



Engaging youth and extension workers to build agribusiness capacity: A peer-to-peer training approach in Malawi



Austen Moore, AgReach
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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Background on Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Many Sub-Saharan African countries have high youth populations
 - 66% of Malawi's population is under 25
- Youth struggle to participate in local economies
 - Lack of employment opportunities
 - Low marketable skills
- High youth unemployment is common
- Potential for youth-related problems
 - Economic stagnation
 - Conflict and crime



Background on Youth in Agriculture

- Agriculture often cited as sector best able to incorporate youth, but...
 - Rural youth are eschewing agriculture
 - Often lack access to land, inputs, financing, and other resources to participate
 - View agriculture as labor and drudgery
 - Lacks the appeal of urban life
 - Don't see economic pathway to "a better life"
- Extension systems are increasingly tasked with engaging youth, but struggle
 - Extension workforces are stretched thin and focus on other groups
 - Under-staffing and vacancies > farmer-to-extensionist ratios of 2000-3000 to 1
 - Insufficient resources to travel to communities
 - Program fail to directly target youth
 - Field staff lack capacities and knowledge in:
 - Youth engagement
 - Agribusiness and other priority areas for youth
 - Lack of in-service training to build capacity of workers



Youth and Agriculture in Malawi

- Population of 17.22 million
 - 66% of the population under the age of 25
 - Youth categorized as between 16 and 28
- Annual GDP per capita: \$381 (PPP)
 - 53% below international poverty line (\$1.25)
- Approximately 80% of population in small scale agriculture
- Production levels are extremely low per hectare
 - Production highly vulnerable to weather, pest, and disease shocks

Youth and Agriculture in Malawi

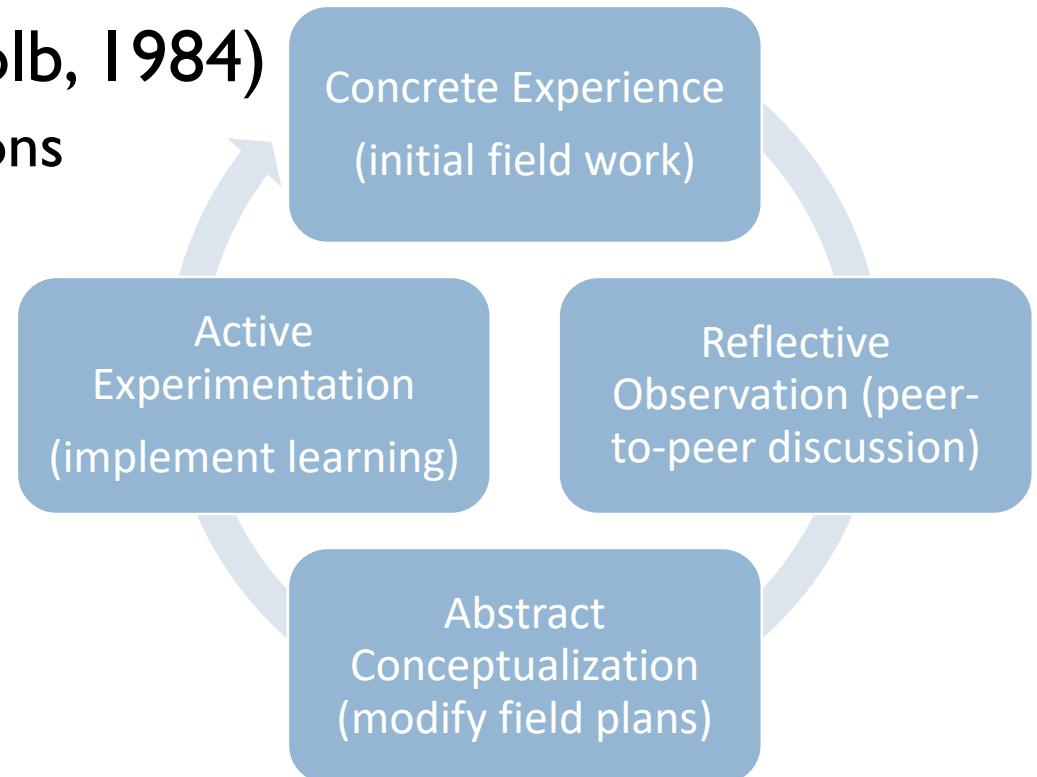
- Strong political commitment/focus on youth economic development
 - Rural youth clubs are common
 - Young Farmers Clubs (YFCs) designed to increase involvement in agriculture
 - Others focus on HIV/AIDS, health, literacy, etc.
- Governmental and donor efforts to improve extension
 - Focus on improving capacity of extension workers
 - Identified bi-weekly administrative meetings as opportunity for in-service training
 - Government personnel have technical capacity but lack teaching skills
- Improvements to agribusiness capacities of farmers a priority
 - MoA uses FAO-developed Farmer Business School (FBS) curricula
 - 5-day workshop approach not leading to knowledge/skill improvements

