy Permanent Secretary; Joseph McAlister – Technical Manager, Agriculture In-service Training and Communication Center; and Steven Jones – representative from the New GMC. Also in attendance were John Preissing, Tom Cadwallader, Dr. William Olson, Shaun Francis and Kelvin Craig.

- Apparently, the MOA is divided into four divisions, one being Crops and Livestock. This is further divided into Animal Services; Crop Services and administration. The Extension function is with each division – a Livestock Officer under Animal Services and an Agriculture Officer under Crop Services. This Extension field staff are located within the ten regions of the country but they are supervised from their technical unit.
- Other agriculture actors include NARI; Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA); NDDP; the new GMC; the NDIA; and the Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals Control Board.
- At the current time there are 67 people involved in the MOA's Extension Service between the central office and the field. However, there is a new plan (see NARI proposal) to add part time para-agents to the field as "Extension Agents."
- There is little strategic planning or organizational planning or priority setting. Further, their work is not based on a grass-roots approach as much as it is on central administration priorities.
- According to Joseph McAlister, there is a need for better training. In fact, a new training conference is just getting underway. We offered to present a segment on the Wisconsin

Extension System and were asked to be the lead off session after the opening remarks by Minister of Agriculture Persaud.

Key observations from meeting with MOA officials.

- *There is a need for strategic direction and planning within MOA.*
- *Training for extension staff could be strengthened.*
- *A genuine interest in strengthening Extension was expressed by the large group gathering.*
- *There is little to no connection to the University of Guyana's Agriculture Program and the Guyana Forestry Commission.*
- *Most students have spent some time at the Guyana School of Agriculture for their two-year associate degree or certificate. There also seems to be a better connection to the MOA there.*
- *One of the topics that seemed to catch their interest was the need for "soft-skill" development among all of the staff. They are well trained in technical information but they need more in such things as conflict management and negotiation, group facilitation processes and strategic planning. They've had some experience with the power of strategic planning in a couple of regions but they would like to see it applied in a way that helps Extension do a better job of focusing its attention and resources.*

April 24

Visit with Cromwell Crawford, Director of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA).

- IICA works primarily on commodity production, systems, and problems. They are currently supporting efforts in export promotion with coconut, organic pineapple, and domestic legume production.
- IICA has base funds from the member countries which include all countries in the hemisphere and then seek funds for individual projects. The Ministers of Agriculture of the various member states constitute the Board of Directors of IICA.
- Cromwell says that as a result of Cooperation Agreements at the headquarter and local levels, IICA sees itself as a constant partner with POA and the Farmer to Farmer program.
- The major extension challenges in Guyana were identified as: 1) Lack of policy direction on the type of extension services to be developed; 2) Overall lack of resources (funds, transportation, staff, etc.); 3) Lack of training on modern extension practices, technical training for staff; especially training for field staff; and 4) Considerable project oriented extension type work within and outside of government detracts from Extension's possibilities.

Key observations from IICA Visit

- *Strategic planning or priority setting is needed for Extension services. It should also be clear what the policy direction will be for extension.*
- *If extension is a de-valued agency then it should be refocused or dropped.*

Visit with US Ambassador David Robinson and USAID Director Fenton Sands.

- Ambassador Robinson spoke highly of an effort that the Embassy and the US Agency for International Development is supporting through a Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project. Rather than producing a commodity and finding a buyer it seeks an identified market then works backwards to the producer to ensure that bottlenecks and barriers are addressed to ensure that the product can be delivered.
- Robinson said that he would rather see smaller practical steps taken than develop large infrastructure related projects.
- The Ambassador also said that he had an opportunity to get out and do about 12 town hall style meetings scattered around the country. He heard a lot of complaints about a lack of primary services and a deep skepticism about the government and their ability to follow through on projects. He got the impression that promising to do something wouldn't be enough; they need to build trust by delivering on some of the important needs of the people. He offered the results of the sessions through the Peace Corps Director who was to summarize them.
- The Ambassador also mentioned that he was not interested in seeing any big capital intensive projects. He would rather see smaller projects that are identified at the local level and have some chance of success. If the local population has an investment they increase their chances of seeing positive results.
- The Ambassador also recommended a focus on market networks and market structures. He also recommended more donor coordination.
- The Ambassador asked us to return for a wrap up visit.
- Fenton Sands noted that there is a need for greater strengthening of private and public entities. The NGO and PVO quality was partly based on the quality of governance structures and overall organizational capacity.
- Fenton Sands also noted that there is a tremendous brain drain occurring by professionals which makes it challenging. The Ambassador added that while just 2% of the Guyanese leave each year, 90% of the university graduates leave.

Key observations from US Embassy & USAID visit

- *Profitability and markets should be an important focus of extension and agriculture development efforts. Learn from the GTIS efforts.*
- *We should ask the Peace Corps Director for any of the Town Hall notes that might be relevant to our recommendations.*
- *The government (and MOA in particular) needs to build trust in the community by showing it can make a positive difference on something the community is interested in.*
- *Robinson was very interested in our project and expressed an interest to meet with us again before we headed back to Wisconsin.*

Visit with the Crops and Livestock Divisions.

- ***Preissing visit with the Crops Division - John Woolfod and Steven Jones.***
 - John Woolfod spoke of the combined negative effects on Guyanese agriculture professionals of the brain drain and the baby boomer generation. As people have left the service, their spots have never been filled. This is primarily due to a government policy not to employ more staff (core establishment) in the public service – part of the agreement with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

- At their high point there was 450 people in the Extension Service delivering programs and now there are only 67.
 - Outside of the central office only two staff members have what is referred to as a “first degree” in the area of crop production.
 - There is a need for extension training beyond technical transfer.
 - Transportation issues are more challenging today than they were in the early years when Extension outreach was a priority.
 - Woolfod spoke of the challenge of new, enthusiastic staff members that eventually have to confront the lack of budget, support, and work conditions.
 - Woolfod also thought that in the best circumstances the future of Extension delivery would be more like the GRDB; semi-autonomous and more privatized.
 - Woolfod believes that the President and the Minister are serious in their attempts to modernize the service.
 - More thought on the organizational structure is needed and the kind of extension service the country needs.
 - Recruiting, hiring, training, and motivating staff are important challenges.
 - A smaller staff that is better supported would be good.
 - Steven Jones reported that the new GMC is focusing on just two regions, trying to make an impact. Perhaps a lesson here on the need to focus.
 - Dr. Homenauth said it is important to organize better and to be more strategic.
- **Cadwallader visit with Livestock Staff – Michael Welch, Kenrick Elias and Colleen Bascom**
 - When asked about the responsiveness of the field staff to the needs of the Ministry when they needed to address an issue they uniformly said that when they needed someone to help with a disease outbreak or something similar they had complete cooperation. They felt that in general the technical skills of the agents were very good.
 - When asked about possible barriers to better cooperation and/or performance, they mentioned several things:
 - There are administrative barriers.
 - They have a lack of physical resources.
 - There has been no formal needs assessment.
 - There is no succession planning at either the local or national level. Many national level staff will be retiring in the next three years.
 - What would they like to see happen in the next five years?
 - Better market information to farmers so they can see how they fit into the marketplace. They felt that the crop area had a better handle on market information than the livestock sector.
 - Research will be more proactive and localized so it is meeting the farmers needs more directly.
 - Educational programs and initiatives will be better organized and have more focus.
 - When asked what Extension Modernization meant to them they all referred to advancements in technology; both information technology and agricultural research and practices.
 - As far as some of their other concerns:
 - NARI does some Extension work and tends to bypass the Ministry’s Extension Service. They may go out to collect tissue or blood samples in the case of livestock, or soil and plant samples in crops, and there is never any feedback to either the

farmer or the Extension field staff. Since the farmers see them as both being a part of the government it makes the Extension staff look bad.

