

Chapter 5: Agriculture

The MPRSP (page 8) highlights the importance of agriculture as a source of income for the rural poor, accounting for 63.7 per cent of the total. It further underlines the pre-eminence of the sector by pointing out that it accounts for about 36 per cent of GDP, 87 per cent of total employment and supplies more than 65 percent of the manufacturing sector's raw material requirements. It identifies that increasing this income will be a key source of poverty reduction, at least in the medium-term (page 22), and that the agricultural sector will remain the key source of growth and employment in the same time frame.

Activities to achieve this increase in income are incorporated under the first pillar of the MPRSP– pro-poor growth. These cover a multitude of initiatives, including expanding and strengthening access to agricultural inputs, improving agricultural production through improved extension services, improving access to markets and promoting small scale irrigation schemes.

Under agriculture, two PPEs are identified, targeting agricultural extension and small-scale irrigation. In the 2002-3 budget a total of MK325,351,500 (MK100.2 million and MK 225.1 million respectively) was allocated to these, even though later advertisements in the newspapers²² showed major increase in the allocations to these PPEs (to MK238,400,000 and 290,200,000 respectively).

The Targeted Input Programme (TIP) is also included as a PPE, however in the 2002-3 budget it is not under agriculture but pillar three, improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable. A total of MK230million was allocated to this in the budget; this was also subsequently amended, in this case downward to MK100million, however in terms of actual money allocated to date, it has received MK323million.

The Service Delivery Satisfaction Survey asked a number of questions connected to these key areas – primarily related to the availability of extension workers, access to ADMARC and the Targeted Input Programmes. It found that while a very large number of people do not receive extension advice (49 per cent), the majority of those receiving the advice are satisfied with it. It also found that ADMARC is a very important institution in the eyes of the respondents, predominantly acting as a source of food for them at different times of the year, while the TIP, though important, is not viewed as automatically leading to an increase in production. The more detailed results for each of these questions are outlined in the following sections.

5.1 Extension Services

The MPRS (page 23) highlights that efforts will be made to reverse increases in the farmer to extension worker ratio in order to increase farmer access to extension services. This requires training and employing more extension workers to fill the gap created by the high attrition rate. In addition, existing extension workers will be retrained to enhance their knowledge and reorient them to the new extension policy.

The indicators identified within the MPRSP for extension services relate to improvements in the yield per hectare for certain crops, the number of cooperatives formed and the number of trainees taken in. It does not address quality issues relating to the frequency of visit, numbers of farmers trained or satisfaction with the service provided. To rectify this shortcoming, the SDSS attempted to address two of these areas.

A high proportion of those responding to the survey (87.1 per cent) stated that they owned some amount of land, suggesting the importance of agricultural activities in their economic lives. In total, 68.3 per cent of respondents said that they were living in a site covered by an

²² Weekend Nation Newspaper, Vol 7 No 7, 15-16 February 2003

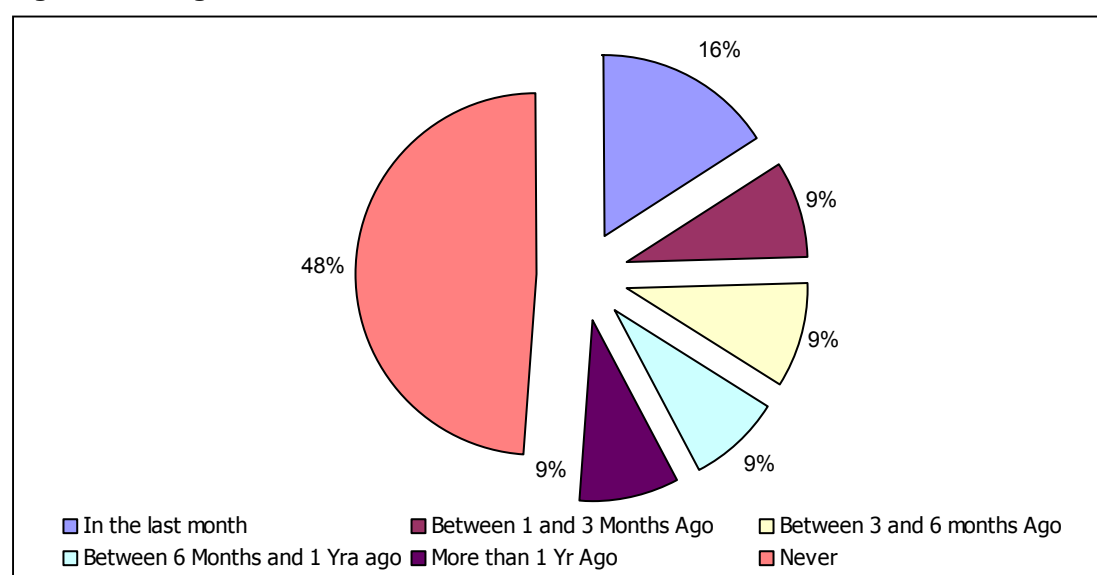
extension worker²³, unsurprisingly the district with the smallest number of respondents saying this was in the urban area of Blantyre²⁴ – even though in some of the more remote urban clusters, they did respond that they were covered. If the responses for Blantyre are excluded then 76.4 per cent of respondents in rural areas reported that they live in villages covered by extension workers. (Table 5.1 shows the responses to this question by district).

