

Disseminating Innovative Resources and Technologies to Smallholders (DIRTS)

Newsletter | October – December 2015



DIRTS is an agricultural study that evaluates interventions aimed at promoting intensified cultivation through increased smallholder investment in farming activities. The study attempts to measure the impact of three interventions on the productivity levels of smallholder farmers.

General Updates

Nomination and Presentation of Preliminary Results at PEGNet Conference

The DIRTS Project was nominated in the “Best Practice” Award category for 2015’s [Poverty Reduction, Equity & Growth Network \(PEGNet\) Annual Conference](#) held in Berlin. The conference was co-organized by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IfW), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and supported the KfW Development Bank, and the Courant Poverty Research Centre at the University of Göttingen. Nominations for this category were reserved for projects that sufficiently combined relevance in research questions, rigorous research approach, effective collaboration between research and policy, as well as capacity building and partnership sustainability. From a pool of about 20 applications received globally, DIRTS was shortlisted in the top three projects meeting the above criteria. A member of the DIRTS team participated in the conference and presented on the preliminary findings.



A Project Team member presenting preliminary results & findings at the 2015 PEGNet Annual Conference, Berlin.

The Extension Intervention



The extension intervention facilitates access to information on recommended agricultural practices for the cultivation of four crops – maize, soya, cowpea and groundnuts. This intervention reaches 20 respondents per community in half of the 162 project communities. By using community-based agents (CEAs) equipped with android devices, respondents meet CEAs weekly to watch short extension videos on activities being carried out by the farmer in the week of the visit.

Activities / Updates

Collaboration with District Assemblies & Department of Food & Agriculture

The DIRTS Extension team collaborated with six District Offices of the Department of Food & Agriculture – Saboba, Tolon, Savelugu, Zabzugu, Central Gonja and Gushegu – for the annual Farmers’ Day celebrations held on December 4. A category to award the best DIRTS Community Extension Agent (CEA) was created for the Departments to show appreciation to IPA and the CEAs for the valued supplementary extension services being provided as part of the project. Team members representing the project were also given the chance to address the audience and talk about the scope of the DIRTS study.



*Awarded CEAs with DD & DCE on farmers’ day, Saboba
Preparations for launch of Extension Qualitative Survey*

Preliminary findings from the Knowledge and Practice Survey (KPS) and Annual Surveys reveal that farmers in the Extension treatment are learning and adopting new practices. However, this is neither seen across all messages taught nor all practices recommended. In addition, preliminary data analysis from the labor survey shows increased labor investment from female farmers, who are the primary recipients of the legume messages. To probe into these findings, DIRTS will be conducting a qualitative survey in 41 treatment communities to investigate the observed behavioral changes. Findings from this survey will feed into content development for 2016, and guide refinement of extension messages and videos. Questionnaire development began in November, with data collection and analysis planned for January and February 2016 respectively.

Extension Message Delivery & Close-out Sessions

CEAs continued with the delivery of extension messages to respondents. Meeting with primary (male) and secondary (female) respondents of project households, CEAs delivered extension messages on maize and legume (soya, groundnut

and cowpea) crops respectively. Extension messages shared between October and December covered practices and topics on end-season harvesting and post-harvesting activities such as timely and proper harvesting, proper drying of produce, bagging and storage of harvested produce, preparing for next season, etc. Extension messages deliveries were expected to end in the final weeks of December with mop-up activities planned for January 2016. At the end of every farming season, the Extension team visits project communities to conduct closeout sessions. These close-out sessions are conducted with officials of the Department of Food and Agriculture to:

- Show appreciation to communities and respondents for their continued participation
- Gather feedback from respondents on the performance of their CEAs
- Give MoFA officers the opportunity to interact with respondents to gauge impact of the intervention
- Share plans on upcoming year's activities

In December, the team began sharing preliminary plans for 2016 with DDs and AEAs to solicit their input and feedback as well as scheduling these close-out sessions.