Program Design

- Joint in-service training designed and implemented by SANE and MoA, to:
 - Address technical knowledge/skills of extension workers in agribusiness through bi-weekly in-service training with FBS
 - Improve teaching methods used by extension workers to engage youth through training on participatory approaches
- Transport stipend to get extension workers to their target communities
 - \$4 per bi-weekly period
 - Attendance in trainings/submission of paperwork a requirement to receive stipend
- Pilot an approach for scaling up/out
 - Focused on two Extension Planning Areas in Lilongwe East district
 - 30 extension workers and 964 youth trained

Program Implementation

- FBS curriculum broken out into 10 modules, taught over 20 weeks
 - Supplemented by participatory approaches and activities
 - Team taught by MoA Agribusiness Specialist and SANE Research Specialist
- Used an Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984)
 - Include field implementation between sessions
 - Promote peer-to-peer learning
 - Increase retention of technical knowledge
 - Facilitate skill development



Program Evaluation

- Baseline and endline surveys
 - Measuring knowledge and skill changes over time
 - 25 multiple choice questions, equally weighted at 4 points for a 100 point composite score
 - Youth $n=564$ Extension workers $n=22$
- Conducted with both extension workers and youth participants
 - Same questions for both respondent types
 - Treatment (trained) and control (untrained) groups for youth
- Qualitative data gathered via weekly reflection forms