Table 5.1: Respondents living in a site covered by an extension worker (%)

	%
Mulanje (n=180)	70.6
Phalombe (n=178)	87.1
Blantyre City (n=144)	16.7
Mchinji (n=205)	82.9
Salima (n=214)	75.7
Nkhata Bay (n=142)	62.0
Total (n=1063)	68.3

Respondents were then asked how long it was since an extension worker last visited them²⁵ - 16 per cent said they had been visited in the last month, but 49 per cent said they had never been visited (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Length of time since the last visit of an extension worker



The SDSS did not attempt to ascertain the reasons why the extension workers were not visiting the respondents, rather complimentary work carried out by the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), who interviewed the extension workers themselves, should be able to address this issue. As can be expected there are large differences between the various districts. Respondents in Mchinji and Nkhata Bay appear to receive visits far more frequently (26 per cent and 32 per cent said they had been visited in the last month) than

²³ Estimates from the Civil Society Agriculture Network's (CISANET) budget monitoring exercise for 2001-2 suggested that staffing levels were at the time only 47 per cent of what was required, but that a number of extension agents also covered villages that were not allocated to them.

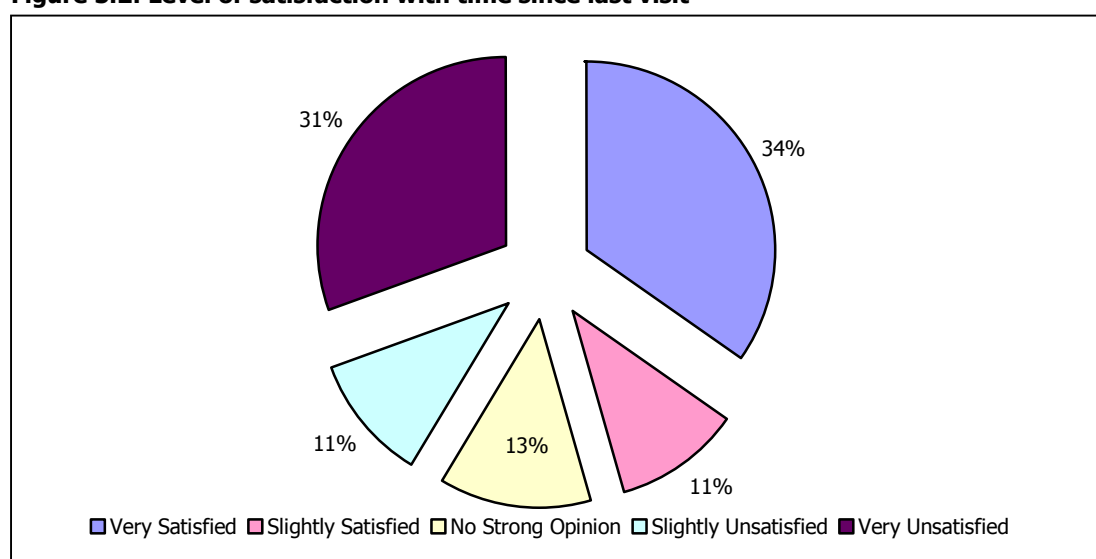
²⁴ Initially, the results for Blantyre were to be completely excluded from the section on agriculture because of its status as an urban centre. However, during the analysis stage it emerged that quite a number of households sampled live in peri-urban areas and engage in some form of agriculture. The responses for those who do not engage in any agricultural activity have been excluded (hence the smaller *n* for Blantyre than other districts).

