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NGOs as brokers in agricultural R&E planning**Kate Wellard**

Non-government organisations (I include here both local and international NGOs and local membership organisations) have moved away from exclusively relief functions and are increasingly involved in development and empowerment of their members or client group. Where NGO projects and programmes are planned in conjunction with local groups, a degree of participation in planning at local level may be achieved. If NGOs are able to represent the views of their members at national level, then potentially they can act as brokers between rural people and government planners, research and extension staff on a much wider scale.

Whether this potential is realised depends on certain factors, both exogenous e.g. the nature of interaction between government and NGOs, and the existence of donor pressure, and endogenous e.g. size and status of the NGO, the extent to which it is able to represent genuine interests, and its technical capability.

This summary addresses the last of these. Case studies of NGOs who have initiated agricultural and environmental research and extension (R&E) activities in response to an identified local need are examined. Many have gone on to address wider research questions, linking up with other organisations locally or nationally through networks, and collaborating with or lobbying government on policy issues or development programmes.

- Successful translation of local farmers' needs into practical R&E programmes is seen as dependent upon:
- NGOs' ability to identify these needs, design and appraise appropriate interventions and carry out participatory research.

- this in turn depends on their approach, technical expertise and other resources. Where they do not have specialist resources in-house, there may be a possibility of collaboration with government R&E services.
- the amount of professional interaction between NGO and government R&E staff.
- acceptance by government and donors of NGOs as legitimate contributors to their agricultural R&E agendas.

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