- They also felt that livestock are relegated to a lower class of agricultural commodities. There are parts of the country where livestock farmers may own land but a large majority have no land and they use the commons and byproducts to feed their animals.

Key observations from Livestock and Crops Division meetings:

- *Strategic direction and planning is needed for a stronger, more focused extension delivery system.*
- *The various units of government that serve agriculture must be better coordinated – NARI, the New GMC and the University.*
- *Recruiting and hiring will continue to be a challenge as long as salaries, brain drain, and the prestige of agriculture professions remain low.*
- *A leaner, more efficient service is envisioned.*
- *Although there are many people worried about the future of Extension they are still motivated by the possibilities that exist.*
- *Up-to-date agricultural production and extension education technologies that are appropriate for the learner's situations should be explored and incorporated wherever possible.*

April 25

Visit with Dr. Oudho Homenauth, Director of the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI).

- Dr. Homenauth also presented us with a proposal (dated November 7, 2006) that he had prepared at the request of the Minister of Agriculture on “Enhancing the Delivery of the Extension Services in the Short Term” complete with an organizational diagram. In this proposal it is being suggested that a new Extension Services Unit (ESU) be created in each region with a Regional Coordinator (RC) appointed. The RC would come from within the existing Extension structure in six of the regions but in four of the regions a new person would be hired to play this role.
- The plan also called for hiring new staff members at the community level that would function much like the Ministry of Health’s Community Health Workers. They would be trained in a wide variety of areas to relieve some of the pressure on the current staff.
- The proposal had just been submitted to the Ministry within the last day and the Partners staff was not familiar with it.
- Besides the organizational chart the proposal contained a list of eleven different action items ranging from purchasing computers for regional Extension offices, providing internet access and field staff performance expectations. Nothing was mentioned about program planning, evaluation and reporting.

- Dr. Homenauth said the Ministry expected to hire up to 50 more people through this mechanism. A new Regional Coordinator will be hired in each region to supervise these Extension Agents.
- NARI has 260 staff members, most of who are in 12 field stations throughout the country. Their educational level of those staff members is quite diverse, ranging from a general public school education to agriculture degrees.
- From his perspective, he feels that NARI is completely attached to the MOA, but has some operational independence in hiring and salaries. The majority are GSA level graduates.
- Dr. Homenauth seems to think that the cause of the poor communication and focus is due to their structural relationship. While the Ministry is run through the government bureaucratic system where the minister is appointed by the elected government, NARI has a semi-autonomous board.

Key Observations from meeting with NARI

- *Dr. Homenauth's concept paper is a derivative of an FAO publication on Modernizing Extension Services and it has carried the recommendations from that paper to the extreme degree.*
- *Dr. Homenauth's proposal and organizational chart do not, in our opinion, solve the Extension issue. The hiring of para-professionals as a means for reaching more people does not mean that there is a more mid-term or long range strategy in place for addressing agriculture coverage.*
- *Plus, many in the MOA were not aware of the full extent of this new strategy and were certainly not included in its development. One could ask a question about using these new resources to work with the existing staff.*
- *While it is a commendable attempt to bring more people to bear on the concerns for coverage, the action in itself does not address the concerns for modernizing or creating a more effective and efficient extension service.*
- *Although Dr. Homenauth was adamant that NARI answers to the Ministry they do have a different relationship. They may have a fiscal reporting responsibility to Ministry but it does have its own budget to work with and can compensate its staff at levels different from the Ministry.*
- *Because of its research focus, NARI staff, as a part of a national research organization, more likely than not would like to be respected among their peers in the agricultural research community. It is not unusual for researchers to focus the results of some their work on the scientific community and not get the information out to the Ministry field staff and farming community. This may or may not be the case but it would be understandable and should probably be looked into further.*

Brief tour of the NARI facilities, the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), and the University of Guyana.

- The Guyana headquarters for the POA on the St. Stanislaus College Model Farm, NARI, the GSA and the University of Guyana are all fairly close to each other on the eastern edge of Georgetown.
- The GSA is a fenced and guarded campus and contains classrooms, dormitories and housing for some of the staff. There are also farm fields and orchards on the campus that are used primarily for instruction.

- The NARI facility is also closely monitored for security purposes. It is the center of activity for the administration and research activities. Besides having research facilities for various crops and livestock projects the campus also provides housing for some of the staff.
- The University of Guyana is a comprehensive university and is the home of the College of Agriculture and Forestry. The Agriculture and Forestry faculty also have a research field station that is used for their own research projects and to support their educational mission.
- Shaun Francis said that all of the institutions have taken advantage of the St. Stanislaus College Model Farm where the NDDP has a managed grazing project going.

Visit with the Guyana Rice Development Board staff, Kuldip Ragnauth (Extension Manager) and Laxmikant Manroop (Administrative Manager and Secretary).

- The GRDB is managed by a board of directors that has some government affiliation with the Ministry of Agriculture. They are completely self-funded on check-off dollars from the export of rice. The rate is about \$6 US per ton of rice.
- Because of the focus they have a very clear organizational chart and for the moment each of the five divisions, Finance, Administration, Marketing/Quality Control, Extension and Research, have good understanding of their performance objectives. We say for the moment because over the years there have been some changes in name and mission of the GRDG and thus their relationship with other agencies and organizations, such as NARI and the Extension staff at the MOA. They also maintain close ties to the Guyana Rice Producers Association.
- Currently the Extension Division has about fourteen employees who work at the national and regional level supporting the extension needs of about 8,000 farmers on 70,000 acres.
- In the past few years they have been doing something similar to our pasture walks. On a weekly basis they organize farm walks on different farms in a region as way to get farmers together to share research the GRDB has done or been a part of and also to get some of the better farmers to share their own experiences. Mr. Ragnauth was very interested in hearing about the facilitation techniques we've used in our pasture walks. The people they hire for the Extension roles are trained in the technical aspects of production but need some training in educational methodologies that do a better job of engaging the farmers.
- Kuldip said that the new methods, such as the farm field schools, i.e. discussion groups like the Pasture Walks require new training and skills by his staff. This is an important area for future professional development and growth.
- Mr. Ragnauth agreed with Ministry staff that new employees coming out of the technical schools lack the people skills needed to be more effective at their jobs.
- The day we met with Mr. Ragnauth and Mr. Manroop, the GRDB had just submitted a draft report to the Ministry of Agriculture assessing the Ministry's Extension Service. The assessment was done at the request of the Minister and was apparently intended to identify weak programs and employees. They were only given 2 weeks to do the assessment. Although they were asked to evaluate individual staff members they were very uncomfortable with that level of involvement and declined. The questioning that is going on, along with our visit, is causing quite a bit of concern among the Extension staff.
- If they had to pick one overriding problem that seemed to reduce the potential positive impact of the Extension Service they said it was leadership. There is no unified program planning that is tied together with an evaluation and feedback process. If a plan-of-work is created at the regional level it takes three months or more for the national office to get back to them.
- The extensionists with the GRDB, who are called Regional Extension Officers or District Regional Extension Officers, promote Integrated Pest Management, conduct demonstration trials, collect data, and provide improved seed delivery.
- They are currently working on a six points of improved practices to enhance production.