²⁵ The option of not applicable was included here, 16.1% of the total number of respondents to this question chose this answer (mainly from Blantyre), they have however been left out of the final analysis.

the other districts²⁶. At the same time over half of the respondents in Mulanje, Salima and Phalombe responded that they have never received a visit (a table depicting the district level answers is included in the annex as Table A5.1).

After this, respondents who had answered that this question was applicable to them, were asked about their satisfaction with the frequency of the visits. These responses were analysed both by district and by the length of time. Overall, 34.8 per cent of respondents were very satisfied with the frequency of visits – on the other had 31 per cent stated they were very unsatisfied. There are major differences between districts; for instance in Nkhata Bay, where 32 per cent of respondents had received a visit in the last month, almost 58 per cent of respondents stated they were very satisfied. At the same time, in Mulanje, where only 10 per cent of respondents had received a visit in the past month, 36.1 per cent of respondents said they were very unsatisfied. This district also recorded the highest score for “No Strong Opinion”, 28.3 per cent of respondents, possibly as a result of the fact that well over half (58.3 per cent) of respondents stated that they had never received a visit from an extension worker. (See Figure 5.2 and Table A5.2 for a breakdown of the results by district).

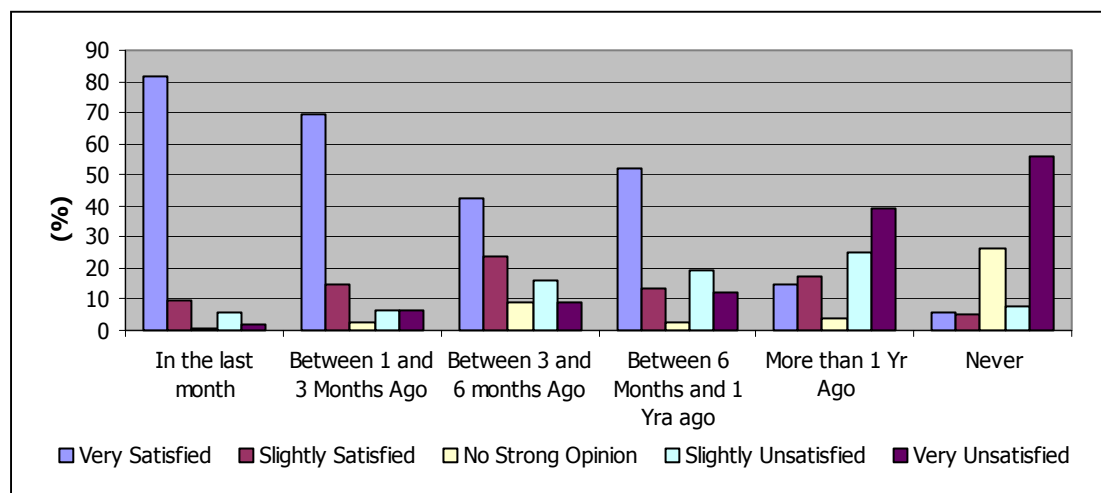
Figure 5.2: Level of satisfaction with time since last visit



The results for this question were also analysed by the length of time since the extension worker last visited the respondents. Unsurprisingly, those who had been visited in the past month had the highest expressed level of satisfaction, and those who had never been visited registered the highest score for being very unsatisfied. It is also interesting to note that respondents were more satisfied than unsatisfied even for instances where the last visit was as long ago as between six months and one year. It is only for periods of over one year that the respondents were more unsatisfied (See Figure 5.3).

