

### **3ie-IFPRI Joint Seminar: How Sustainable are Benefits from Extension for Smallholder Women Farmers?**

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[Stephen Smith](#), the Director of the Institute for International Economics at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, along with Vida Bobic, a PhD candidate working with him, presented their paper "How Sustainable Are Benefits from Extension for Smallholder Women Farmers? Evidence from a 'Reverse-Randomized Control Trial' in Uganda" at the [3ie-IFPRI joint seminar series](#) on January 14th. Their talk discussed the findings of a unique randomized 'phase-out' of the intervention, to measure the sustainability of the program benefits. They obtained baseline and two rounds of follow-up survey data, with the follow-ups occurring after the treatment groups had experienced the elimination of some intervention benefits. They are planning to field a final survey round this year, to help examine longer-run sustainability implications of intervention phase-out.

BRAC designed the original extension program to increase low Ugandan agricultural productivity. The program's two pronged approach set out to enhance demand-side productivity, and improve the quality and accessibility of supply-side farming inputs. The Model Farmer (MF) component trained female farmers on better agricultural practices, including the use of improved seeds. The Community Agricultural Promoters (CAP) component trained farmers to sell farming inputs, especially improved seeds. Since these types of programs are usually short lived, it is critical to assess whether productivity increases remain after the end of the intervention.

Although development interventions often claim long run sustainable benefits, generally these lasting effects are not tested. The presenters' unique identification strategy, a reverse randomized control trial, allows them to measure the sustainability of program effects after program termination. The evaluation randomized the phase-out of the intervention, leaving a group still receiving benefits, along with two other groups only receiving one of the program components. After a year, all the treatments were stopped in both arms. This allowed an assessment of the persistence of program outcomes, as well as if the sequencing of the program phase-out made a difference.

The results indicate that three seasons after program elimination, the knowledge on agriculture practices remained in the phase-out groups. Regarding the use of seeds, in phase out villages less CAPs sold seeds and sales went down, however the results suggest that farmers were able to find alternate suppliers for improved seeds after a couple of seasons. These results give us insights regarding the sustainability of agricultural extension interventions that last for a short period of time, a kind of initiative that is widespread in developing countries' rural areas.

The discussant, [Aslihan Kes](#), an Economist and Gender Specialist at the International Center for Research on Women, provided the researchers with a number of tips on how to develop the gender angle within their work. The audience gave feedback concerning the importance of missing cost-benefit analysis. General discussion also focused on a number of Ugandan specific questions, from the quality of the agricultural extension services available to historical improved seed usage in the intervention areas.