PROGRESS REPORT
Agricultural Extension in South Asia
May 2013 - Dec 2015

BACKGROUND

About 80% of South Asia's poor live in rural areas. Most depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Agricultural and rural development is the key to eradicate poverty and creating conditions for sustainable and equitable growth. South Asian agriculture faces several new challenges ranging from deteriorating natural resources base, climate change and increasing de-regulation of trade. Moreover, the sector is dominated by small farms often with weak bargaining powers and limited political voice. Women constitute the majority of the agricultural labour force in small-scale and subsistence farming in the region. A pluralistic, demand driven and gender responsive extension provision, that offers a much broader support to rural producers, is critical for agricultural development and poverty reduction in South Asia. Though, South Asian countries have a long history of organising and reforming extension services, much more needs to be done to strengthen their capacities to deal with the rapidly evolving challenges in agriculture.

Commitment to pluralism is central to the discussion on extension reform as it is now widely accepted that no single actor or agency is best placed to offer the wide range of services required by the rural communities. While several new approaches are being tried by varied extension providers in the public, private and NGO sector in different countries, these experiences are not shared across due to lack of a platform for sharing and networking among extension professionals in South Asia. AESA was formed in response to the demand for a network of all those interested in extension and advisory services articulated in some of the recent global and regional meetings on extension organised by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS). AESA was established initially as a virtual platform around a website (www.aesa-gfras.net) and a Facebook group named as Agricultural Extension in South Asia (https://www.facebook.com/groups/428431183848161/). These efforts helped in identifying several key individuals and organisations interested in contributing to and strengthening the AESA network.

On realizing the need for a full time staff and resources to expand the network and to upgrade and maintain the AESA website, a proposal seeking funding was developed. In April 2013, the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation) funded AESA for a 2 year period (15th May 2013-14th May 2015 which was further extended upto 30 June 2015) to strengthen its communication and networking activities and also for organizing the first face to face meeting. SDC provided these funds to the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (http://www.crispindia.org/) which has been hosting the AESA Secretariat since its inception in 2013.

PROGRESS SO FAR

NETWORK PROMOTION

Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA) is currently the only regional platform available for extension stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences.

AESA organized meetings with key stakeholders in extension and advisory provision in 3 countries prior to organizing its first face to face meeting in January 2014. These include meetings in:

- Bangladesh at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Department of Agricultural Extension and SAARC Agricultural Centre (June 2013),
- Sri Lanka at the University of Peradeniya (August 2013)
- Nepal at the Department of Agriculture (November 2013)

These meetings helped in creating awareness about AESA and GFRAS, developing new contacts in the region and also led to the establishment of three country forum of extensionists in South Asia.

First face-to-face regional meeting of AESA was organised at Kathmandu, Nepal, "Strengthening Extension and Advisory Services in South Asia" to strengthen and formalize this virtual network and to identify its vision, mission, priorities and governance mechanism jointly by The Centre for Research on Science Policy (CRISP), India (http://www.crispindia.org/) and The South Asia Institute for Advanced Studies (SIAS), Nepal (http://www.siassouthasia.org/new/).

This meeting finalized the vision, mission and functions of AESA and its governance structure and also identified the short-term and long-term priorities of AESA. The proceedings of this meeting is available at http://aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/PROCEEDINGS-First%20AESA%20Meeting%2014-15%20Jan%202014-Kathmandu.pdf

AESA Vision
Improving food and nutrition security through efficient and effective extension and advisory services
AESA Mission
Sharing, learning and networking for building effective and efficient extension and advisory services Functions

Governance Structure:

The following persons were selected as members of the AESA Governance Group:

Bangladesh: Md Hamidur Rahman
Bhutan: Bhakta Bahadur Shoangshon
Maldives: Mohamed Rihvaan
Nepal: Niru Dahal Pandey
India: P Chandrashekara/Mahesh Chander
Pakistan: Muhammad Ali
Sri Lanka: R S Wijesekara/W A D P Wanigasundra
SAC: Director, SAARC Agricultural Centre