Key observations from GRDB visit:

- *The GRDB was asked to do another appraisal of the MOA extension services, making it the second appraisal/plan that we had learned of that day, not counting the one that the Minister had asked POA to conduct. This surprised us. Our assignment can accommodate these various requests, but it does muddy the water and call for more imaginative interpretations of our assignment to keep in all on the table at once.*
- *The GRDB seemed highly motivated and with a clear mission and purpose compared to the MOA work. This is the good news, bad news scenario of specialty extension services.*
- *We believe that UWEX and the GRDB could benefit from some more in depth discussions on modern extension methodologies and tools.*

April 26

National Extension staff In-Service at the Guyana School of Agriculture. Heads of the MOA and NARI were present. The meeting was opened by the Permanent Secretary (PS) Dr. Dyndial Permaul of the MOA and conducted by Brian Greenidge, Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS) who was also introduced as the new Director for Extension Services.

- This was the beginning of a three day in-service for all Extension staff. The Ministry was using this event to announce its plans for restructuring of the Service and making sure that all field staff, including the new para-professionals, had the same basic understanding of fruit and vegetable production, animal husbandry, soil analysis and fertility, crop pest and disease management and irrigation management.
- After introductory remarks by the Extension leader Brian Greenidge and Permanent Agriculture Secretary Dr. Dyndial Permaul, we did a 45 minute presentation on the Wisconsin Extension Service; its structure, its evolving role in education and community development and some of the challenges coming down the road.
- In his opening remarks Secretary Permaul made several points that were worth noting:
 - The Ministry of Agriculture Extension Services is going through the process of reorganization.
 - Agriculture in Guyana has slowly gone through a series of changes over the years. Casaba, coconuts, rice and sugar had been important commodities in the past. Although some of these commodities will continue to be important they need to be looking at agricultural diversification opportunities that will better position them in the export markets. Reaching new global markets rather than relying on traditional commodities and trading partners.
 - He also talked about the importance of the Extension Service in helping the Guyana's farmers increase their production, reach new markets and improve their communities. In order to do this there needs to be a better relationship between the regulatory activities, research, formal education and extension.
- There were approximately 100 national and regional staff members in attendance with many new people that had recently been hired under the NARI plan.
- After our presentation we had a chance to speak to several senior field extensionists one-on-one. They expressed considerable frustration on the hiring of the new, para-extensionists. They knew nothing of it until it occurred, doubted the professionalism of most of them, and

saw it as a misallocation of scarce resources. They also spoke of the lack of meaningful professional development and lack of operational budgets to complete their work.

- Although the field staff were more focused on the topics at hand some of the program leaders in the Ministry were very interested in our approaches. One mentioned the concept of transformational education specifically as something that he has tried to instill in new agents who are going out into the field. Although he had never seen the term before he completely understood the concept.

Key observations from Extension In-service Presentation and Visit

- *Our presentation was generally well received, particularly the concept of the transformational education work that Extension is involved in, the grassroots basis for program development, the responsibility based culture approach to our work, and the description of the changing nature of extension work in Wisconsin.*
- *Our perceptions beforehand of how negatively the hiring of para-professionals could be interpreted by the underpaid, under-resourced existing staff were quite correct.*

Visit to the MAR Friends Land Cooperative Society in Region IV

- MAR Friend Land Cooperative is made up of 28 families farming on 60 one acre plots. Their inception came from an attempt by the government many years back to get public land into private hands by way of land cooperatives. This evening we met with about a dozen cooperative members and the leaders Mr. Valentine and Mr. Stoll.
- Two of their greatest concerns are a lack of secure access to water and organizational strength.
- In their estimation, the MOA Extension needs to clarify their priorities and provide access to credit and other resources.
- Mr. Stoll, a 19 year veteran of the military and a current employee of the nearby poultry operation, believed the average extensionist did not have sufficient background to help him.
- We met briefly with two of the women in the cooperative who are interested in assistance for their women's group on developing some income generating projects.
- They have had some experience with Extension field staff but they seemed to understand that there are too few agents spread out over a big area trying to meet the needs of many different types of farms.
- They also mentioned that they have internet access and that if they need information on a specific crop or problem they can find the information themselves.
- As far as projects for the cooperative in future, one of the areas of common concern seemed to be water control, both bringing it in for irrigation purposes and getting it off the ground in the rainy season.
- There is also a real interest in organic farming techniques and they mentioned several times the importance of holistic approaches to agricultural production.

Key observations from MAR Friends Visit

- *Water and water management are grave concerns for the group. Access to wind power or a pump is seen as vital to assuring guaranteed access to water.*
- *Some strategic planning with this group might prove quite useful.*

April 27

Field Visits to the Region V area of Mahaica and the Mahaicony Rivers. We traveled with Steven Jones of the new GMC and met with several farmers.

- The first person we met with was a young aspiring farmer in Mahaicony named Travis Waldron. He and about 20 other younger farmers are part of a recently organized producers association in the area. Most of the young people in the group are working on cash crops. Travis is a real leader, but has a very limited bit of land to work with.
- Travis was very interested in intensive organic gardening skills and technical assistance.
- Travis believed that the Extension Service could assist with more technical assistance and organizational development.
- Steven Jones did indicate that John Woolfod would be accompanying him the following Sunday to meet with the full group on some organizational issues.
- We also met with two brothers, separately, Marvin and Taylor T.
 - Marvin is attempting to raise produce organically, not because of the market potential but because of his beliefs.
 - Marvin would like technical assistance through Extension in the area of organic production. He was in the process of growing pumpkins as his main crop and was hoping that they could be marketed as part of the GTIS project.
 - Taylor had plans to raise cash crops (burro beans, egg plant, lettuce, etc.) but lacked access to secure land so couldn't access capital from the bank.
 - He and his brother were basically landless farmers even though they were provided free access to land. There were no guarantees or titles.
 - Also, the deterioration of the sluice doors was making dependable access to water impossible.
- We also met with a woman named Mrs. Ali who had farm along the main highway. Mrs. Ali not only owned her land but she also had good access to water. By using a series of hoses she could irrigate where she needed to. Her husband apparently had a well paying job as a truck driver so they were building up their farm. She was raising the same cash crops for GTIS. Her extension type needs were in organizational development and technical assistance.

