

HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOODS AND THE UTILISATION OF MOBILE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES IN CENTRAL UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Over the years traditional agricultural extension systems have utilized mobile extension delivery platforms. The purpose of this study was to examine experiences of households in utilizing the mobile agricultural extension services for livelihood improvement in central Uganda. Using the capability approach and actor-oriented perspectives, I assessed the socio-economic contexts of households, the effectiveness of mobile extension services in addressing household agricultural information and extension needs, examined the socio-economic factors for utilization of the mobile agricultural extension services, and the socio-economic livelihood outcomes. A mixed-methods design was adopted for the study. Data were collected from 390 households, nine key informants and seven focus group discussion participants. Study results show that most households lived in precarious conditions due to limited access to and ownership of economic resources and livelihood assets. Using personal, social and environmental resources, Village Enterprise Agents as lay extension workers leveraged the *Kulima* mobile platform to disseminate agronomic, climate change mitigation, market and financial information services. Expected economic benefits, social influence, perceived ease of use and usefulness of mobile platforms were key drivers for utilization. Mobile agricultural extension service delivery resulted into household economic, social and human development livelihood outcomes. However, mobile agricultural extension service delivery was hampered by structural challenges such as proliferation and uncoordinated extension delivery platforms, and technology malfunctioning. Thus, mobile extension initiatives should be strengthened, agricultural extension information should be translated into indigenous languages, and there should be effective coordination of extension providers, and dedicated quality assurance of extension delivery methods and content packages.