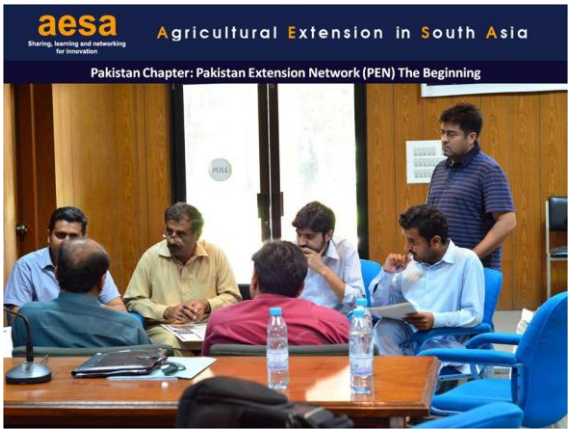
The meeting also identified the short term and long term priorities of AESA.

A meeting to establish the **Indian Extension Network (IEN)** was organized at the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) on 26 Augusts 2014. Another meeting organized by IEN at Karnal on 3 February 2015 discussed several issues related to improving the effectiveness of extension and advisory services in India.

In Bangladesh, the meeting to launch the Bangladesh Extension Network was organized on 1 September 2014 by the Second Crop Diversification project of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). On 24 September 2014, the BE-net constituted two sub-committees, one to work on a draft constitutions and the other to develop a webpage for BE-net. Considering the opportunities in Bangladesh to access the DANIDA support for this network, it was decided to organize this network as **Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network** (BAEN).

The first executive committee meeting of the (BAEN) was organised at Dhaka on 27th December 2015. The meeting was chaired by Md Hamidur Rahman, Director General, and Department of Agricultural Extension. The meeting approved the constitution of BAEN and the Annual Work Plan (2016). It was also decided to organise a Workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Services in Bangladesh during 27-28 February 2016 in collaboration with AESA.

The first meeting of **Pakistan Extension Network** (PEN) was held on 1st September, 2015 at the Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The meeting was attended by academia, research, NGOs representatives, farmers, young agri-entrepreneurs, Agriculture Extension officials of the District Government, private sector Extension professionals and post graduate Agriculture Extension students.



A Planning Meeting for organising a Workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Services in Sri Lanka was held at the Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Peradeniya on 25th November 2015. This workshop would now take place on 10-11 February 2016 at Peradeniya and will be organised jointly by SLAEA (Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA) and AESA.

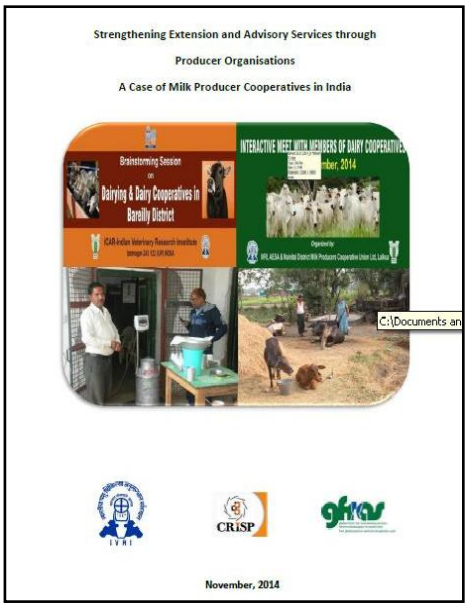
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

During the last 32 months (May 2013-Dec 2015), the AESA upgraded its web portal (www.aesa-gfras.net) and published 54 blogs, 24 meeting notes, 13 good practices, 6 (face to face) interviews and 6 book reviews (see Annexure 1). More than 14,200 individuals have joined the AESA Facebook group so far. We are sharing useful information on extension and discussing issues and new approaches in extension through AESA Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/428431183848161/), AESA LinkedIn Group (https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5055791) and AESA Twitter account (https://twitter.com/AESA_Extension)

AESA has also created an online directory for all those who are interested and involved in extension and advisory services in South Asia (http://aesa-gfras.net/RegistrationForm). Our email list has about 4000 members.

