



**BRIEFING  
NOTE 17  
ON:**

**How the Impact from Better Market Access Was Achieved**

In just nine months farm production is more than doubled and nearly two million USD more is earned in seven Districts in Tanzania. And all from improving small holder farmers access to markets. How did they do this is the question answered here. Here, we explain who are the 'district core groups', what they did, and how they worked. Here, we recount the process through which they acquired the skills to have such impact. Whether the impact can be sustained remains an open question.

*District Core Groups*

District core groups comprise of the AMSDP<sup>1</sup> District Focal Person and Partner Agency, usually an NGO or consulting company contracted by the programme to support programme implementation. These two provide leadership to the core groups which also includes a District Market Monitor and representatives from producers and processors or traders. In order to improve farmers access to markets these core groups have to 'learn' how to develop a network of clients as well as how to develop market chains and share experiences with their peers in other districts. This required not only collective action, but also improved access to the internet and the wider use of mobile phones.

*Local Client Networks*

The most successful District core groups quickly established strong local networks of producer groups and other key players in the market chain. Once the core groups had decided which commodities they were going to concentrate on the successful ones made contact with a large number of producer groups and farmer associations. Figure One shows that Songea core group, for the rice commodity alone, made contact with twelve producer groups or farmer associations including the four hundred plus members of the Nakahuga Irrigation Scheme. Songea's network is strong not only because it contains many producer groups but also a number of key players in the market chain like traders and processors. It is also strong because they helped farmer groups plan their own use of 'info-mediaries' to get access to the internet and mobile phones. A large network of 'customers' having good communications allows for greater impact by the core group.

*Developing Market Chains*

Successful core groups undertake market research tracing each transaction as the commodity moves from producer to consumer before moving on to the job of convening the key players in a market chain. They put producers in touch with larger traders or wholesalers. They put producers in touch with processors. Core groups help producers and other key players communicate with each other using mobile phones. Core groups bring together in one 'trade fair workshop' as many of the key players as possible to vision better market chains in which each player benefits more. The Mbinga core group assisted wheat producers build a market chain that included a large trader to bulk their production to such a level that they could negotiate the use of a wheat mill owned by the Diocese. The chain went on to include the same trader who sold the wheat flour to retailers and large consumers like the local bakery. The complete chain can be seen in Figure Two.

*Peer-to-Peer Sharing*

Peer-to-peer sharing between core groups not only stimulates the development of new practices but also speeds up their application across districts. Sharing across Districts is initiated at workshops and then continues through email and exchanges using the internet learning support tools at [www.linkinglearners.net](http://www.linkinglearners.net). Cross district learning using the internet occurred in many areas including how to get core groups organized! Core groups exchanged experiences in: a) how to get market chains started; b) how to operate the warehouse receipt system; and c) how to improve market linkages in a range of commodities, particularly maize and oranges. A total of two hundred and thirty exchanges were made in a six month period. Just over one hundred people from the fourteen AMSDP districts used the online learning service. The majority were core group members but some were leaders of producer groups and other key players in the market chain. Learners not only exchanged experiences and practices but also information about market key players as well. For instance, once Babati district reported their successful negotiations with Dodoma Transport, Sumbawanga and Songea districts immediately requested the contact details and were soon able to make their own successful negotiations. Engaging in such sharing requires the core groups to plan their own use of intermediaries to get access to the internet.

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<sup>1</sup> *Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme of the Government of Tanzania supported by IFAD.*

### *Acquiring the Necessary Skills<sup>2</sup>*

AMSDP's District Focal Persons, Partner Agencies, Market Monitors, producers and other key players in marketing started acquiring the necessary skills with a "Key Players Exploratory Workshop on Market Linkages" in Arusha, Tanzania in early June 2005. This exploratory workshop helped the forty five participants of the AMSDP programme understand the different challenges people face in marketing and develop future visions of improved market linkages. Participants also explored the concept of linked local learning as a process for acquiring new skills. Following the exploratory workshop thirty seven people drawn from their District Focal Persons, Partner Agencies and Market Monitors in fourteen districts were trained as facilitators in the Linking Local Learners methodology of action learning and peer-to-peer exchange. The "Training-of-Trainers Course" ran from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2005 in Arusha. The course produced facilitators capable of: a) planning, managing and facilitating a local action learning process; and b) organising district core groups and setting up a communication network linking them together.



enable the documentation of outcomes to build a knowledge pool of experiences, good practice and impact stories. They do this through direct emails to the learners as well as through the LLL learning support service. Mentors prepare syntheses of discussions and help draft contributions to the library. Mentors also maintain the data base of contact persons registering new members and changing member contact details.



### *Sustaining the Impact*

In March this year after just ten months of skill building through on the job learning district core group members discussed what they needed to learn to ensure that the impact they had achieved would be sustained in the long run. They agreed that sustaining the impact beyond the life of the AMSDP would require the establishment of commercial rural services companies. They realized that their network of clients or customers would have to grow significantly. New skills in how to prepare business plans and how to access loans would also have to be learned. The AMSDP has just three short years to pull this off. For whether they will or not watch this space.