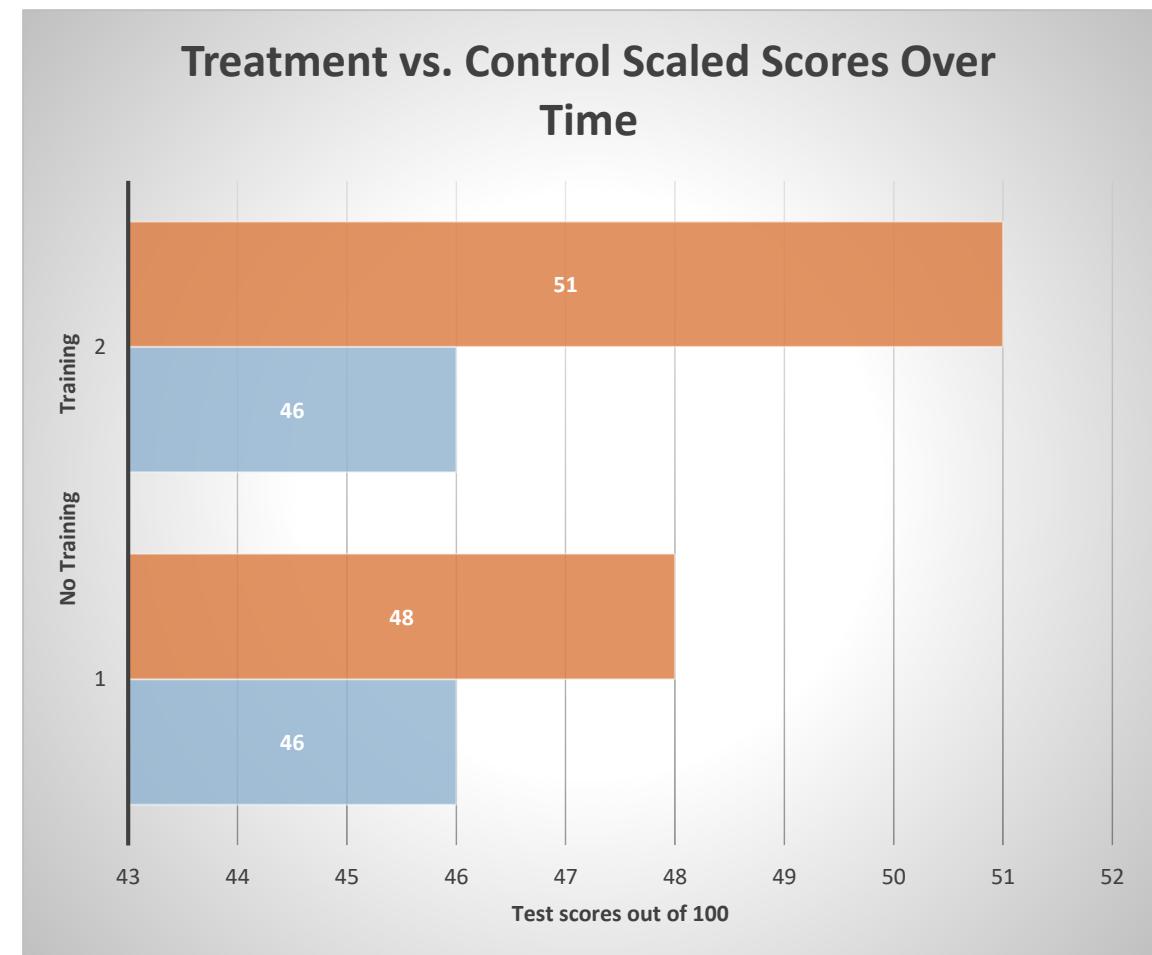
Program Evaluation

- Key indicators:
 - 1) Changes in youth agribusiness knowledge
 - 2) Changes in extension worker agribusiness knowledge
 - 3) Number of functional Young Farmers Clubs
 - 4) Number of youth in Young Farmers Clubs

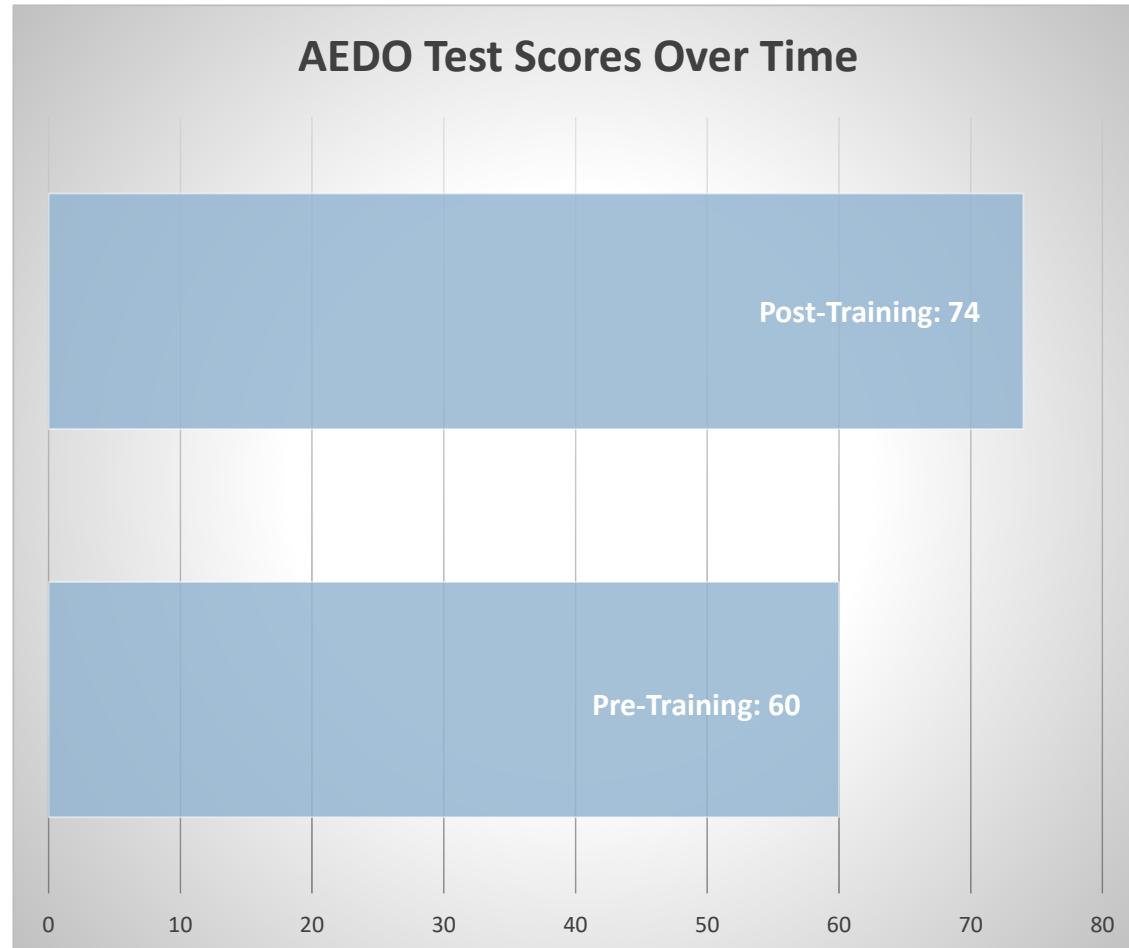


Result I: Changes in youth agribusiness knowledge

- 564 youth surveyed and scored 1 to 100
- Group trained:
 - Scores increased 11% (46 to 51)
 - Statistically significant at 5% level
- Untrained group:
 - Scores increased (46 to 48)
 - Not statistically significant