E-DISCUSSION

During 18 August 2014 to 30 September 2014, AESA in association with the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) and Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) organized an e-discussion on "**Role of Producer Organisations in Strengthening extension and advisory services in Dairy/Livestock Sector in India**". This discussion was followed by several rounds of face-to-face discussions with the officials and member producers of dairy producer cooperatives in four states of India. The findings and recommendations from these consultations are compiled and published. (http://aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/FINAL-Report-PO-Extn-26-Feb-2015%20(1).pdf)



PARTICIPATION IN OTHER MEETINGS

GFRAS Annual Meetings

AESA participated in the 4th and 5th GFRAS Annual Meetings held at Berlin (24-26 September 2013; Buenos Aires (23-25 September 2014) and Kyrgyzstan (14-17 September 2015).

Asian participants in all these meetings discussed the common challenges in rural advisory services (RAS) in their region and reviewed the current status of networking initiated in the different countries. One of the most important outcomes of these meetings is the development of a proposal for regional funding for EAS at the APIRAS (Asia Pacific Island Rural Advisory Services) submitted for IFAD Funding support. IFAD has agreed to fund APIRAS during 2016-2018.

Promoting AESA in other meetings

AESA participated in the **International Extension Conference** jointly organized by the International Society of Extension Education (INSEE) and the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore during 5-8 December 2013 (Bangalore, India). Several participants visited the AESA stall at the event and this allowed us to talk more about AESA and its activities. We have also been promoting AESA during trainings, seminars and conferences whenever we participate in such events.

AESA also participated in several consultations on extension including the discussions on development of the **"New Extensionist Learning Kit"** organised by the GFRAS Consortium for Extension Education and Training at South Africa in November 2014, January 2015 and June 2015.

AESA also participated in the IFPRI workshop on **"Agricultural Extension Reforms in South Asia: Status, Challenges and Policy Options"** (held at New Delhi during 17-18 February 2015; consultation on development of learning materials to build capacity for extension evaluation at the regional and national levels (23-24 April, 2015) at Wageningen (The Netherlands).

AESA co-organised and participated in **'Reaching the Millions: A face-to-face workshop on Rural Advisory Services'** held at Hanoi during 2-7 March 2015, Hanoi, Vietnam. The workshop hosted by the A&FS Network and organised by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in collaboration with the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), the Asia Pacific Islands Network for Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS) and AESA came up with the "The Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Service Systems" which was endorsed by 68 RAS experts and practitioners.

DEVELOPMENT OF THEMATIC/REGIONAL WORKING PAPERS

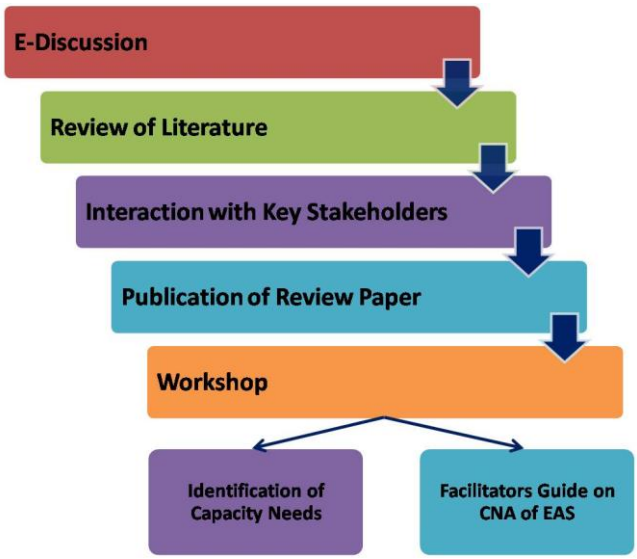
AESA has produced two working papers during this period. These include a paper on **Status of Extension and Advisory Services in Sri Lanka** and a paper on **Extension Research in India- Current Status and Future strategies**.

