



Report on the Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) Providers in Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association

Agricultural Extension in South Asia

JUNE 2016

Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) is a network of all those who are interested and involved in Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) provision in South Asia (www.aesa-gfras.net). Our vision is to improve food and nutrition security through efficient and effective EAS in South Asia. Our mission is to promote sharing, learning and networking for building effective and efficient EAS. AESA is part of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS). The Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), Hyderabad, India, hosts the secretariat of AESA.

Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA) envisions 'Prosperity through socially responsive agricultural extension services'. The overall objective of SLAEA is to promote and assist the advancement of Agricultural Extension.

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June 2016

This report was prepared by Dr. W.A.D.P. Wanigasundera, Professor, Department of Agriculture Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. (Wanigasundera@gmail.com)

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INTRODUCTION

The Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) has articulated a new vision for Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) within the Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS). This vision articulated in its position paper, called “New Extensionist”, argues for an expanded role for EAS (Box 1) within AIS and the development of new capacities at different levels.

EAS need new capacities to respond effectively to the emerging challenges in agricultural development (declining water availability, increasing soil degradation, and changing and uncertain climate and markets). In the past few years, capacities in EAS to perform their traditional roles such as training and communication of technical information have eroded. Meanwhile, the extension landscape has become increasingly pluralistic with greater participation of the private sector. All these warrant new knowledge, skills, and expertise among the EAS providers.

Box 1: What is EAS?

Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) consists of different activities that provide the information and services needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in rural settings. The services assist the stakeholders in developing their own technical, organizational, and management skills and practices. EAS recognizes the diversity of actors in extension and advisory provision (public, private, civil society); much broadened support to rural communities (beyond technology and information sharing) including advice related to farm, organizational and business management; and facilitation and brokerage in rural development and value chains.

Source: (GFRAS, 2012)

In addition to linking research to farmers, EAS is crucial for all other actors in the AIS involved in (a) delivery of credit and inputs; (b) provision of training and other services; and (c) marketing and policy development (Figure 1). To undertake the linking or bridging role effectively, EAS need to broaden their mandate and strengthen their capacities. The increasing pluralism in EAS delivery has also brought an additional challenge of ensuring quality, collaboration and synergy among diverse EAS providers.

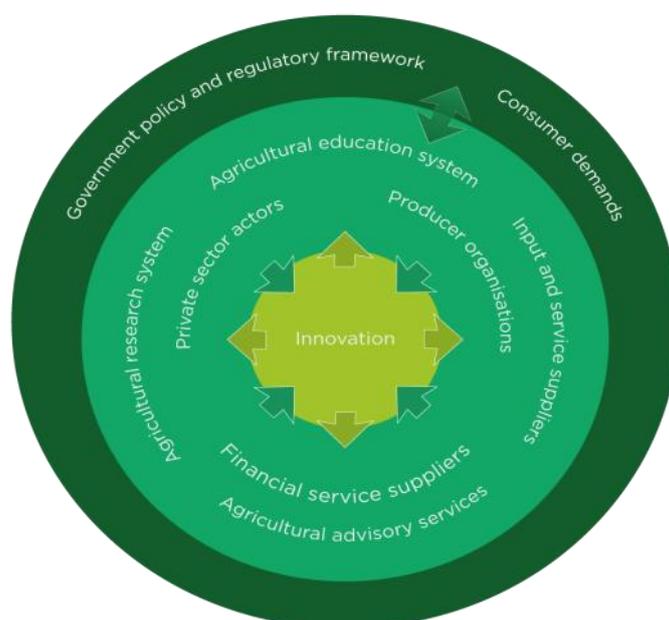


Figure 1: Agricultural Innovation System (Source: GFRAS, 2015)

Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) was formed in response to the demand for a network of all those interested in extension and advisory services. The demand was articulated in some of the recent global and regional meetings on extension organized by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS). It is an attempt to form a network with all those who are interested and involved in agricultural extension and advisory services (from the public, private and civil society sectors) in South Asia.