The Insurance Intervention



The Insurance Intervention facilitates access to an indexed insurance product against drought. Farmers with insurance coverage either from purchasing the product themselves or receiving it for free (paid for by IPA) are eligible to receive payouts if drought conditions detailed in the policy contract are manifested. Insurance products are marketed in project communities by IPA on behalf of the Ghana Agricultural Insurance Pool (GAIP).

Activities / Updates

Payout Outcomes for FAARIGU Insurance Policy Holders

For the 2015 insurance coverage period, the seasonal downpours recorded were preceded by a drought period of more than 12 consecutive days. Rainfall data collected indicated that this drought had occurred in 160 out of the 162 project

communities. This matched the condition for triggering payout in the germination phase of the insurance product. As such, a payout amount of GHS 25 per unit insured was triggered payable to farmers who had insurance coverage. The 2015 notification of the payout outcomes will start in late December, 2015 and will last through February,

2016. The two communities not eligible for a payout will equally be informed about the seasonal rainfall record in their area. During these payout meetings with respondents and community members, a short qualitative survey will be administered to collect data on farmers' understanding of the policy, their initial expectations on the season's rainfall, main reasons for purchasing the insurance products and interest in purchasing a similar insurance product in the future.



A member of the Insurance Team giving payout to a farmer who purchased insurance

Introduction of a Groundnut Insurance Product (Insurance Intervention)

As part of the qualitative survey mentioned above, the team will also collect data on presence and level of activity of Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) and out-grower schemes in project communities. Data from this part of the survey will inform the Insurance team's sample for the marketing of an additional Insurance product developed for groundnuts. This research is motivated by a prospective collaboration with **World Cover**, a new agent in the weather insurance landscape in Ghana. Through this partnership, IPA and World Cover will assess the feasibility of commercializing a groundnut insurance product. Unlike the marketing of the GAIP-underwritten maize insurance, under the groundnut product IPA and World Cover will use an FBO-driven marketing strategy. In parallel, IPA will continue to market the FAARIGU insurance for maize through CBMs in all 162 communities.



The Inputs Intervention



The inputs intervention facilitates access to agricultural inputs at the community level. The intervention engages selected community members (CBMs) to market and take orders for input purchases at prevailing market prices with IPA bearing the cost of transporting products to communities. These CBMs are then linked to commercial input retailers at district centers who attend to the input orders.

Successful Exit Sessions / Workshops with Inputs Community Based Marketers (CBMs) & Retailers

Following the decision to phase out the “Access to Input Technologies” Intervention from the DIRTS project for the 2016 Implementation year, the Inputs team carried out exit sessions to properly inform all key stakeholders. These exit sessions were carried out in all 60 communities with the Community Based Marketers (CBMs) and community members in group gatherings. All ten retailers who were partners in the

Inputs treatment and an additional ten non-partner retailers were interviewed in a round of qualitative surveys to gather their views on the intervention and ideas for potential adoption and scale-up of the intervention. Findings from these interviews were used to inform discussions in the final exit workshop held with retailers during which sales made through the project in 2015 and implementation reports were also shared.

Research Management Column

Plot Measurement Activities and the Labor Survey

The DIRTS team managed to complete about 90 % of plot measurement activities in project communities. This involved the use of Community-based Survey Assistants (CSAs) equipped with GPS devices to take coordinates and measurements of respondents’ fields. Data collected from this activity are then matched with plot data collected during the baseline survey conducted in 2014.

The DIRTS Evaluation team has also managed to complete a total of 12 rounds of bi-weekly surveys started in June to collect data on labor investments by respondents. Four of these 12 rounds were successfully completed between October and December. We anticipate an additional two rounds going into January 2016.

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LOCATION: Ghana

SAMPLE: 3,240 households
in 162 farming communities

TIMELINE: 2014-2016

THEMES: Agriculture

POLICY GOALS: Technology Adoption



