

# Extension Processes for Rural Energy

## Research Brief

**Key words:** Extension processes, rural energy, participation, sustainable livelihoods

**Energy is important**, and poor communities all over the world struggle to break out of the poverty trap due to either their energy needs not being met or the time and resources need to source it. Energy should play large part in all development initiatives. The DFID Guidance note for Energy for the Rural Poor states “Access to energy is essential to sustain human life”.

**Participation is important.** The knowledge has been around in development for a long time now that any project – from a new well, to increased ICT capacity – should be sustainable to ensure a lasting impact. It is also know that engaging the participation of communities in needs assessment lead to initiatives that are demand led and therefore more likely to be sustainable. That’s all great, the only problem being that people don’t always know what’s best for them. Consequently, **there are few recorded and reported examples of where energy issues are expressed as a need resulting from participatory processes.** All these factors gave birth to the following research hypothesis.

Hypothesis: The skills and awareness of workers facilitating participatory processes depend largely on the training given, which is in turn governed by the remit of their parent organisation. If energy is not included in the training, it is unlikely to be recognised by either extension worker or village as a need.



3 key assumptions:

- 1) Energy is important
- 2) Participatory processes are important
- 3) There are few recorded and reported examples of where energy issues are expressed as a need resulting from participatory processes.

## Key Findings

- The displaced were more likely to adapt sustainable fuel wood management than stable communities due to – increased awareness of the limitations of resources, greater value placed on resources after having their own removed.
- The need to fit in (in terms of energy practices) is more influential among the displaced above their own reasoned attitude. This insecurity is due to their status as refugees.
- The displaced are less open to external input into matters concerning the way their home is run (e.g. which stove to use). They are though, more open to advice regarding woodlot planting. This also can be attributed to security fears.

## Implications of research

Both the content and the channel need to differ for energy education messages depending on whether the community is stable or unstable. Targeted messages prevent extension agents from doing this.

## From data to results

The TORA technique proved itself valid in that it uncovered the majority of items that are usually discovered for displaced persons (and then added quantifiable statistics as the strength of the belief).

The validity was further proved in the demonstration phase of the project (DFID R7483), This project took the recommendations of R6849 and worked with extension services across Northern Ghana to apply them. The new messages addressed the barriers to the adoption of three generalized behaviours:

- *Improved stove adoption*
- *Firewood collection*
- *Wood lot planting*

The messages and methodologies of this focused extension were further developed by local extension agencies, both GO and NGO, involved in the promotion of sustainable natural resource management, during a workshop conducted in Tamale in January 2000.

## Does it work?

The final research activity was to repeat the TORA survey in order to explore the changes that had occurred among extension clients. 230 sample households were surveyed in the districts exposed to the focused extension. The project determined if the focused intervention had changed these barriers and whether there was a related improvement in the three behaviours.

**Improved Stoves** - The focused messages have led to an increase in the use of improved stoves (51% increase) and a stronger intention to continue this practice.

**Firewood collection** - While there had been a general deterioration in sustainable collection behaviour during the previous 3 years, the focused extension programme does appear to have halted this negative trend and has led to more sustainable behaviour.

**Woodlots** - Generally tree planting and wood lot management behaviour have weakened over the past 3 years. Those communities exposed to the focused extension initiative, and particularly those who have attended demonstrations have registered a significant positive change in both their current practice and future intentions.

The full report is available to read at:  
[www.fuelwood.info](http://www.fuelwood.info)

For more information on Gamos and its activities please visit:

[www.gamos.org](http://www.gamos.org)



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