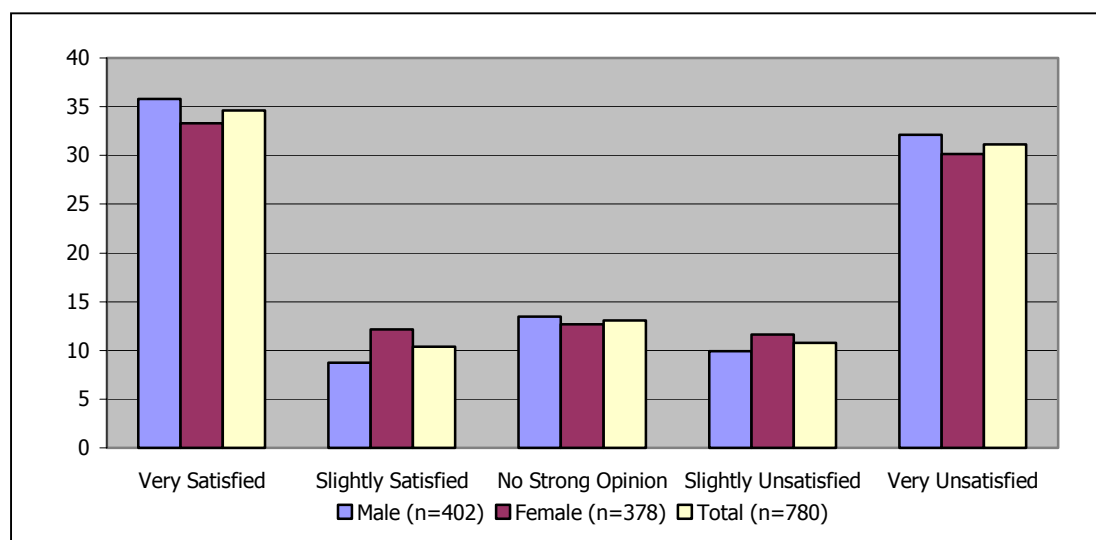
²⁶ In a review meeting held with enumerators operating in these districts, it emerged that these figures were possibly as a result of interventions and support by a number of non-governmental organisations operating in these districts (specifically NICE in Mchinji and World Vision in Nkhata Bay), who had been assisting extension workers reaching the communities in question.

Figure 5.3: Satisfaction with frequency of extension visits, by time since last visit



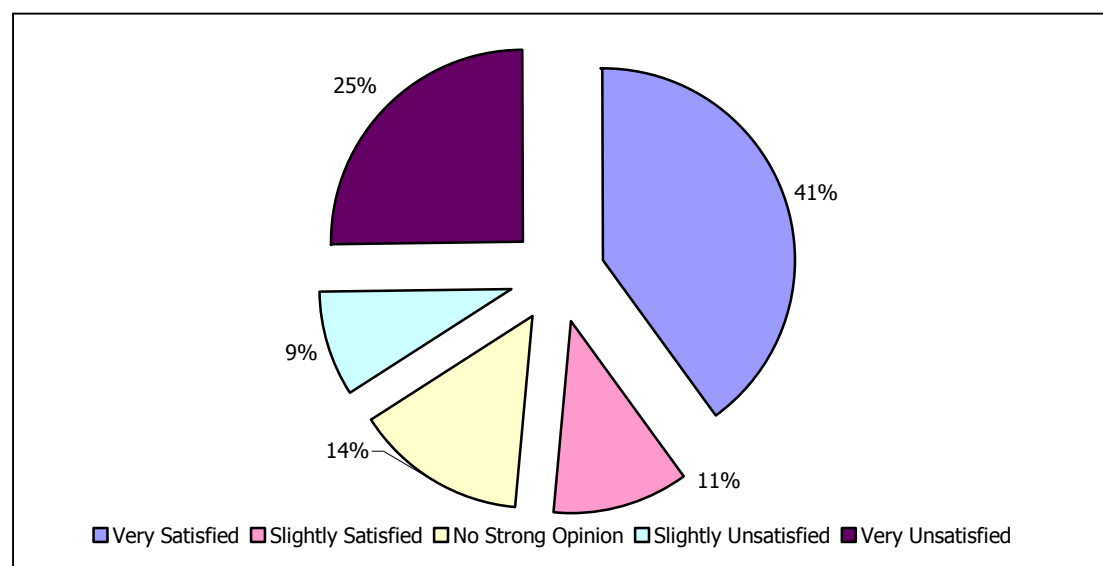
As mentioned in earlier sections, some questions related to satisfaction were analysed in terms of the respondent’s gender, with the expectation that men and women may have different levels of satisfaction with the services on offer. However, similar to the sections that were analysed in these terms in education and health, the issue of frequency of visit of extension workers revealed only minimal differences in the satisfaction levels of men and women. Amongst male respondents 35.8 per cent of men said they were very satisfied, opposed to 33.3 per cent of women. At the same time, 32.1 per cent of men said they were very unsatisfied, while 30.2 per cent of women stated that this was the case (See Figure 5.4 and Annex Table A5.4).