As part of the Capacity Needs Assessment of EAS providers, AESA developed a **Review Paper on Assessing Capacity Development Needs of EAS.**

CAPACITY NEEDS ASESSEMENT OF EAS PROVIDERS

AESA organized an e-discussion on capacity development of extension and advisory service (EAS) providers during 4-23 June 2015 and recently completed a review of capacity development in EAS. We are currently engaged in developing a "facilitators' guide for capacity needs assessment of EAS providers". The plan is to develop, test and refine the facilitators guide for carrying out capacity needs assessment in four countries (India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) in South Asia by April-May 2016. This activity is funded by GFRAS.

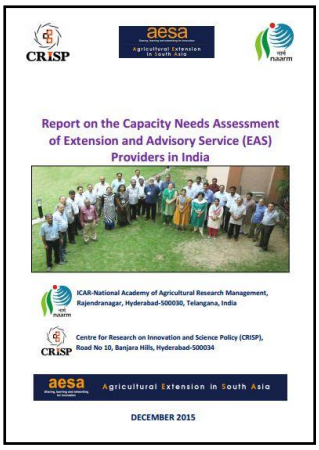
India Workshop



AESA organised a workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment for EAS in India in collaboration with the ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) and the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP) during 6-7 October 2015 at Hyderabad with the following objectives.

34 participants representing over 20 organizations with diverse backgrounds and experiences

across sectors in EAS delivery participated in this workshop. The workshop identified the capacity needs of EAS providers at the individual and organizational level.



The Workshop Report is available at:
http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/Report%20on%20the%20Capacity%20Needs%20Assessment%20of%20Extension%20and%20Advisory%20Service%20(EAS)%20Providers%20in%20India.pdf)
Similar workshops are scheduled to be organized at Sri Lanka (in partnership with SLAEA) and Bangladesh (in partnership with BAEN) in February 2016. The dates for the Nepal workshop are yet to be decided.

NEW PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FOR APIRAS

AESA has been working very closely with APIRAS (Asia Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services) in developing a proposal for funding by IFAD and the proposal "Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific-Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services" has now been accepted. This project will be led by SEARCA (Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture) based at the Philippines (http://searca.org/).

The project activities comprise four main components:

- Undertake capacity needs assessment and strengthening of country fora and (sub-) regional networks
- Improve individual capacities of AAS
- Develop a regional portal/hub as a repository of information
- Engage in high-level policy dialogs and other policy processes

Major activities under this project focuses on three countries in the region, namely, **Bangladesh (South Asia**), Philippines (South East Asia) and Fiji (Pacific Islands). Limited but interesting opportunities for capacity needs assessment at the AESA level and cross learning among countries in the region exists. More details on this project will be elaborated in the Inception Workshop scheduled towards end of April 2016.

LINKS WITH GFRAS

AESA is a member of the GFRAS (www.g-fras.org) Steering Committee and Rasheed Sulaiman V is currently representing AESA in GFRAS. Rasheed is currently the Chair of the GFRAS Steering Committee. AESA is contributing to the evolution and strengthening of GFRAS through participation in the GFRAS Steering Committee and several other GFRAS initiatives related to Policy Advocacy, New Extensionist Learning Kit Development and ICT4RAS Working Group of GFRAS.

FINANCES

The initial investment made by SDC (May 2013-June 2015) has resulted in the establishment and strengthening of AESA and 3 country fora and this has contributed to networking of EAS providers in the region for the first time. SDC funded the organization of the first AESA face-to face meeting at Kathmandu (Jan 2014), supported the development and management of AESA web portal, publication and printing costs, regional travel to promote the network and also the salary of a full time communication officer. Many people currently appreciate the AESA web portal, which has become a "single window" to understand what is happening in EAS in the region.

The additional funding from SDC for one more year (July 2015- May 2016) is mostly for continuing the above activities and also for organization of the AESA Governance Meeting at Sri Lanka in 2016.