The first regional meeting was held in 2014 in Nepal to strengthen and formalize the virtual network of extension professionals and to identify its vision, mission, priorities and governance mechanism (AESAs, 2014). One of the most important functions of AESAs identified was the capacity development of extension and advisory service in the South Asian region.

PROCESSES

WORKSHOP

AESA organized a workshop on Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) for EAS in Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (Box 2) during 10-11 February 2016 with the following objectives:

1. Identify capacity gaps among EAS providers
2. Finalise a methodology for undertaking capacity needs assessment.

Box 2: SLAEA

Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA) envisions 'Prosperity through socially responsive agricultural extension services'. The objective of SLAEA is to promote and assist the advancement of agricultural extension. In the last 25 years, SLAEA has contributed to fulfil the aforementioned objectives through a number of activities such as conferences, workshops, publications and trainings both at local and regional levels. All EAS service personal are members of this association.

Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) in Sri Lanka are facing unprecedented challenges. Therefore, new capacities should be developed at different levels to effectively deal with the new and evolving challenges faced by rural communities. In Sri Lanka, although there are extension education programs implemented to train extension personnel, there is very little appreciation and acceptance on the need for a systematic CNA to guide Capacity Development (CD) interventions.

CNA is a capacity-strengthening process in its own right, and this process is as important as the outcome. While several approaches and tools on CNA exist, these are yet to be adapted and used in the context of EAS. Lack of a clearly articulated list of core competencies for EAS adversely affect the recruitment of new staff, professional development of existing staff and also the quality of professional education in extension. The workshop was organized based on the guidelines developed by AESAs included in its publication on "Assessing Capacity Needs of Extension and Advisory Services (EAS): A Guide for Facilitators". AESAs expects to enrich the same with experiences from CNA workshops held in member countries in South Asia.



Figure 2: Pre-Workshop Activities

Pre-Workshop Activities

In partnership with AESA, the SLAEA organized several preparatory activities for the CNA such as e-discussion, review of literature, interactions with key stakeholders and development of a working paper.

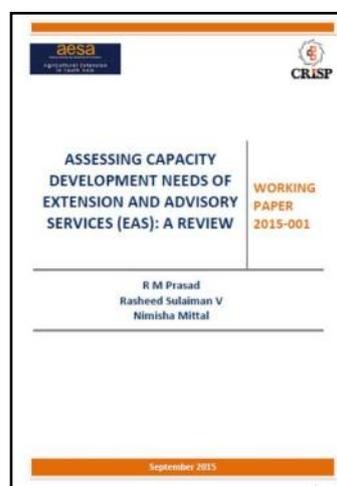
E-discussions

From 4 June 2015 to 26 June 2015, AESA organized an e-discussion on “Capacity Development for Extension and Advisory Service Providers in South Asia”. Twenty-four extension professionals participated in this discussion. See Annexure 1 for summary of this e-discussion.

From December 2015 to January 2016, SLAEA organized an e-discussion on “Capacity Needs of Extension and Advisory Service Providers”. Several extension professionals participated in this discussion. The respondents identified a wide range of new skills, especially soft skills and ICT skills that are needed by EAS providers. There was a consensus that the existing opportunities for human resource development are highly inadequate. There appears to be some capacity needs assessment undertaken by various means by different extension services, but they are not well organized.

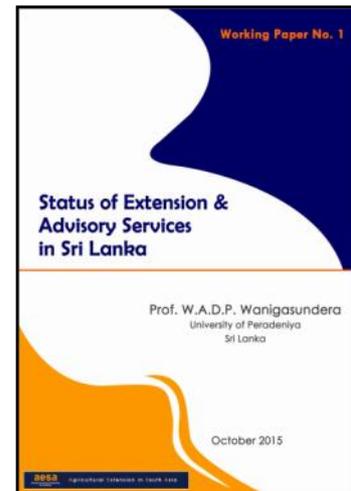
Literature review and development of background papers

An essential feature of CD is a common understanding of what capacity and capacity development mean. To some, the terms are synonymous with workshops and training. For senior managers, it might mean organizational development. Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) associate the terms with empowering individuals and grassroots organizations. In the case of international agencies and donors, capacity and



capacity development is about national institutions, governance and economic management (Horton 2002). Another related issue is the lack of systematic efforts to identify the capacity needs of EAS providers, which should be the starting point for organizing CD. Though a range of tools and approaches exist for assessing capacity at different levels, the tools are not used in designing CD interventions in EAS. We undertook a literature review on different dimensions of capacity, capacity development and capacity need assessment.