Figure 5.4: Level of satisfaction with frequency of extension agents visits, by gender (%)



Respondents were then asked about their level of satisfaction with the advice they were given – the most frequent response was that they were very satisfied (40.1 per cent), even though a large number said they were very unsatisfied (25.3). As with the results with the question on satisfaction since the time of last visit, it appears that the respondents opted for the extremes. On a district level, Nkhata Bay again registers the greatest proportion of respondents saying they were very satisfied (61.2 per cent).

Figure 5.5: Level of satisfaction with the quality of the extension advice delivered



From the preceding, it is apparent that those who receive agricultural extension advice are happy with the services they get. However, it is also apparent that well over half of the respondents in this survey had not received any extension advice in the past 12 months, and many of them have never received this information. This is a major concern, particularly when one takes account of the importance attached to this service in the MPRSP for improving incomes in the rural areas and thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

The same methodology used in other sections of the report was used to weight the responses and assess which of the six districts respondents' were most happy with extension services in.

Table 5.2: Satisfaction with extension services – weighted responses by district

	Frequency of Extension Visits	Quality of Extension Advice	Total	Rank
Nkhata Bay	1.000	1.235	1.118	1st
Phalombe	0.530	0.841	0.686	2nd
Blantyre	-0.100	0.296	0.098	3rd
Mchinji	0.011	0.169	0.090	4th
Salima	-0.219	0.000	-0.110	5th
Mulanje	-0.378	-0.117	-0.247	6th
Total	0.075	0.319	0.197	

From the results, as outlined in Table 5.2, it appears that those from Nkhata Bay were most satisfied with the extension information given, and respondents in Mulanje were least satisfied. Overall, extension services received a score that puts them towards the lower end of the somewhat satisfied classification.

5.2 Access to ADMARC

One of the initiatives highlighted in the MPRSP as being important for improving the level of income of those involved in small-scale agriculture is expanding and strengthening access to agricultural inputs (page 23). The MPRS mentions that improving access to markets has the potential for contributing to this goal (this issue is also taken up under the heading of Infrastructure in Chapter 6 of this report). In this regard, the SDSS asked questions about ADMARC and its supply of inputs, the questionnaire also took the opportunity to investigate the importance of ADMARC as a source of food for people, bearing in mind the on-going discussions concerning the reform and privatisation of the institution.

In general, respondents live 11.6 kilometres from the nearest ADMARC depot – those in Blantyre and Phalombe live closer to ADMARC, while those in Nkhata Bay (the least densely

populated of all the districts visited) live just less than 18 kilometres from the nearest ADMARC.

Table 5.3: Average Distance to the Nearest ADMARC Market (KMs)

	Total (KM)
Mulanje	14.9
Phalombe	6.1
Blantyre City	3.5
Mchinji	11.2
Salima	14.5
Nkhata Bay	17.9
Total (n=899)	11.6

When asked whether the nearest ADMARC facility had a supply of inputs, only 19.2 per cent of respondents said that this was never the case – 40.4 per cent said that it always had inputs and 29 per cent said sometimes. The district with the highest proportion saying the depot never had inputs was in Salima (30 per cent), while Mchinji had the highest proportion saying they were always available (62.9 per cent) (see Table 5.4 below).

