



the story workshop

educating through entertainment



in malawi

WOMEN ACCESSING REALIGNED MARKETS (WARM PROJECT)



A BRIEF ON THE THEATRE FOR POLICY ADVOCACY (TPA) PROCESS

Malawi, October 2010

Introduction

The project, Women Accessing Realigned Markets (WARM), seeks to strengthen women farmers' ability to advocate for appropriate agricultural policies and programmes. The goal is for women farmers to have access to the tools that help them farm more successfully, such as access to credit and better seeds, by ensuring that local and national policies and services address their needs.

The project uses an innovative tool, Theatre for Policy Advocacy (TPA), to engage leaders, service providers and policymakers, encourage community participation, and research the needs of women farmers. In rolling the TPA activities in Malawi, the Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Advocacy Network (FANRPAN) has partnered with Story Workshop in crafting policy messages to amplify the voices of women and demonstrate the challenges they face. Story Workshop is a Malawi based Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) that brings social change communication together with creative entertainment to improve the lives of Malawians. They are bare foot media practitioners, working as the megaphone of the people. Their work is story based, they support people to explore the obstacles to improvement and to find solutions that are as real as the problems.

TPA activities in Malawi were officially launched in Lilongwe district on the 11th of October 2010. This brief gives an overview of the activities that have taken place to date and the reaction from the communities. Annexed to this brief are the following documents:

1. A generic theatre script that is used to develop the plays performed
2. Theatre for advocacy training manual
3. Tentative program for warm project field trips
4. Theatre performance action plan

TPA IN SOKELELE VILLAGE 14TH -18TH OCTOBER 2010

The TPA process in Sokelele Village, T.A. Chadza in Lilongwe District began with a community briefing. The community was briefed on the project goals, objectives, activities and expected outcomes. During the briefing, it was emphasized how relevant the project is to the community. With more than 70% of the community's households being Female Headed, the project would be developmentally beneficial to the community and them as individuals.

Firstly the TPA facilitators selected interested individuals to be participants of the TPA drama group. The selection ensured that people from all sections of the community (i.e. the youth, the elderly, men and women) were included in the group. A total of 23 people actively participated in the training and performance of the TPA for a total of Five days.

After the selection the group conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions. In these discussions real issues on root causes of the problems, case studies and impact of the issues on the community development were explored. In Sokelele village it was discovered that the main challenges being faced by subsistence women farmers include: lack and therefore expensive agricultural inputs, lack of land ownership and lack of effective agricultural extension services. The group was also challenged to critically discover, analyze and debate on conflicting ideas, view points and behavior motivators.



Part of the audience that attended the TPA performance

Following these discussions, the group was therefore equipped and tasked to conduct interviews (i.e. research) in the community on the real issues affecting women small holder farmers. This exercise ensured that the group is well conversant with issues affecting the whole community. The research enabled the TPA group to source ideas from people which might not be available or won't participate during the TPA performance.

During this exercise the group discovers real issues, real people being targeted by the issues to be addressed. They also meet real life characters being affected and or proliferating the root causes of the issues being explored. The outstanding case study/ story in Sokelele village was about a divorced woman with three grown up children whom after coming back from her ex-husband's village, has been living for the past three years without a piece of land since back in the village no one is willing to give her a piece of field.

In her story Ida Pofera said *"I seem like a person without a home. Because at my husbands' village they said I belong here & I have no land there... back here they say I don't have land either because I am supposed to be at my husbands village... so where do I really belong?"* she lamented.



Ida Pofera narrating her story

Equipped with this information, the group then created a story that best portrayed the issues the community is facing in terms of women small holder farmers. It is from this story a play is developed. The play forms the basis of the TPA performance. The play was based on two prominent issues faced by women subsistence farmers: lack of land ownership and lack of access to input markets.

The first scene portrayed a widowed woman who is having problems to support her family of five after her late husband's relatives had seized her best farmlands.

In the second scene, a married woman is arguing with her husband about his lack of support in food farming, his habit of personally using all their money from produce sales and disregarding family needs but most importantly because he has sold the coupon for obtaining government subsidized inputs and using the money for beer.

In a turn of events the women coincidentally meet at a water borehole and discuss issues affecting their progress in farming. They discuss that the issues they are facing in their families contribute to women retardation in farming business. Other women also explain that even with an access to farm inputs: low literacy levels, poor exposure to good produce markets and lack of effective agricultural women oriented policies also contribute to poor progress in women subsistent farmers.

Concluding the discussion one woman asks “*but where can we report all these issues? Who can listen?*” the community audience informs the woman that to the best of their knowledge; there are no structures/authorities or laws who can address those issues.

In the final scene, things have gone from bad to worse in the married couples’ home. A debt collector has come to collect some money from the wife who got the credit on the basis that the husband will pay after receiving money from their tobacco sales. The husband became so furious because he has used all the money. He beats the wife so much that the community and intervened and took them to the chiefs court to resolve their issues.