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Key observations from the Region V Farmer Visits

- *The needs of the small cash crop (non-traditional) farmers varied somewhat, though there were some overall themes.*
- *GTIS was giving many of these farmers hope for producing for a market that would actually exist.*
- *The new GMC was acting as an extension operation and organizing entity, though the local staff person, Steven Jones, didn't feel he had all those skills.*
- *There needs to be a better pathway for attracting new farmers and helping them get started.*
- *They need help in using organic and/or IPM crop production methods. The Extension Service has some experience with IPM but they lack any practical knowledge on organic production methods. It isn't the fault of the Extension Service, there is little university based research that has been done on organic production methods anywhere.*
- *Land tenure is an issue. Because of the colonial foundation of the land tenure system there is a wide variety of land tenure arrangements requiring a wide array of solutions that need to be explored if new farmers are going to have opportunities.*

- *They have started a farmer association in the region and they are making an attempt to set up a youth program. They were very interested in hearing more about the Future Farmers of America and 4H youth development models.*
- *Water was mentioned again. The current system of controlling water is very old and in need of a significant investment. The two brothers who are farming on the edges of the rice fields have lost their crops when the decision was made by the local government to sacrifice their fields in order to save the rice crop. They don't quite know who to complain to. The drainage and irrigation system is in the public sector but the local drainage commission tells them it is a private landowner issue.*
- *They rarely work with the Extension Service. Although they think the Extension Service is an important asset they also understand that they are stretched too thin.*

Meeting with Jim Gemmes, US Peace Corps Director for Guyana.

- *The office visit with the US Peace Corps Director was quite informative. They have 43 Peace Corps Volunteers in the field concentrating primarily on health, education, and IT. They would like to have an agriculture presence, but the budget limits expansion as of now.*
- *There is a growing interest in square foot gardening and intensive gardening schemes in general.*
- *Jim sees a strong role and possibility as social promoters or organizational developers for the country – with farmers and other small groups.*

Key observations from US Peace Corps Director Visit

- *Water management, working with organics, market ready produce, and organizational developments are all Peace Corps needs.*
- *Jim raised the issue of possible tribal exchanges between Wisconsin and Guyanese Amerindians. Perhaps this can be a POA request?*

April 29

Visit to Kaieteur and Orinduik Falls.

- *A great trip and a great chance to get out of Georgetown.*
- *The falls were great. There is limited eco-tourism so far, but according to Jason Gibson, our local Amerindian guide; there are a lot of possibilities.*
- *Met a USAID GTIS project coordinator, two VSO volunteers from Chicago working with the disabled, and a Canadian attorney volunteer.*
- *The guides for the trips into the hinterland are required to have a certain level of training and have to pass certification exams on flora, fauna, history, safety.*

April 30

Visit to Region II. We met with Mr. Charles Spellen at the Farmers Market in Charity. Mr. Spellen is the Chief Agriculture Officer for the Region based out of Anna Regina. While at the market we were also able to meet with the market manager, Mr. Khan, who was able to give us some background on how the market operates. On our way to Charity we had an opportunity to visit the New

Opportunities Center (NOC), a reformatory for both young men and women that has been in operation for over 100 years, and meet with its director, Mr. Otoonga and his staff. Reaching and traveling through Region II was quite an experience. It required a speedboat ride across the mouth of the Essequibo River and a taxi to get across the Region to the community of Charity located on the Pomeroon River.

- Our first stop of the day in Region II was to the NOC, located on the outskirts of Suddie. We made the stop because the NOC has worked with a Peace Corps volunteer and Dr. Munoz (one of the founders of the NDDP and a person very active in agricultural development in the country) on setting up a set of organic and hydroponic gardens and vermiculture project. They also had a herd of about 50 cows and wood and metal working shops. Besides providing the youth with some practical skills the farm and garden products also meet a fair amount of the NOC's food needs.
 - The NOC has 130 wayward youth. They also offer educational classes on their facility, for those that need special assistance beyond regular schooling.
 - They were very pleased with how the hydroponic gardening project was working out. Rather than being suspended in water baths the plants were in a sand and rice hulls medium.
 - They had two gardens where they were trying to use organic production methods. They have been on their own in trying different organic methods. Although they know that they could produce more if they used chemicals they like the taste and quality of the foods and they are very uncomfortable with health risks that chemicals pose to them and the staff and students.
 - One of the staff has taken a real interest in the gardens and has developed a back yard business where he grows seedlings for sale in the community. He said that he and all of his customers are very interested in organic production techniques.
 - Their only experience with the Extension Service has been in getting some tests taken. They get the results back but they aren't very timely. They are familiar with the Extension field staff in the area and they have stopped by occasionally but they know that they cover a big area.
 - They felt that Extension needs more staff, more training and logistical support.
- As we worked our way across the Region toward Charity we stopped by the main Extension Office in Anna Regina. The office is located right on the main street in an area that houses other government related buildings, such as the local Rice Board office, and several financial institutions. Compared to many offices we had visited it was actually a fairly nice office and was staffed with a secretary to handle any clients that stopped by.
- Upon reaching Charity, the end of the line as you head west along the coast, we found Mr. Spellen visiting with farmers who were set up at the market. With over 32 years of experience with the Ministry of Agriculture, he was able to provide lots of insight into the changes and challenges with Extension, NARI and the MOA.
 - Mr. Spellen has always found the market days to be very important for reaching the farmers. With limited time and budgets anytime you can get farmers in one place at one time you take advantage of it.
 - For the first 10 years he was a researcher with NARI at the central farm in Georgetown and has spent the remaining 22 years as a field agent. Primarily working out of the Anna Regina office.
 - When he first started with Extension he had a difficult time adjusting to an educator's role. Students coming out of the agricultural education system are trained well in the technology aspects of farming but aren't prepared to be educators. More than 60% of the job is working with people. He claims that there is no clear career path for bringing

people into agricultural extension work. Those that naturally have a good combination of people and production skills are diverted into the private sector and don't make Extension a career.