Table 5.4: Proportion of ADMARC facilities that always have a supply of inputs

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Don't Know
Mulanje	37.9	30.5	13.6	18.1
Phalombe	45.8	25.4	22.6	6.2
Blantyre City	58.5	13.8	23.1	4.6
Mchinji	62.9	21.8	10.7	4.6
Salima	16.7	39.4	30.0	13.8
Nkhata Bay	22.5	40.8	14.8	21.8
Total (n=1026)	40.4	29.0	19.2	11.4

Respondents were then asked how important the nearest ADMARC facility is to them as a source of food. From the responses received, it is apparent that this is perceived as being a major role for ADMARC. In all, 71 per cent of respondents felt that ADMARC was a very important source of food for them – in Blantyre City, this was as high as 92.7 per cent, attributable to the fact that so few people there produce their own food. Less than 13 per cent of respondents stated that ADMARC was never used as a source of food, underlining the important role this facility plays in everyday life in Malawi.

Table 5.5: Importance of the nearest ADMARC facility in access to food

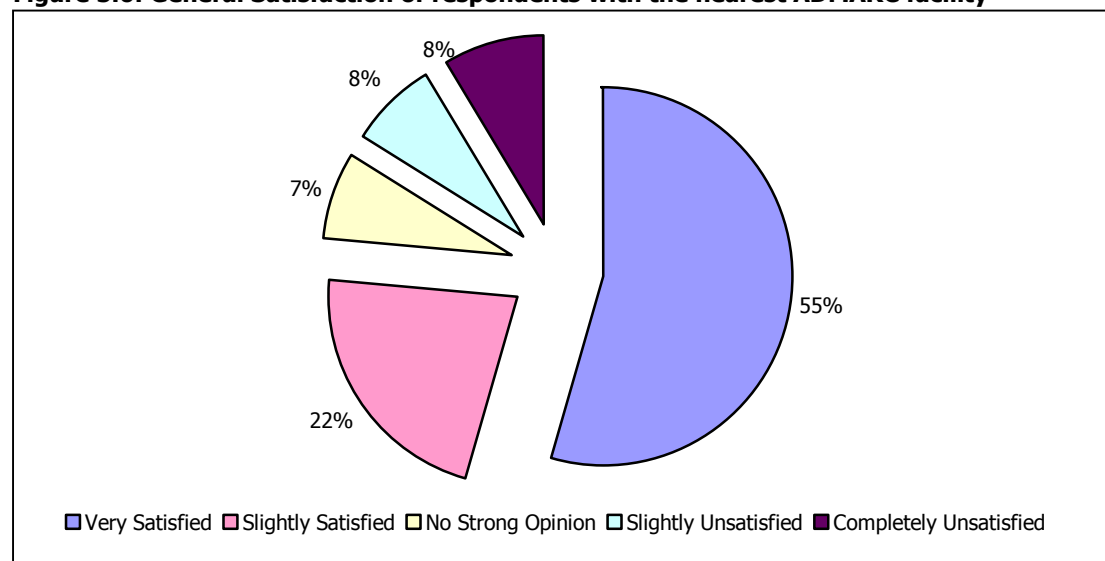
	Very Important	Important at occasional times	Never Used as a source of food
Mulanje	58.9	18.3	22.9
Phalombe	79.7	8.1	12.2
Blantyre City	92.7	6.5	0.8
Mchinji	84.1	9.5	6.3
Salima	58.2	20.4	21.4
Nkhata Bay	55.7	36.6	7.6
Total (n=992)	71.0	16.2	12.8

It is then perhaps not surprising that respondents were generally happy with their nearest ADMARC depot – in total 54.4 per cent of respondents stated that they were very satisfied, with a further 22 per cent saying they were somewhat satisfied. Only 16.1 per cent of respondents stated that they were either slightly or very unsatisfied.

There are differences across districts – for instance in Blantyre, which had such a high proportion of respondents saying they viewed ADMARC as a very important source of food, 77.3 per cent of respondents said they were very satisfied. Salima and Nkhata Bay registered the largest degrees of dissatisfaction with the ADMARC facility – but even here it was only one in four who said they were either slightly or very unsatisfied. Of particular concern in these districts is the fact, highlighted to some of the enumerators, that people consider that

some maize sellers adjust the scales for personal gain – however the survey did not attempt to investigate this further (Figure 5.5 below represents the level of satisfaction nationwide).