A working paper exploring the current status of EAS in Sri Lanka (Wanigasundera, 2015) was developed prior to organizing this workshop. Discussions in the paper include the challenge in Sri Lankan agriculture and its implications for organizing Extension; current composition of actors in the public, private and NGO sector; agricultural extension and advisory services; and an assessment of current capacity building support including agricultural education and extension training programs offered by various stakeholders.



Interactions with different stakeholders

To know more about the current approaches followed in CNA, interactions were made with different stakeholders involved in EAS in Sri Lanka. The AESA leaders and SLAEA executive committee members interacted with officials of some of the major extension and training services such as Department of Agriculture (DOA), Department of Animal Production and Health (DAPH), Department of Export Agriculture (DEA), plantation crop research institutes and major agri-business firms.

These interactions were helpful in understanding some of the existing mechanisms for capacity development and capacity needs assessment followed in Sri Lanka and how to proceed with CNA interventions. This pre-workshop meeting organized by SLAEA formulated the design and identified the participants (who work at different levels) for this workshop. .



Figure 3: Initial Discussion on CNA Workshop held in Kandy in November 2015

OUTPUTS

CAPACITY NEEDS

In order to strengthen the EAS provision, the participants identified the three most important capacity gaps at the individual (field, middle management and senior management level) and organizational levels.

CAPACITIES REQUIRED AT THE FIELD LEVEL FOR EAS FUNCTIONARIES

The field level extension workers play a vital role in EAS provision and they have the most direct contacts with farmers. The most important capacities that need to be strengthened at this level are discussed below.

Capacities on communication and use of mass media and ICTs

Field level extension officers are the professionals who disseminate the new knowledge related to cultivation of crops and rearing of farm animals. They should have access to ICTs to effectively gain and disseminate knowledge. Since they deal with issues at the grassroots level, they should have a good database on farmers. Therefore, ICT knowledge regarding database management should also be improved if such data has to be used by field level officials.

The capacities could be enhanced through the following activities:

- Provide ICT facilities for the field level officers (mobile phones, data cards, tablets and laptops) and train them on the use of these ICT tools
- Ensure proper maintenance and monitoring protocols on use of these tools
- Develop in collaboration with agricultural research stations appropriate content and programmes/applications to use through ICT tools
- Establish mobile units for field level extension enabling the recording audio/visually and sharing timely information

Capacities on need-based planning and decision-making

The need-based planning is essential to identify the real needs of farmers. These need identification should follow a participatory approach. For that the knowledge on PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) methods should be developed among field level extension officers.

Planning Capacities can be developed with following activities:

- Launch training programs on the use of PRA tools and application of such tools among the field level extension officers
- Organise regular interface meeting where these identified needs from the field could be shared with middle and senior level EAS managers
- Training on improving the decision-making abilities. These trainings should target the field level extension officers and farmers

Capacities on linking farmers to markets

In Sri Lanka, farmers are facing problems related to marketing of agricultural products. Developing linkages with other farmers and markets is essential to enhance the economic status of farmers. EAS should have capacities to support farmers in this regard.

The capacities can be developed through the following activities:

- Organise training to EAS providers on linking farmers to markets (understand and analyse markets, undertake value chain analysis, engage with market intermediaries, organizing farmers as marketing groups, supporting group/collective marketing etc)
- Organise training on post-harvest management aspects including value addition opportunities, processing technologies, grading as well as certification and standards to field level officials

CAPACITIES REQUIRED AT MIDDLE-LEVEL MANAGEMENT FOR EAS FUNCTIONARIES

The capacity gaps at the middle-level management are as follows:

Organizational and coordination skills

Organizational and coordination capacities are critical at this level and these needs to be enhanced.

