

### **05.01.12 Dowa Sensitization Meetings**

Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa (ACE) in Conjunction with Market Linkages Initiatives Bridging Activity (MLI BA) conducted sensitization meetings for Chitsosa Grain Bulking Centre (GBC) farmers in Dowa. Chitsosa is one of the GBCs that benefited from the Market Linkages Initiative (MLI) project of promoting small holder producers integration into national and regional markets. This integration was done through linking the producers to MLI Grain Bulking Centres (GBC) who, in turn are linked to national and international buyers through Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa (ACE).

The meetings were held on 5<sup>th</sup> January at Simbi Trading Centre where 39 farmers from 13 Clubs attended. The second meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> January at Kasuntha Trading Centre and 97 farmers participated from 34 clubs.

ACE and MLI BA sensitized the farmers on the role of ACE in linking them to the national and regional markets through ACE trading platform, the warehouse receipt system, and ESOKO, a new mobile technology for disseminating vital agricultural information. On ESOKO, farmers were sensitised on the importance of maintaining their phone numbers after registering with ESOKO, what messages to get through ESOKO and sharing of information. Such messages include ACE alerts on trade opportunities, GBCs messages on buying prices of commodities at different buying points and dates, MLI extension messages on production from pre-planting, weeding, harvesting, post harvesting handling, marketing and prices of different commodities from different place.. Such messages would give guidance and beef up farmer knowledge that is expected to help them to maximize production, reduce post harvest losses and find better markets.

The two meetings generated interest to the farmers and a follow-up meeting was organised for clubs operating outside Chitsosa GBC on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at Msimbi Association.