Figure 5.6: General Satisfaction of respondents with the nearest ADMARC facility



Overall satisfaction with ADMARC has to be judged from a single question. Using the methodology as highlighted earlier in the report, it appears that respondents in Blantyre City were most satisfied with the service offered, followed by Phalombe, with those in Nkhata Bay being least satisfied (See table 5.6). It is also apparent that respondents generally lean towards the very satisfied response when discussing ADMARC.

Table 5.6: Satisfaction with ADMARC – weighted responses by district

Satisfaction with ADMARC		
Blantyre	1.591	1st
Phalombe	1.449	2nd
Mchinji	1.374	3rd
Mulanje	0.765	4th
Salima	0.728	5th
Nkhata Bay	0.517	6th
Total	1.063	

These findings suggest that the importance of the role played by ADMARC in both rural and urban parts of the country cannot be underestimated, and should be taken into account in any reform programme that is undertaken.

5.3 Access to the TIP

Respondents were also asked questions regarding the Targeted Inputs Programme (TIP), particularly concerning whether the pack arrived in a timely manner and whether it contributed to an improved yield for the household. Because of a large amount of anecdotal evidence being put forward, respondents were also asked whether they had been requested to make a payment to receive a TIP.

In total slightly over 70 per cent of respondents said that they had received a TIP in the latter part of 2002 – this figure rose to almost 87 per cent of the population in Phalombe and was as low as 30 per cent in Blantyre (see Table 5.7). In particular, respondents in Blantyre complained about how the TIP is being distributed, including the politicisation of the process and the way it is being delivered to friends and relatives of the chiefs (see Tables A5.7).

Table 5.7: Proportion of households receiving TIP (Starter Pack) by district

	(%)
Mulanje (n=180)	80.0
Phalombe (n=180)	86.7
Blantyre City (n=144)	29.9
Mchinji (n=212)	67.0
Salima (n=215)	77.7
Nkhata Bay (n=144)	72.2
Total (n=1075)	70.3

However, of those who responded that they had received the TIP, slightly over half said that it had contributed to an improvement in their yield in the harvest of 2003. This figure was particularly low in Blantyre (27.9 per cent) and highest in Mulanje (64.6 per cent).

Table 5.8: % of households receiving TIP who felt that it improved their yield

	(%)
Mulanje	64.6
Phalombe	49.4
Blantyre City	27.9
Mchinji	61.3
Salima	42.5
Nkhata Bay	53.8
Total (n=758)	52.4

Those who had received the pack but said that it had not improved their yield were then asked to give a reason why it had not done so. The most common response was that bad weather had prevented improvements (40.1 per cent), followed by the fact that the pack was incomplete (24.6 per cent) and that it had arrived too late to be of any use (17.5 per cent). Amongst the elaborations on these responses given to the enumerators were that the pack contained sand rather than fertiliser (Blantyre), and that the pack was received at the end of December, after the household had already planted for the season (Mulanje). Only a very small proportion of respondents reported reselling the inputs (0.6 per cent) (See table A5.7 in the annex for figures by district).

Respondents who had received the TIP were also asked whether they felt it was delivered at the right time. Slightly less than two thirds of respondents felt this was the case. As can be expected there were differences between districts on this (see Table 5.9), with those in Mchinji being most positive, while the small number in Blantyre who received the pack feeling quite strongly that it was delivered at the wrong time.

Table 5.9: % of households receiving TIP who felt that it was delivered on time

	Total
Mulanje	52.1
Phalombe	74.4
Blantyre City	27.9
Mchinji	80.6
Salima	70.1
Nkhata Bay	50.0
Total (n=758)	64.4

All respondents were asked whether they felt that the correct beneficiaries were receiving the TIP – overall 62 per cent responded positively to this (a lower proportion of respondents than actually received the pack). Those in Blantyre, which had the smallest proportion receiving a TIP, were perhaps, unsurprisingly, the most negative in this regard – only 20.2 per cent said the right people were getting the TIP. (See table 5.10).