The performance was staged before an audience of all stakeholders identified as policy holders, traditional local authorities and the community. In Sokelere we had the areas T.A, District Commissioners’ representative, The Director of Planning & Development, the District Agricultural Director, The Member of Parliament and representatives from NASFAM, Bunda Collage and ADMARK. Through out the performance the audience was engaged in a dialogue by the actors. Through the dialogue, the actors verified with the audience whether issues portrayed in the play occur in real life. The audience provides guidance to the actors on how to act or react in particular circumstances. The community leaders presented the cultural justification on some behaviors by the characters in the play.



Member of Parliament, Mr. Kamanga responding to the performance

Immediately after the play, the audience was engaged in a discussion based on the issues highlighted in the TPA performance.

The Policy makers were motivated to advocate for Policy reforms to address the issues highlighted by the community. Local leaders were sensitized on the issues affecting women farmers and encouraged to make decisions guided by these concerns. The community was also motivated to take a leading role in resolving their own problems and initiating dialogue with relevant influential stakeholders.

In response to questions presented by community women in regards to land issues, the MP of the area, Mr. Kamanga informed the audience that the parliament will in the November 2010 house discuss an inheritance Bill that will resolve some of the issues concerning land and property grabbing faced by widows. He therefore promised to support that bill. This earned high jubilations from the women.

The officials from the district agricultural office also informed the people on the proper selection, distribution and use of Government subsidized input coupons. In response to the challenges face by women in their utilization, community leaders were encouraged to address those issues as criminal.



Ms Alice Kachere, one of the women advocates trained



Scenes from the performance and the dialogues that then followed

By the end of the performance the community had utilized a forum where all policy stakeholders were available to address all their preponderant issues.

Most importantly, women were empowered to voice out their views to relevant authorities in a culturally acceptable and effective way. In her concluding remarks a woman advocate trained by NASFARM based in the village commended all the stakeholders present in the discussion and informed them that it is from these kind of discussions that good agricultural policies should be developed because they will truly reflect and be beneficial to the needs of women subsistence farmers who form more than 80% of subsistence farmers in Malawi.

Based on these discussions, action plans were developed and all stakeholders were tasked to ensure that they are fulfilled. The community was given reference points and relevant officials to refer to, when faced with challenges discussed in this forum.

Throughout the process, everything was documented and will be used over time to monitor impact made by this intervention and to provide a basis for further policy amendments guidelines.

AGRICULTURE INPUTS FOR THE POOR - 18TH OCTOBER 2010

“I have always wanted this kind of forum to raise my issues” Explained Lezinati Daniel from Sokelele Village T.A Chadza in Lilongwe district.

She was saying this during the FANRPAN – WARM Project Theatre for Advocacy (TPA) performance facilitated by Story Workshop. Prior to the discussions Mrs. Daniel, a married woman with four children participated in Focus Group Discussions conducted in the village during the WARM project activities. In the discussions she explained that as a woman small holder farmer, the main challenge she faces that retards her progress in farming is lack of access to farm inputs.

“I do not qualify for government subsidised fertiliser because they say I am not amongst the communities poorest people”.

But although this case her family of six relies on their four acre farmland as their only source of food an income. The WARM project therefore provided an opportunity for her to present this issue to the community and all the relevant stakeholders. “I want to know what criteria you use to come up with subsidy program beneficiaries and where you expect the rest of us to get the inputs” she asked the District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO) during the discussion amid cheers from her fellow women.



Lezinati Daniel asking her question to the DADO

In her response, the DADO explained that the subsidy program is only intended for a few people in the community. Women farmers are therefore encouraged to find alternative sources of income for farm inputs from other Input Providers like NASFARM. She however promised that as policy makers, they will critically look into this issue and ensure that more women are benefiting from the program.

In her remarks after the performance, Lezinati applauded the TPA performance for providing her opportunity to voice out her agricultural concerns. “I have been thoroughly sensitized. Now I know which stakeholder to consult when I have issues concerning farm inputs.”



A ONCE IN A LIFE TIME CHANCE – 11 October 2010

It is said “An ideal Opportunity is found but once in a life time!” the TPA Performance conducted by Story Workshop under the FANRPAN WARM project was such an opportunity for Estere Chithope.

The 63 years old Estere is a divorced woman from Tidi Village, T.A Chimutu in Lilongwe district. Ms Chithope was divorced six years ago. During her marriage, she had been living in her husband’s village for more than 17 years. Upon being divorced, she returned to her home village where she found the land which belonged to her mother (which traditionally should belong to her) possessed by her uncle’s. In this case, she can’t reclaim the land back because her mother passed away and she had been away for a long time. The TPA performance provided her the opportunity to raise this land issue to the stakeholders present during the Forum discussion.



Traditional Authority (T.A) Chadza responding to Ms. Chithopes’ issue

“I have three grown up children who are looking up to me for a piece of land, but I can’t give them since I don’t have any land either, so what will happen to us?”
she lamented.