Once the district core groups were up and running with their access to the internet sorted out twenty one participants from their ranks were trained in how to use the LLL Internet Learning Support Service. The training took place in Arusha from the 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005. It provided the district core groups with at least one member who knew how to share their experiences and engage in peer-to-peer exchange with other districts. From August to February 2006 they trained most of the one hundred and four information contact persons who now use the LLL internet learning support service. These information contact persons perform the job of sharing experiences and practices with their peers in other districts. From August to March these information contact persons were mentored in their use of the LLL internet learning support service. Mentors guide, encourage and make suggestions to learners, they make links to others who can help, and they

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<sup>2</sup> Skill building activities were conducted through the First Mile project funded by the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC)

Figure 1. The Strong 'Client' Network of Songea District Core Group

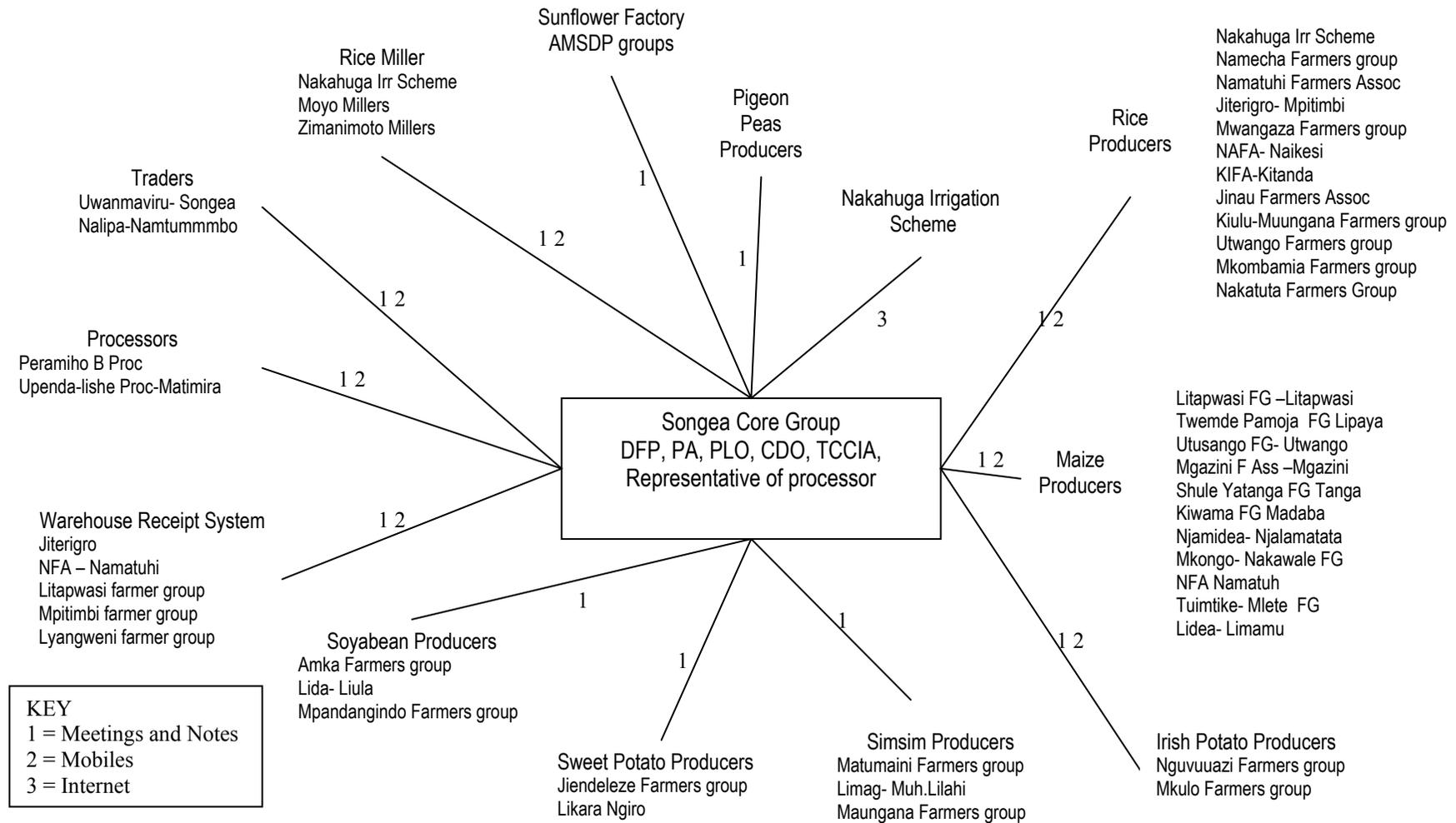


Figure 2. Well Developed Market Chains of Mbinga District Core Group