Table 5.10: % of all respondents who felt that the TIP is received by the correct beneficiaries

	(%)
Mulanje	60.2
Phalombe	86.4
Blantyre City	20.2
Mchinji	60.1
Salima	62.1
Nkhata Bay	72.4
Total (n=988)	62.0

Those who did not feel the right people were receiving the TIP were then asked to give a reason for this: 27.6 per cent of respondents said they felt the TIP was being given unfairly to friends and relatives of the chiefs. A further 22.7 per cent said they felt that the pack was not being received by the right people because of political interference. This compares to the findings of last year's CISANET study, which found that main reason for the TIP not reaching the poorest was nepotism in distribution (cited by 47.7 per cent of extension workers). Other reasons given during that exercise were political interference and the fact that the beneficiary identification survey was not done.

All respondents were then asked whether they had been requested to make a payment to receive a TIP. Less than four per cent said this was the case, contradicting somewhat the anecdotal evidence put forward on this. The mean value of these requested payments was MK15.80, and the respondents stated that the most frequent source of the request was from the traditional leaders (chiefs).

Table 5.11: % of respondents asked to make a payment to receive a TIP

	(%)
Mulanje	1.1
Phalombe	0.6
Blantyre City	2.8
Mchinji	8.8
Salima	6.5
Nkhata Bay	1.4
Total (n=1078)	3.9

Notwithstanding the fact that so few people have actually been requested to make a payment for the TIP, the large number of people who feel that it is being given to the wrong beneficiaries is a cause of concern.

5.4 Conclusions

It is of major concern that such a high proportion of respondents (49 per cent) do not receive any extension advice, particularly as this issue receives such prominence in both the MPRS and in the allocations towards the PPEs. This is unfortunate, as such a large number of those receiving this advice view it in a positive light. Bearing this in mind, it is unlikely that improvements in food security or agricultural production can be made without firstly increasing the number of extension workers available and the frequency of their visits to rural villages.

However, once the numbers are actually increased it is also important to ensure that they are given the resources necessary to complete their functions and proper supervisory structures are put in place. In the interim, the experiences of districts that have received assistance from outside sources (such as NGOs) needs to be drawn on and means of fostering such a relationship in other districts should be considered. However, all is not negative on this subject, encouragement needs to be taken from the fact that such a high proportion of those who do actually receive this advice view it so highly.

The high level of satisfaction with the ADMARC facilities is not surprising and is consistent with the position taken by a number of Civil Society Organisations in the discussion over the future of ADMARC. The fact that it is a major source of inputs and food, with only 13 per cent of all

respondents saying they never use it as a source of food, and as many as 92.7 per cent saying they do use it for this reason in Blantyre, suggests that any reforms of the institution needs to take account of the differing roles it plays, and should perhaps not be made on solely economic and financial efficiency grounds.

The Targeted Input Programme continues to have the potential to improve yields of the poorest, however the numbers who received the pack saying it has had no discernible benefit on their yield is cause for concern. While very little can be done about constraints attached to the weather, other issues, such as distributing the pack on time, ensuring that it contains all its components and that the right beneficiaries receive the pack must be addressed.

To have such a high proportion of people saying that the correct beneficiaries do not receive the TIP is something that requires urgent attention for potential future rounds of the exercise, particularly as this appears to be connected to the politicisation of the exercise. The perceived leakage from the programme, despite the fact that it covers such a large amount of the population, suggests that current efforts made at targeting need to be reviewed and alternatives need to be considered, including placing more responsibility for targeting on the communities themselves rather than the chiefs.

For any advancements to be made on the issue of targeting, there is a need to have a regular and reliable budget allocated to the TIP Implementation Unit. One could have expected this situation to exist because of the TIP's inclusion as a PPE, but regular changes in the allocations (not all positive) and in the actual amounts received over-complicate this. This also has implications in relation to timing – if budget allocations are made in June, and the TIP distribution must be completed in the first six months of the year (to prevent difficulties with delays in delivery), reliability in releases for the first six months of the year is required. It is expected that having the area marked as a PPE would bring some regularity in the funding, which would allow for longer term planning (which is necessary if graduation from the pack is ever to be achieved). However, performance to date with this PPE suggests otherwise.