Table 1: Financial Support received by AESA so far

S No	Agency	Period	Amount in USD	Remarks
1	SDC	15 May 2013-30 June 2015 (25.5 months)	1,27,185	Closed
2	SDC	1 July 2015- 31 May 2016 (11 months)	59,400	50% received so far
3	GFRAS	1 April 2015-30- April 2016 (13 months)	66,800	50% received so far
	Total		253,385	

The GFRAS funding for capacity needs assessment (CNA) of EAS providers (September 2015 to March 2016) is for organizing the CNA workshop in four countries (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and development of the Facilitators Guide for capacity needs assessment of EAS providers. The IFAD support through APIRAS will help to strengthen BAEN to a large extent.

However AESA definitely needs more resources to continue and strengthen its activities in 2016 and to address the short term and long term priorities identified earlier.

We thank SDC and GFRAS for its contribution that made all these happen and we look forward to continued engagement with them and others in the coming days to take AESA to the next level.

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Annexure 1

LIST OF AESA OUTPUTS

BLOGS

54. The Yak-Moving Treasure of High Himalayas
53. Can CSR Funds Strengthen Indian Livestock Sector?
52. Towards Extension Education Reforms 2.0: The Realities, Expectations and Imperatives
51. Are we generating need based and relevant livestock technologies?
50. New Advances in Extension Research Methodologies-Part 1
49. Extension for Promotion of Improved Backyard Poultry
48. Governance: The Missing Piece In KVK Reforms
47. New Advances in Extension Research Methodologies-Part 1
46. Enhancing the Capacities of Farm Women
45. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in India: The full potential yet to be unleashed!
44. Inefficient Extension Services: Livestock Owners Bear the Brunt
43. NEGOTIATING REALITY: A pragmatic approach for conducting quality extension research
42. PLANTWISE: Complementing diagnostic and advisory services of extension?
41. Social Media: New Generation Tools for Agricultural Extension?
40. India Rice Check Program: A New Extension Method in Making?
39. Scientific Publishing In Extension: Are We Doing Enough And Are We Doing Well?
38. Extension Research: Random thoughts from a Well Wisher
37. Quantity Vs Quality: The great dilemma of livestock research
36. Actors, Programmes and Policies: SRI in Tripura
35. Skills, Scale and Speed: Harnessing MOOCs for Large Scale Capacity Development
34. What Is Wrong With Our Forestry Education?
33. Producer Organisations and Extension: Performance and Sustainability
32. Fostering entrepreneurship through Agribusiness Incubation: Role of extension professionals
31. Livestock extension-need for a paradigm change
30. Enhancing the potential of quality videos for farmers
29. A seminar on seminars?
28. Extension Research and Technology Development
27. Reforming Governance to improve extension service delivery
26. Extensionpedia: A mechanism for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of National Extension Discourse
25. Developing critical systems of learning competence: Is this the way out?
24. It is time to influence the 13th Plan
23. Beyond technology dissemination: Why extension should also focus on policy change?
22. Isn`t it time to set up an Indian Institute of organic Agriculture?
21. How Can Technologies Make An Impact? Innovativeness, Improved Delivery And Institutional Mechanisms
20. Youth: Potential Target for Agricultural Extension
19. AgriLORE- An Innovative Content Management System
18. Co-Developed Content through Agropedia - Experience So Far
17. Delivering Agro-advisories Through Mobile phones-reality Check?
16. Is Horticultural Extension Getting the Priority it deserves?
15. Extension, ICTs and Knowledge Management: The 10 difficult questions
14. Skill development in Veterinary Education
13. Producer Organizations (POs) and extension: The road ahead
12. Skill Development for a new Rural Resurgence
11. Extension and Participatory Irrigation Management: Can it complement each other?

10. Redeeming the public extension system: Can rural democratization offer plausible alternatives?
9. Institutional Shift: From Extension to Entrepreneurship
8. Skilling the farm sector – Need for a focused approach
7. Why fisheries sector needs an extension framework?
6. Why Collaboration Matters for Livestock Development?
5. Research in Extension: It is time to introspect
4. Research in Extension: New tools to reinvent its future
3. Institutional Change and Adaptation to Climate Change
2. Competence Development through Education and Capacity Development through Extension
1. Beyond treatment and breed improvement