In response to this issues, the Traditional Authority for the area Chadza, encouraged chiefs and families to give land to women from an early age. He argued that women lose possession of land through marriage and/or remarriages which are inevitable. But if young girls are given land ownership from an early age, they would retain possession of the land throughout life. Ms. Chithope was encouraged through this forum to take her land issue to her village chief for proper solutions.

WHERE TO FROM HERE? – 22ND OCTOBER 2010

Elicy Dyson is one of the small scale farmers in Chimphedzu village T.A Kalumbu in Lilongwe. For the past years she has been having challenges to improve her agricultural enterprise.

“I have always wanted to start pig farming but I don’t know where to start from” she explained to the Theatre for Policy Advocacy facilitator during a pre-performance research in her community.

Prior to the TPA performance, the facilitators interacted with women small holder farmers in Chimphedzu village to expose their issues and come up with a relevant play that will truly reflect those issues. Elicy was one of the women targeted in this research.

“Every year I harvest 2 ox carts of maize; I eat some and sell some of the maize. The following year the same will happen... so I don’t improve my status... I am still where I was five to ten years ago!” she said.

Elicy was encouraged to attend the TPA performance which was conducted in her village by Story Workshop in partnership with FANRPAN under the WARM project. The TPA platform gave her opportunity to air out her concerns to the ministry of Agriculture officials who were present on the day.



A TPA Performance in progress at Chimphedzu village

The performance was conducted at a community ground with more than 2000 community members in attendance. After the performance which highlighted

challenges faced in Chimphedzu village by small scale farmers like Elicy Dyson, a discussion between the stakeholders and the community was conducted.

True to her word, Elicy participated in the discussion and asked this question to the District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO)

“We no longer have agricultural extension workers based in our communities, and visiting us everyday.... So how do we expect small holder farmers like us to learn new farming technologies? or to learn how to improve our agricultural enterprises?”

In her response to this query, the DADO explained that there has been a change of Policy, Agricultural Extension Services are now provided at a demand driven basis. And not as a routine exercise as previously done. And that explains why extension workers no longer visit individual households.

After a debate about this policy, it was conceded by this forum that changes in Policies should be implemented only after thorough consultation with the communities concerned since most female small holder farmers are negatively affected by ineffective agricultural policies.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM FOR WARM PROJECT FIELD TRIPS

Day	Time Frame	Activity	Expected outcomes
ONE	Morning	Stakeholder orientation & booking SWET officials will visit & orient all stake holders in the project including traditional leaders to officially familiarize them on the project program and invite them for the TPA performance. These stakeholders will include: NASFARM, GVH, TA, Extension workers, other NGO officials working in the area.	All project stakeholders aware of their role in the project activities and are available to provide necessary expertise
	After noon	Village briefing & selection of working group The whole village will be briefed on the project goals and objectives and the expected outcomes of the project. Following this briefing there will be a formation of a TPA drama group A total of 10 people will be selected for this committee. Among other things the committee will be responsible for I) Under go a 3 1/2 day TPA training II) Perform a TPA performance to the village and stakeholder audience III) Write evaluation reports IV) Give input on script improvements V) Perform other performances' in surrounding villages as stipulated in the project i) Undergo training in leadership and advocacy skills l) Documenting all project activities and compiling progress reports for submission to SWET	This exercise will ensure that the whole village is well aware of the program activities and the people selected for the TPA action group have a support system for their activities This open selection will also ensure that the people selected for the activities are those really motivated and willing to implement the activities

		II) Guiding the village to carry out advocacy resolutions III) Ensuring that planned activities are being carried out IV) Holding stakeholders accountable to their role in the project After the selection of the committee, the group will meet to discuss and draw a working program for the project activities and plans.	
TWO	morning	Research – Case study	This exercise aims to verify core issues to be focused on during TPA training and development of the Play. Lessons in project briefing and policy advocacy will make the TPA group well conversant about the context in which they are creating their plays.
	Afternoon	Theatre for Policy Advocacy Trainingⁱ Lesson 1: project goals, objectives and expected outcomes Lesson 2: introduction to policy advocacy on 3: introduction to participatory theatre for policy advocacy	
THREE	morning	Lesson 4: concepts of participatory theatre Research	Proper training in concepts of theatre concepts would ensure that the group has basic skills and ability to create theatre performances on various issues
	afternoon		
FOUR	morning	Storyline development & play development	
	afternoon	Rehearsals	
FIVE		Rehearsals	

	afternoon	TPA performance In-depth Focus Group Discussions & Planning	The performance will act as a tool for verifying issues and encouraging dialogue to resolve those issues. By the end of these Focus Group discussions the targeted community and all stakeholders would have discovered the root causes, the effects and solutions of the main challenge women farmers face. And would have made action plans on how to resolve those issues.
SIX	morning	Final Compilation of Information & Reports	This exercise will ensure that all the information gathered and discovered has been documented in a timely and effective manner

ⁱ Please refer to training manual for details