Result 2: Changes in extension worker knowledge



- 30 extension workers surveyed
 - Only 22 completed pre- and post-surveys
- Scores increased 23% (60 to 74)
 - Statistically significant at 5%
- Pre- / post- differentials varied widely between extension workers
 - Those with attendance rates above 70% saw the largest gains
 - Male-female differential was negligible

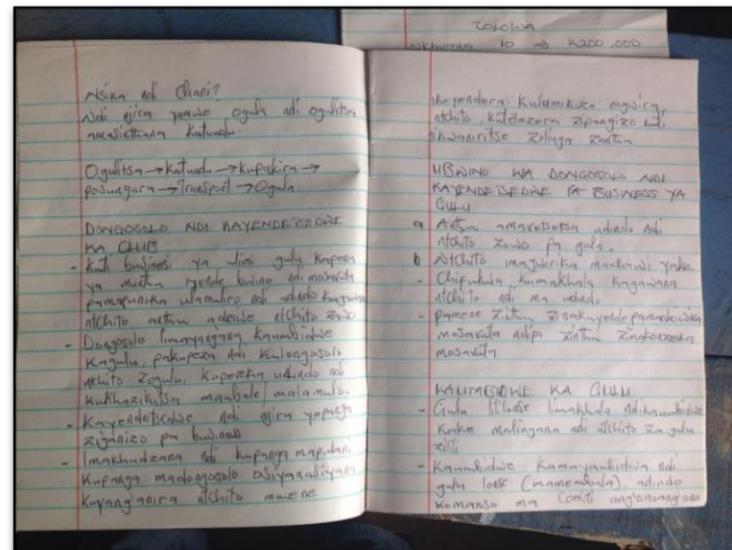
Result 3: Number of functional Young Farmers Clubs

- Young Farmers Clubs were largely dormant before implementation
 - Only 3 of 30 extension workers reported having YFCs
 - Only 1 met frequently (i.e. more than once every several months)
- At completion, 39 clubs were meeting on a weekly or bi-weekly basis
 - Each extension worker had at least 1-2 clubs in their target area (EPA section)



Result 3: Number of functional Young Farmers Clubs

- All clubs developed formal business plans
 - Over 300 in total
 - Plans covered staple crop production, livestock, dairy/poultry, value addition, etc.
 - Shared with local leaders, NGOs/projects, microfinance organizations, market actors, etc.



Result 4: Number of youth in Young Farmers Clubs

- 903 new youth joined YFCs by completion of the program
 - Substantial increase in youth formally engaged in agricultural activities
 - 39 Young Farmers Clubs established youth in leadership positions



Results after 1+ year

- MoA eager to scale out program to other districts
- Extension workers are supportive of peer-to-peer learning approach
- YFCs are conducting cross-visits to other districts to share experiences
- YFC leaders are participating in farmer stakeholder platforms
 - Advocating for youth involvement and agribusiness trainings
- Market actors have worked with YFCs to create market linkages
 - YFCs linked to Agricultural Commodity Exchange (ACX)
 - Resulted in buying agreements between some YFCs and ACX
 - FAO and NASFAM actively partnering with YFCs



Conclusions/Implications

- Peer-to-peer approach effective for capacity building of extension workers
 - Allows trouble-shooting and group learning
- Breaking out complexes trainings into smaller pieces assists knowledge retention and skill development
- Participatory approaches are a crucial supplement to technical training
- Modest investments in transportation support can dramatically increase extension visits
 - 45% receiving no visits all year > bi-weekly visits
- Youth are receptive to agricultural training with economic relevance
- Long-term benefits can be found if connections are brokered to markets, buyers, etc.

Thank You

Please contact us for more information:

Austen Moore, PhD

Deputy Project Director - SANE

acmoore@illinois.edu

+1-217-265-6536

AgReach / FTF Malawi Strengthening Agricultural and Nutrition Extension
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

agreach.illinois.edu / <https://agreach.illinois.edu/sane>