- Currently there are seven people serving the region with him covering both crop and livestock production.
- He feels that there is a lack of respect for the importance of agriculture as a basis for community development. Food production and adding value are important for not only the local economy but the health of the community.
- Farmers are looking for options besides rice and the standard commodities but Extension workers have little experience or education in helping farmers explore diverse commodities and marketing opportunities.
- Besides looking at new farming options Spellen said that farmers are in need of lots of training on how to use a variety of cultural practices, such as organic. Unfortunately the Extension staff also could use the same training.
- Business training principles are always in need. Farmers have had very good math and writing instruction but they haven't had much help in putting together plans.
- He noted that the new para-professional agriculture extension agents would need lots of training to be ready to serve farmers, though the ones that come as farmers already were a good idea.
- Mr. Spellen lamented that the MOA twiddled their thumbs for years while other entities within and adjacent to the MOA assumed many extension roles. If the agency had been building up skills and developing projects there would have been some continuity and a stronger service. He said it was a real loss.
- The lack of coordination is also somewhat frustrating. There is no apparent organizational plan that integrates research, extension and marketing in either the field offices or centrally. An integration that not only includes the MOA but also the University of Guyana.
- This lack of coordination also means that Extension may miss out on some excellent people who have never even considered it as a career. There is no clear career path.
- While at Charity we also had a chance to visit with the manager of the Central Market, Mr. Khan.
 - One of the things we noticed at the Central Market was a price board that reported the prices of various vegetables and commodities at the two main markets in Georgetown; Stabroek and Bourda. The new GMC took the responsibility of collecting the information and getting it disseminated.
 - Although he was with Mr. Spellen, an Extension employee, he was very candid with his opinions on the changes that he has seen in Extension. He expressed his concern that Extension has lost a lot of its credibility because of the erosion of resources and the changes in global markets. He said everyone is aware of the changing marketplace and is very much aware of consumer trends in such places as Miami and New York.

Key Observations from Region II Visit

- *Extension was left to dwindle while other entities came online to provide services. The MOA and the Guyanese government should decide for once the role that extension should play.*
- *The notion of a career path is important for the professionals.*
- *Training and benefits like overseas studies, in my opinion, should be directed towards this kind of career development.*
- *Again, the need for a strategic focus was clear.*
- *Organizational development skills, strategic planning, and mission clarity are important.*

- *We also noted how challenging it was for extension work, given the tremendous distances and poor infrastructure. And we complain in Wisconsin!*

May 1

Visit to Region VI. This trip took us to the eastern end of the Atlantic coast road to the Guyana-Suriname border, on the Corentyne River. We had an opportunity to meet with NDDP Cattle Development Officer Mr. Madanpal Sampat and cattle farmers in the community of Corriverton, saw one the largest ethanol plants in the world being built by the Chinese and visited with a farmer named Dhanraj Singh (Buddy) who has been one of the leaders in adopting improved crop and livestock management practices.

Cattle Farmers and Meeting with NDDP Cattle Development Officer, Mr. Sampat

- In our first stop of the day we met with Mr. Sampat and cattle farmers representing two different cattle associations. Although there were a number of concerns that were covered the ones that seemed to rise to the top were land tenure, water drainage, organizational development, poor pastures (in part based on the first three concerns) and a commitment of the government to address those needs and enforce laws already on the books, such as cattle rustling. We also had an opportunity to talk about the changes in the Extension Service.
 - The two associations represented farmers from different areas and each had slightly different challenges in regard to land tenure. One of the associations had 175 members and 8,000 head of cattle and the other had 320 members and 28,000 head. One of the groups had a long term lease with the government that gave them at least some security, while the other was in the negotiation process.
 - The land tenure issue goes back a number of years. Each of the groups has a slightly different problem but both are having trouble convincing the government that for the cattle industry to grow and develop they need to have a better mechanism for cattle producers to reliably access land. They were quite concerned that lease on government land had gone up to \$200, Guyanese (\$1 US), per acre per year from \$7. Rice farmers are paying about \$1500 G per acre per year.
 - They also felt that an underlying issue that is making it difficult to get things done is the change in the cattle owners themselves. Less than 10% of the farmers use cattle for a majority of their income. Most of them have just a few head that they use to supplement other family income and family food. These smaller producers are tough for the associations to work with because they don't have the financial investment and long term commitment to the industry.
 - They felt that secure and predictable land availability and an improvement in cattle markets would help producers feel there was more of a commitment to the industry by the government.
 - Apparently the groups were to meeting with the President of the Republic on Friday morning to hopefully get some commitment on the land tenure and market issues. They were looking for some ideas on how to approach the President. One of the ideas we brought forward was the work that has been done in Wisconsin showing the economic impact that agriculture has on the community. Oftentimes simple economic analyses are done without showing the long term economic impact that various agricultural

commodities have on the community. They seemed very interested in seeing how Wisconsin used an analytical process developed by Ag Economist Steve Deller to show the economic impact of agriculture on both the county and state levels and then how that information was used to develop brochures for policy makers and the public.

- At the end of the meeting with the cattle farmers we had a chance to talk about the changes in Extension. The cattle farmers felt that Extension doesn't have much to offer them until they have dealt with some of the land tenure and market issues. They did say that they were concerned about the erosion of Extension personnel out in the field and the potential access to all of its services.
- After our meeting with the farmers Mr. Sampat shared some of his views on what has been happening with Extension.
 - The Extension training and field visit approach is followed by NDDP; each extensionist is expected to visit 10 farmers daily and demonstrate it with a log. The para-agents work from their homes as does Mr. Sampat. In the NDDP model each agent is provided a cell phone and motorcycle which was ironically more than the GSA graduate Extension Officers had for support for their extension work.
 - Mr. Sampat noted that joint monthly meetings were being held in Region III to coordinate extension work there, but he was not aware of similar actions elsewhere.
 - He also sees a real challenge bringing new agents into the profession. He puts in long hours, has limited resources and if it wasn't for his long relationship with the community and the farmers in the region (over 20 years) it would be very difficult to justify the commitment with the other options available to a bright, educated young person.

Key Observations from Meeting with Cattle Producers and Mr. Sampat

- *Some economic analysis of the sector would be useful. It is a very legitimate extension program which could help the entire sector.*
- *Perhaps an agriculture economist like Steve Deller could assess economic development extension endeavors and work on a trial project to demonstrate the economic impact of the cattle industry for Region six? An implan type process could be useful but somewhat challenging based on the probable paucity of data.*
- *Other profiles of regions and the impacts of agriculture are possible.*
- *From an extension perspective, the NDDP is stretched thin and overworked. The para-professional model doesn't mean that all farmers can benefit from the NDDP services – some progressive cattle farmers have access to information from other sources such as the internet and the pesticide industry consultants.*
- *Land tenure inconsistencies, the lack of enforcement of current laws and water have again surfaced as major underlying structural problems that make it difficult for farmers to plan for the future.*

Ethanol Plant in Skeldon

- In the city of Skeldon and adjacent to the Guyana Sugar Company plant, the Chinese are in the process of building one of the largest ethanol plants in the world. The plant is being engineered and built by approximately 100 Chinese workers who are living in a small village built exclusively for them by the Chinese government.
- With the rising interest in ethanol as an alternative to petroleum, and the low market price of sugar cane, the ethanol plant will definitely have an impact on the local agricultural economy.

Other than seeing the plant we had no information on what its annual sugar cane demand would be once it gets up and running.

- There was surprisingly little discussion among the farmers and Extension workers about the impact that the plant will have.

