

Social Accountability for enhancing smallholder agricultural service delivery and performance in Zimbabwe: Synthesis of a Farmers' Jury Process in Zimbabwe

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Background

- The crisis in small scale farming in Africa cannot be resolved by technocrats alone.
- BUT how can the farmers themselves be involved in shaping the policy priorities for smallholder agriculture?
- Practical Action and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), jointly initiated some action research work which recommended the need to test the relevance of the **Farmers' Jury Methodology** following its use in India. This would create an opportunity for comparative learning and documentation of best practice.

Context and Timing

- Intense debate on environmental situation:
 - Fast track land reform
 - Hotly contested polarized elections – political polarization
 - Rapid economic decline had begun
 - polarization that was created by the hotly contested 2002 elections.
- The fragile context required:
 - Careful planning and stakeholder consultation
 - Full consideration of ground realities
 - Strategic adaptations of the process

The Farmers' Jury Concept

- Linked strongly to Deliberative and Inclusive Processes (DIPs) and increased demands for social accountability on public policies & programs. Involves:-
 - Open deliberations on issues of public interest
 - Inclusion of previously excluded groups
 - High degree of social interaction and face to face dialogue
 - Live discussion and debate through commonly agreed procedure
 - Respect for diverse ideas and positions
 - Constant evaluation and re-evaluation of positions to reach consensus
 - Enriching negotiations creating opportunities for learning & growth
 - Not rushing to reach conclusion for expediency's sake.

Related Citizen Jury Experiences: Prajateerpu Process in India: “People’s Verdict”.

- There was no need to completely re-invent the wheel.
 - Similar process in Andhra Pradesh in India
 - Andhra Pradesh Vision 2020 Document
 - Profound changes proposed in the food system without inputs from 50 million potentially affected farmers.
 - Coalition of 5 organisations initiated an effort to initiate public debate on the policy framework.

Prajateerpu Process

- **Visioning scenarios:-**
 - **Vision 2020:** consolidation of small farms and rapidly increase mechanization and modernization.
 - **An export-oriented cash crop model of organic production** – targeting the emerging organic food markets in the North.
 - **Localized food systems** – self-reliance for communities, re-localizing food production, markets and local economies.
- Each vision introduced with a 30 minute simulated video presentation

Prajateerpu Process

■ Expert Witnesses:

- Presented case for a particular vision of the future
- Jury members given time to cross question witnesses.
- Jury deliberations: based on three visions.
- Oversight Panel: independent observers.
- Video Archives: clear and accurate record of event.
- Media: relaying information and jury deliberations to a wider audience.

Prajateerpu Outcomes

- Voice of marginal farmers influenced government and donor organisations
- Experts were better informed of farmer needs and priorities.
- Emergence of a wider coalition of support around the farmers' vision.
- Some panic among donors who were backing Vision 2020.
- Testing of jury principles.

Farmers' Jury Adaptations

- Key Adaptations were:-
 - Participatory identification of issues affecting farmers
 - Careful debate on high profile issues such as land, HIV and AIDS, farmers' rights.
 - Use of an ordinary training centre where farmers are relatively comfortable.
 - Purposive selection of farmer representatives.

Social Accountability Issues from the Zimbabwe Farmers' Jury Process

- **Land Reform** – inclusiveness, production, equity, access, farmer consultation and dialogue.
- **HIV and AIDS:** resource scarcity, diversion of resources to the sick and orphans, asset loss, policy coherence.
- **Farmer Representation:** effectiveness and impact, representation quality, favoritism, misuse of farmer resources.
- **Farmer Learning:** GMOs, Intellectual Property Rights (IPS), right to farmer networking.

Outcomes from the Zimbabwe Process.

- Witnesses – positively impressed and demanded more initiatives of this nature.
- Farmers – followed up on previous promises, useful process in ensuring farmers' voices are generated and fed into the learning process.
- Oversight Panel: ability by farmers to discuss complex issues always overlooked. Need for a commonly agreed assessment tool.
- Specialist witnesses provided the required information for effective dialogue with farmers.
- Need for an objective assessment tool for use by the stakeholders and communities.

Concluding Remarks

- Post-jury assessments showed the Farmers' Jury Approach is a good social accountability and public engagement tool.
- Citizen jury principles are applicable to any subject of enquiry or debate.
- Sensitive selection of methods critical.
- Always need to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the process.
- Through innovative planning and stakeholder engagement space for deliberative and inclusive social accountability initiatives can always be secured.