GOOD PRACTICES

13. Breeders' Association in Promotion of Buffalo Husbandry
12. Boost in Egg Production and Family Income through Climate Resilient Practices in Backyard Poultry Rearing
11. Postmasters as Community-Based Extension Agents
10. Transplanting Rice Seedling Using Machine Transplanter: A Potential Step For Mechanization In Agriculture
9. Promoting Eco-Friendly Technologies In Rice Production In Kuttanad, Kerala
8. Increasing Cropping Intensity And Achieving Food Self–Sufficiency In The Coastal Zones Of Bangladesh
7. Community based seasonal floodplain management: BRAC's initiative in extending aquaculture technology
6. Bee keeping in Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh
5. Direct seeding in rice using Drum-seeder
4. Intelligent Advisory System for Farmers in North East India
3. Integrated approach to coastal water management by the poor in Bangladesh
2. Promoting organic cultivation of vegetables through women groups
1. Micro Enterprises through Value Addition of Local Produce.

MY MEETING NOTES

24. 8th GCRA International Conference on "Innovative Digital Applications for Sustainable Development" organized by Global Communication Research Association (GCRA), University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, India on 5-7 January, 2016
23. National Dialogue on "Innovative Extension Systems for Farmers' Empowerment, 17-19 December 2015, New Delhi, India. TAAS, ICAR, DAC, NAAS, BKS, BMGF, YPARD, CSISA
22. National Workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) Providers, 6-7 October 2015, Hyderabad, India
21. IVEF National Seminar on Teaching, Research and Extension Gaps in Livestock Development, 28-29 August 2015, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Veterinary Education and Research (RIVER), Puducherry
20. International Conference On "Good Governance in Agricultural Extension" at Centre for Good Governance, Gachibowli Campus, Hyderabad, India, 3 - 4 September, 2015
19. Driving Innovations in Agri-Food Value Chains-d
18. East Africa Agricultural Extension and Advisory Service (AEAS) Policy Dialogue
17. Strengthening Extension and Advisory Services for Lasting Impacts 3-5 June 2015, Washington D.C., USA

16. Building Regional Capacity for Assessment and Evaluation of Extension Programmes 23-24 April 2015, CTA Wageningen, The Netherlands
15. RYFF 2014: National Seminar on Rural Youth in Family Farming, December 18-19, 2014, Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bihar, India
14. COHESION ON TALENT DEVELOPMENT, October 15, 2014 FAO, Rome, Italy
13. ARD 2014 – 2nd International Conference, November 12-14, 2014, Philippines
12. 7th National Extension Education Congress - November 8-11, 2014 Translational Research-Extension for Sustainable Small Farm Development
11. 5th GFRAS Annual Meeting RAS Policies – Evidence and Practice, 23-25 September 2014, Buenos Aires, Argentina
10. 48th Annual Conference of SASAE
9. Visit to Sid Martin Biotechnology Incubator Alachua, Florida, USA
8. 30th Annual Conference-AIAEE: Integrated Agricultural Systems for Environmental Sustainability and Production
7. International Conference on Extension Educational Strategies for Sustainable Agricultural Development – A Global Perspective
6. Making it in Michigan: Conference and Trade Show
5. IVEF 2013
4. GFRAS 2013
3. CEC-2013
2. Hybrid Communication Tools-2013
1. Training on Agricultural Innovation Systems- 2013

FACE TO FACE

6. Enhancing the Contribution of Extension to Indian Agricultural Development
5. Strengthening Frontline Extension in India
4. Developing New Capacities for Agricultural Extension in Bangladesh
3. Improving Agricultural Extension in Sri Lanka
2. Agriculture Extension in Pakistan: Challenges and Ways Forward
1. Agricultural development in North West Bangladesh

BOOK REVIEWS

6. Knowledge Driven Development – Private Extension and Global Lessons
5. CAREER SENSE: Guide on Higher Education and Skill Development
4. Rural Innovations at Grassroots – Mining the Minds of Masses
3. Increasing Access through Mobile Learning
2. Farmers' Organizations in Bangladesh: A Mapping and Capacity Assessment
1. Text Book of Agricultural Extension with Global Innovations

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