Visit with Dhanraj Singh (Buddy) – Region VI

- Our last stop of the day was to a dairy and cash crop producer who has been working with the Partners of the Americas and the NDDP over the last couple of years. He is very satisfied with the progress in his business, has recently secured a 50 year lease on 80 acres of land and is in the process of organizing dairy producers who have similar interests.
- Getting the association going has been a bit of a challenge. When they try to hold meetings they are lucky to get 7 or 8 people to attend. Other than the NDDP and Partners there hasn't been much help in organizational development.
- The other producers he has been working with have very little interest in marketing together or sharing in the purchase of inputs, they are more interested in having a group that can share information and possibly resources if it makes sense.
- He has collaborated with POA, worked with the NDDP and is seriously considering working with the new GMC effort around raising Bullnose peppers for the export market. We believe this is part of the GTIS effort. Kelvin encouraged Buddy to go slow on this effort and to weigh the costs and benefits. He could probably use extension decision making analysis for the peppers.
- His use of Extension has been very sporadic. When he thought about his use of Extension it was typically in terms of solving some disease problem. If he knew what the disease was he had plenty of other information resources on how to deal with it. If a farmer can read he can access information in a variety of ways.
- Buddy also has two sons, one who is studying information technology and the other is interested in studying agriculture.

Key Observations on Visit with Dhanraj Singh

- *Extension services could assist someone like Buddy on analyzing alternatives. Extension staff would have to be trained and experienced in this, but it is the kind of customized, value-added extension service that individuals can benefit from. Producing profiles on the crops and considerations for all new expansions could also be helpful.*
- *The current batch of extensionists does not assist Buddy much, however the new GMC does represent an extension type effort – it just isn't recognized as such.*

May 3

Visit to Bartica – The seat of Government for Region VII.

- We had a couple purposes for our trip to Bartica. The primary one was to visit an Extension office off the coastline that deals with a vast expanse of hinterland where the agriculture is largely subsistence and transportation is primarily by boat; in this case along the Essequibo, Paruni, Cuyuni and Mazaruni Rivers. We wanted to learn more about the challenges that Extension staff face in working in the more remote areas of the country, how they and the Ministry staff in Georgetown work together to deal with local issues, what they think of the effort to provide para-professionals to help meet the information needs of the citizens in their

district and we also wanted to talk with local government officials about the importance of Extension in their region.

- Bartica is located at the confluence of the Cuyuni, Mazaruni and Essequibo Rivers and is an interesting mix of a river, mining and logging town.
- Our guide on this trip was Colleen Bascom, one of the specialists with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The Regional Agriculture Officer we met was Mr. Winston David. We also met with a young man who was his Livestock Officer.
- We also had an opportunity to meet with the Regional Executive Officer (REO).
- According to the REO and Mr. David, the food that is produced in the region only supplements what comes up the river from coast. Although there is the potential to be more productive the lumber and mining industries are the main economic drivers in the area.
- On the outskirts of Bartica we had a chance to visit the local Extension headquarters where Mr. David both lives and works. The field staff are on call virtually 24-7.
- The Extension Office was also acting as a distribution point for a variety of fruit trees provided by NARI. Apparently this was creating a bit of a problem because NARI had hired someone part time to be there to handle the distribution of the plants but they never did anything to coordinate their effort with Mr. David; the person who would ultimately need to address questions about planting and caring for the trees.
- Although Mr. David, and all of the government workers for that matter, were provided with housing, they had to supply their own transportation and were given a small travel allowance. On the other hand, travel by car can only be done around Bartica. If they need to go into the hinterland they tap into whatever type of transportation they can find; everything from boats to carts to all terrain vehicles.
- When they were asked about the new para-professionals that are intended to help them with their jobs, they said that there were three appointed in their community and that they weren't at all equipped to handle the array of questions that they will need to deal with. They would have much rather had one other person that was better trained than three people who might have great intentions but weren't able to meet the needs of the citizens.
- Between the NARI plant material distribution project, complete with a person who was only there to watch over it, and the para-professionals that were hired to "help out", the working environment was not very positive.
- We had a very candid discussion with the REO. He filled us in on how the regional governments operated and the challenges they face in trying to implement programs without enough resources. As career professionals appointed by the national government they are moved from region to region periodically, giving them some insight as to the varying needs around the country. He was very frustrated with the lack of commitment to Extension in the regions that cover the hinterlands. At their current level of support they are basically window dressing. The local staff work very hard but have little to work with. They can at best handle the emergencies that come up and deal with a few basic services, such as antemortem and postmortem inspections at the abattoir in town, but they have little opportunity to do anything proactive.
- However, even though they may not have a lot of time to work with, they do hold producer workshops on occasion. Ms. Bascom has been up to Bartica on a number of occasions to cover a variety of topics at a field day or workshop.

Key Observations from Visit to Bartica

- *There is a considerable amount of variation from region to region in a number of ways; citizen needs, crops and resources.*

- *Given the lack of resources, the lack of coordination within and between government agencies make it even more difficult at the local level.*
- *The Regional governments are very supportive of Extension's role in their communities but are frustrated with the lack of resources.*
- *The local Extension Office covers a wide array of activities. Unlike Wisconsin Extension Offices, that have primarily an educational role, a Guyana Extension Office needs to work across the spectrum, from education to commodity support to regulation and inspection.*

May 4

The last full day in Guyana included a visit to the Carana Corporation managed Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project where we met with Carl Larkins, Chief of Party and Vijay Rambrich, Business Development Manager; and a final meeting with Ministry of Agriculture Deputy Primary Secretary Brian Greenidge and the staff members taking a lead role in the Extension Service Unit development efforts, Joseph McAlister and Michael Welch.

Visit with Larkin and Rambrich at GTIS

- Mr. Larkins started off by saying that the USAID and GTIS project has been in response to the historic Guyanese development goal of agricultural diversification. However, even though they've spent a large amount of funds in an attempt to increase their diversity they've had little to show for it.
- Mr. Larkins said that when CARANA began working on the GTIS project it operated ineffectively, trying to do too many small projects. Now, they are focusing on just two agriculture crops – bullnose peppers and pumpkin squash. Other areas they work in are eco-tourism, and value-added wood products.
- They have been focusing in on market driven economic growth projects – finding and securing markets and then reaching back in the supply chain from the pre-production, production, harvest, post-harvest, and eventual sales.
- For the pepper project they currently have 50 pepper growers identified and participating in the program. Although word has gotten out to other farmers about the market potential, they feel that right now they have enough market for the 50 growers.
- They are using the contracts with set prices, production schedules, weekly farm visits through a GTIS extensionist, and quality control. They have established a process for trace-ability to ensure quality control and accountability. They have also sought out and gained contracts with US and Dutch firms for the produce.
- They will soon be producing 40,000 lbs. of peppers per week, but 25,000 will be for processing and 15,000 for the market.
- Simultaneously, GTIS is exploring broccoli and cauliflower market driven projects, but at a smaller, more domestic scale.
- GTIS was quite impressed by the potential of using a pilot commodity-based integrated systems approach, similar to what Cadwallader has used with the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin, as they work with the MOA to develop this and other diversified commodities. The process could be integrated into a strategic planning effort on a sub-region along basis that would bring the growers, local and national government. One possible commodity that was mentioned was organic pineapple.

