

postgraduate readers and professionals with a commitment to understanding how economic adjustment policies could be successful while protecting vulnerable groups, such as children.

Reviewed by Abel Zimunya, World Vision International, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Agricultural Extension for Women Farmers in Africa, Katrine A Saito and Jean C Weidemann, World Bank, Washington DC, 1990 (57pp, US\$6.95, ISBN 0 8213 1657 5).

This is a short publication, and is quite condensed but the few pictures and generous spread of case studies make the book interesting and readable. The cover is probably too light coloured to withstand the tough usage for which the book is destined.

The book is product of almost two years of research into the problems facing women farmers, and various ways of developing agricultural extension services to women, in Africa. The work was financed by the UNDP Regional Programme for Africa and is part of ongoing research into raising the productivity of women farmers in Africa.

The book is jointly authored by Katrine Saito and Jean Weidemann, senior economist and consultant respectively in the Women in Development division of the World Bank's Population and Human Resources Department. The authors acknowledge contributions to the publication by many experts within and outside the World Bank. The book has four chapters, Chapter 1 addresses the question of why women need help, and focuses on the role of women in agriculture in Africa, and the particular constraints they face in access to resources and information. Chapter 2 examines the information needed to modify the extension system to better reach women farmers, and the information needed to modify the focus of research to address women's activities and constraints on these, and to monitor and evaluate programmes.

Ways of collecting such data are suggested. Chapter 3 deals with the transmission of the extension message to women. In this chapter the writers examine the role of extension agents and the importance of gender, the use of home economists and subject matter specialists, the use of contact farmers, and the use of groups. The final chapter examines the formulation of the message to be delivered, and the linkages between extension and agricultural research and technology.

One strength of the book is that it views women as an integral part of a complex socioeconomic setting, and avoids defining extension for women only in terms of 'women's' factors, or shortfalls in women-related information. While acknowledging the need to review such factors and provide women-specific information, the authors have looked at extension as an open ended strategy that takes note of different situations and explores new directions for involving women in their own learning not as objects of extension but as participants.

Another strength of the book is its guidelines for action. The literature on women in agriculture rarely goes beyond just expressing views on the situation of women. The

usefulness of the writers' suggestions will however, depend on their compatibility with the trends and traditions set by T and V. Action is unlikely to happen quickly if "extension staff often lack the tools for fully diagnosing the needs and constraints of farmers" (p2), especially women farmers. It is hoped that the guidelines will be accepted and valued, because the authors have outlined the research basis for their suggestions, and provided case studies against which readers can check for themselves the practical implications of the suggestions. A strong point of this publication is its simplicity and the logic of presentation. The right amount of information is given and a busy reader can get through a lot of information very quickly. It is an 'awareness tool' with an authoritative base in research.

The major weakness of the book is that it is not reader-specific. An initial impression given is that the most suitable reader is the female subject matter specialist on women's programmes, who is being informed on the situation of women in agriculture and the views and practices of policy makers, managers, agents and participants in agricultural support services for women. The message seems to be "they are males who are not directly affected by the problems and needs of women farmers and hence are not sufficiently aware of them" (px). However, when an attempt is made to overlook this unfortunate bias, there is information in Chapters 2 and 3 that is relevant to policy makers, managers, extension agents, etc of whatever sex.

Practical ways to involve women more meaningfully are provided. These chapters are useful for those involved in women's programmes for the first time, or for those who need to restructure some homebred measure that is not working very well. Researchers and students on the more general topics of women in agriculture and women in rural development will also find useful information and references. The publication is ideal for agricultural extension specialists working with women, especially those who have to draw up working guidelines for others.

Readers must take note of the writers' own caution that their work is not conclusive, as integrating women into the agricultural extension system is an ongoing process. The writers expect problems to emerge, and suggest alternative approaches to be tested over the next few years. This is a caution worth noting.

The authors have made a significant contribution. I look forward to a revised paper which incorporates not only new lessons and experiences, but also a more authoritative World Bank Extension strategy, either in current T and V messages or another extension strategy that takes note of women as an important and integral part of the rural sector. When this is done it should be signified by a statement of ownership by the World Bank. This final statement is a reaction to the usual World Bank caveat, "The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors...." Sadly with such an apology the impact of this valuable book on World Bank established traditions like T and V extension systems and other books which carry positive World Bank acknowledgements is likely to be reduced.

Reviewed by J H Chavarika, MSW student, School of Social Work, Harare.