- GTIS said the MOA entities, such as NARI, GMC, and even Crops and Livestock were not clear on their role in a market-driven process. There was also concern expressed over how a larger, more expansive undertaking could occur using the current GTIS model. Larkin felt that it was important that the MOA officials would need to play a major role in future expansions.

Key Observations of Visit with Larkin and Rambrih at GTIS

- *This market driven approach is the most valued strategy for agriculture diversification in the country. Practical things are occurring.*
- *The GTIS staff thought Cadwallader's approach to organizing an integrated commodity systems strategic planning process around specific crops was a very sound idea. Focusing on one or two commodities was considered key.*

Final Meeting with MOA, Deputy PS, Brian Greenidge; Joeseeph McAlister; and Mike Welch.

- The MOA officials unveiled a new model for the MOA, focusing on a stronger Extension Services Unit (ESU). It incorporates the NARI concept paper and the existing service.
- The recent Agriculture and Livestock Assistants and community-based assistants, are a limited action for now, while the final IDB plan is adopted for future state hiring policies.
- The Deputy P.S. offered that in the future the ESU could be revenue based. He noted that some level of service would still be available for the poorest farmers in this plan, but that a revenue base would provide extension with greater operational strength and that he didn't see it as leading to a smaller extension organization, but perhaps a larger, strong one.
- The MOA officials and our group spoke of an integrated commodity-focused team program w/in the MOA. It would be similar to efforts within GTIS and the Wisconsin Ginseng Growers' efforts. It would be multi-disciplinary and cross-institutional. It would serve as a pilot for a team-based approach and be a training effort.
- Joseph spoke of numerous training needs, of the need to upgrade the staff skills, and to foster a desire for ongoing professional skill building.
- All three also spoke of the need for newer, more modern extension people skills, organizing and planning skills, and technical training. Joseph also spoke of the need to organize the MOA's training and skill building focus through incentives and requirements.
- The MOA participants also identified the need for extension leadership training, not just for technical staff. Kelvin pointed to the opportunities for Partner exchanges for building up leadership skills. There was agreement on the value of this.

Key Observations from Final Meeting with MOA

- *We were surprised that the MOA has a very clear idea of a new organizational chart with a heavy focus on Extension. Much remains to enact this vision, but it is a direction.*
- *We will still offer recommendations around organizational restructuring but their recent policy decision will be kept at the forefront.*
- *There was interest in a pilot training and demonstration for a commodity-based approach improving agriculture with a strategic thinking focus. This could involve a variety of UWEX people and they could serve some dual-purposes in the upcoming visits.*
- *There was also interest in a community-based strategic planning effort, to learn directly local leaders' interests and how extension can assist them.*

- *There was quite a bit of interest in internal strengthening of the extension function, especially in light of their reorganization efforts.*
- *We spoke of sharing the range of professional development work done in UWEX.*
- *We also spoke of sharing the program planning and development models used in each country and the mutual learning that would be possible.*
- *We believe that our training and program development staff could share quite a bit and learn as well. Our use of several criteria for advancing in the system was of interest – the role of scholarship in our work was explored.*
- *Using the resources identified by Kelvin Craig to bring their extension management here would also have benefit. We may be able to coordinate the visit with a North Central Administrative Leadership Conference and/or a North Central Deans and Directors conference. Another possibility is to invite participation in a regional NELD session.*
- *We concluded by offering our overall categories of recommendations for modernizing extension services: 1) Possible Macro Institutional Changes; 2) Using a team and commodity focus within the newly designed structure; and 3) Current extension practices and skills that could be applicable for many types of organizational structures of extension. This overall set of categories was agreed upon.*

Relevant Resources:

- Cadwallader Website and templates on costs of production analysis
- Microsoft templates
- FAO Modernizing Extension Services publication
- NARI's concept paper on extension services
- NARI's proposal and organizational chart on increasing extension field staff presence
- The GRDB review of Extension services (we haven't seen it yet)
- USAID/Embassy Town Hall meeting results from around the country (we haven't seen this yet)
- The Sunday April 1, 2007 Stabroek News article on the increase in extension field staff.

Results

In this results section, we will present our overall findings followed by three sets of recommendations; first, at the macro-institutional level, second, at the internal institutional level; and third, at the level of improved practices. We believe that items at the second and third level can occur and perhaps should occur before macro-institutional level occurs.

Overall Findings

We must start out by saying that we were very impressed by the extension providers at both the national and regional levels and across a number of governmental agencies and institutions; including the MOA in Georgetown, regional Extension staff, the New Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC), Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB), National Dairy Development Program (NDDP) and NARI. It is clear that they are passionate about their work to make a positive difference in lives of Guyana's farmers but they work under some challenging circumstances. Salary levels, operational budgets, transportation, communications, training support and educational materials are all at lower levels than would be desired. Yet, the staff perseveres.

- All people we met with were sincere in their desire to strengthen the extension function, albeit in different ways.
- We continually inquired about the commitment of the Minister of Agriculture and the Permanent Secretary and Deputy Permanent Secretary to the success of this effort. All those we met acknowledged that there was a commitment to make a positive change.
- The actions of the MOA while we were in country provided further testimony to the MOA commitment to strengthening the extension function - i.e. the hiring of the new para-professional agriculture extension agents.
- We were impressed with the role of the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) in forming young agriculture professionals and in some cases young agriculturalists. It is a common point of intersection and positive feelings for most.
- Interest in both new innovative extension policies and practices was also evident in our visits and interactions with MOA professionals.
- A number of non-extension education challenges confront the agriculture sector – water, water management, land tenure, land access, access to credit, a commodity systems management approach, leading with marketing first). We fully recognize these and know that MOA has to contend with all of these barriers.
- Morale has been low both in the field and the central office.
- There was confusion and perhaps resentment over the new staffing patterns in the face of limited resources for existing staff.
- There is a fracturing of the extension function across many units and agencies in the country. We would benefit from understanding it better, but absent that, the question arises whether multiple, parallel extension services is an effective and efficient strategy for modernizing extension.
- There is an overall need for a unified MOA approach and within that an overall approach to the extension function and/or the extension organization/s.

- There is a need for developing an institutional strategic plan, and several micro-strategic plans by entity (and divisions within entities) and region or area. The MOA new plan for delivering extension services seems merit worthy and should be further explored and supported.
- There was evidence of a program development model and a logic-type model for understanding the results and impacts of the work or to help set priorities for the institutions. However, the chief trainer office expressed interest in integrating this further in the institution.
- The notion that extension work is more than mere technology transfer, but potentially transformational of the community was not clearly in evidence. No doubt there was an implied belief that rural development and change occur through extension education, there was not as clear a focus on institutional strategies, training, and individual goal setting around this kind of an over-arching theme of transformational change.
- Little was learned about the recruiting, hiring, orientation, technical training, organizational development training, core competency assessment and training, continuing professional development, and the overall education and training available to field staff and those that directly work with field staff. This is a potentially critical issue in the face of the attempts to renovate the extension function as well as the impending retirements of a number of senior staff members of the MOA and collaborating institutions. The chief training officer expressed interest in further collaboration on this area.
- Succession planning for mid-managers and other leaders through opportunities to direct programs and high level professional development is needed. Some of this could focus on technical skills while much could focus on managerial philosophies and leadership skill building.
- New skills and strategies can be shared on conducting extension work in the future – i.e. the role of applied local research, using organizational development and facilitation skills to enable farmers and rural community membersalites to discover some of their own solutions, greater focus on rural development, economic development, and marketing skills, strategies for more greater inclusion of youth,
- Agriculture economic analyses and tools appear to be needed and could be beneficial for enterprise decision-making, farm level decision-making, and for organizations.
- There is a continual need to link NARI's work and the University of Guyana's agriculture studies program to the MOA and the MOA's extension people.
- There is not a current clear career path for extensionists or others in the MOA. Transfers, special project assignments, advanced training and schooling opportunities, and operational resources could all help staff recognize that a career path is possible.

Our Recommendations

This section is divided in three parts: macro-institutional recommendations; inter-institutional recommendations; and micro-level stand alone recommendations for strengthening the Guyanese extension service. Plans for the next larger group of UWEX professionals in Phase II and/or III are presented in the follow through section.

Macro-Institutional Recommendations

- We applaud the MOA goal of refocusing on an Extension Services Unit. The opportunity is ripe for considering a strategic focus for the extension service.
- Explore in depth the MOA commitment to modernizing extension including multiple extension services, the link to research, the link to training (Guyana School of Agriculture and University of Guyana) staff and operational support, the broader mission of extension w/in MOA.
- Explore the MOA current mission, vision, goals, and guiding principles as they affect the policy-making and leadership philosophy in MOA. Explore the possible role of self-directed teams, individual accountability, and shared leadership w/in the institutions. Share UWEX programs, DVDs, and educational materials on this area.
- Discuss the major questions on the optimal size of an effective and efficient extension service. Explore the impact of greater revenue generation on the scope of the MOA Extension Services Unit.
- If there will continue to be parallel extension organizations, then discuss mechanisms to strengthen sharing and complementarity between the organizations.
- Inventory the complete extension providers, their relationships, and roles (including forestry).
- Meet with the University of Guyana to better learn of their role within the agriculture development needs of the country and the extension services.

Inter-Institutional Recommendations

- Explore a commodity based systems management approach as an example of a role for extension in modernizing their strategies and approaches. The GTIS work and Tom Cadwallader's work with a variety of Wisconsin farm organizations, and the Wisconsin Ginseng Board in particular, can serve as examples for this approach.
- Explore a sub-regional approach for a community-wide or multiple community strategic planning effort. This would focus on commodities and other aspects of the community. Lead an initial strategic planning process in a community to train staff and to collect information needed on community needs.
- A dual purpose trip with an agriculture economist, to analyze the existing staff training, resources, and daily use of economic, business, feasibility, and marketing analysis by MOA staff. The second purpose would be to conduct some pilot analyzes on these tools and to provide training. Overall, it would be designed to focus on market driven programming and developing program support through economic development extension programming.
- Have POA and MOA organize some community sessions/ focus groups to determine programming needs and extension skills needed. This can be a dual-purpose activity as well – to acquire information on the needs and to demonstrate tools.
- Include a youth based person to discuss strategies for engaging youth in positive community change with MOA staff and encouraging young into farming and agribusiness pursuits.

Micro-Institutional Recommendations

- Meet w/ the staff training and development leadership to understand better their policies, practices, goals, and activities. Share the UWEX recruiting, hiring, orientation, core competency assessment, ongoing professional development, and career ladder strategies.
- Explore leadership development and succession planning possibilities. Discuss the role of special projects, exchanges, NELD, Leadership Academy, and Lead21 (three extension management leadership training programs), and personal learning plans.
- Explore how individual and/or team program planning and program development skills can be enhanced.
- Explore information technology needs and uses for both institutional modernization as well as possible tools for delivering information/interacting w/ producers. Explore how information technology can be used to delivery extension principles.
- Consider incorporating more marketing based analysis for staff and farmers. This can include enterprise budgeting, feasibility analysis, economic impact analysis.
- Strengthen skills in organizational development, facilitate discussion based learning, and strategic planning. Staff training and training in extending this to communities can be beneficial.
- An assessment of small intensive garden possibilities and training programs around it as well as meaningful ways to document impact.
- Learn more about the current program planning process used by the MOA and its various entities and provide initial training on our program development model, logic model for outcome and impact evaluation.
- Provide recommendations for future modernizing of the extension service.

Follow Through

Based on our conversations with the MOA and the POA Farmer to Farmer staff we recommend that the following teams work plan for Phase II. Phase II's goals are now more concrete and will involve assessment and doing. In fact, Phase II is recommended to be the principle phase of the project with Phase III being a follow up and monitoring stage. We are also recommending that potential participants from Wisconsin all provide at least two if not more areas of expertise. **Please note that the individual names are not to imply that we two recommend them specifically, but that the individual's skill sets are what is being sought. The UWEX International Committee and Dean as well as Partners of the Americas and the Guyanese will be the final arbiters for these assignments.**

1) Extension Leaders for Policy Discussions, Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, Partnerships, Operational Matters, Revenue Generation Concerns:

Potential: Dean; Associate Dean; Finance Director; ANRE Program Leader or Asst. Program Leader; CRD Program Leader Asst. Program Leader; or Liaison;

2) Extension Specialists and Sr. Agents/Faculty for commodity-based team development:

Potential: Lincoln County ANRE Agent (Tom C. – expertise and project continuity); Dean’s experience would be asset; State Specialist

3) Organizational Development, Team Building, Systems Thinking, Strategic Planning, Community Building:

Potential: Lincoln County CRD Agent (Art Lersch); Marathon County CRD Agent (Mary Kluz); Ashland County CRD Agent (Jane Silberstein); most CRD Agents (Dan Wilson)

4) Economic Analysis, Business Feasibility, Marketing Analysis skills building:

Potential: Agriculture Economist (Steve Deller); Business Development Specialists (Bill Ryan, Greg Wise);

5) Extension Skills and Practices (new methods, role of scholarship, facilitation practices):

Potential: Most ANRE and CRD Agents (Tom Cadwallader, Art Lersch, Corrine Seaman, Annie Jones).

6) Staff Development Resources:

Potential: Associate Dean; Cooperative Extension Human Resources Director (Sharon Klawitter); Personnel Coordinator (Julie Jakska); Program Development and Evaluation Director (Larry Jones).

7) Program Development and Evaluation Practices:

Potential: Associate Dean (Yvonne Horton); Program Development and Evaluation Director (Larry Jones).

8) Information Technology for Extension Practices:

Potential: IT Director (Greg Johl); IT Outreach Officer (Deanna Shneider)

9) Youth and Agriculture; Intensive Home Gardening Systems, Organizing Youth for Agriculture:

Potential: Sr. 4-HYD Agents (Frank Ginther, Others); CRD or ANRE Agents (Arlen Albrecht, Tom Syverud, Others).