- Develop a training module on organisational and coordination skills, keeping in view the expected roles and functions at this level
- Review and finalise this module based on pilot testing
- Impart this training to those currently in position and make this compulsory/pre-requisite for those who are going to be promoted to middle management levels

Public relations, networking and engagement with stakeholders

EAS personnel at the middle level should have more of networking, coordination and partnering skills and they need support in linking up and working with different organisations working in their area.

- Develop course modules and practical assignments on networking and multi-stakeholder engagement
- Organise face to face interactive forums with stakeholders to develop relationships, share different viewpoints and to plan and implement joint activities
- Organise feedback sessions and review programmes with the employment of new technological packages such as MOODLE which facilitates interaction among members in a group, facilitate networking and at the same time enhance ICT skills automatically.

Leadership and ability to coach and mentor subordinate staff

The middle-level officers need capacities to inspire his/her subordinates, build teams and lead the teams. He/she should also have capacities to organise CNA of the team members and supporting development of appropriate CD interventions for them. They also have leadership skills in planning, organizing, directing, controlling, coordinating, reporting and budgeting.

The capacities could be enhanced through the following activities:

- Organising MDP (Management Development Programmes) for the middle level functionaries to develop their leadership capacities
- Developing their skills in undertaking CNA of their staff

CAPACITIES REQUIRED AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (SENIOR MANAGEMENT) FOR EAS FUNCTIONARIES

Leadership, Administration, Monitoring & Evaluation & coordination skills

Senior level EAS functionaries should have capacities to periodically review the performance of their organization in the changing context and reinvent their organization to meet new demands. Senior level officials currently have only limited capacities in this area. The Human Resource Departments/Divisions in EAS should organize training and workshops to enhance these capacities.

The management capacities can be developed with following activities.

- Develop a tailor-made training modules with Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)
- Organise training for senior managers at reputed institutions abroad
- Arrange follow-up workshops with the contributions of SLIDA and other academic institutes and universities
- Develop a culture of monitoring, evaluation and learning within the organization

Networking and negotiation skills

The middle-level EAS providers should have required capacities on networking and partnership development. They should be fully knowledgeable about other actors in the Agricultural innovation System (AIS) and what roles they play in agricultural and rural development. They also need guidance on developing collaboration. One can also learn from the good practices in networking and partnerships currently available online, but would still need training or learning events. This helps them interact with those who are working in partnership and those who have reviewed these arrangements.

The capacities could be enhanced through the following activities:

- Organise workshop and face-to-face collaboration meeting of key stakeholders at regular intervals.
- Organise training to the senior managers on different networking and partnership arrangements
- Organise interface events with those who have experimented with networks and partnerships to inspire confidence and learn lessons

Policy advocacy and research based evidence

Senior EAS functionaries should have capacities in policy development and policy advocacy to influence other policy makers, especially those who influence the funding and direction of EAS in the country. They should have the capacities to generate evidence that support

appropriate policy advocacy. At the national level there is very little policy relevant research that generates macro-level and policy-relevant evidence of the performance of EAS.

The advocacy capacities can be developed with following activities.

- Develop training modules that support policy engagement and advocacy skills and impart training to senior managers on these areas
- Support generating policy relevant evidence through funding macro level studies on the performance of EAS provision

CAPACITIES REQUIRED AT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Holistic/Broader vision on EAS provision

Currently most of the agriculture sector organizations performing EAS functions are performing individually. There is no common vision or policy on strengthening EAS in Sri Lanka. This is also because of the lack of a common forum for the EAS providers to meet, share and learn from each other.

The capacities can be developed with following activities.

- Create an inclusive platform for EAS providers to interact on a regular basis
- Organize periodic interactions with regional (eg: AESA) and global (eg: GFRAS) leaders/facilitators in EAS
- Organize international training for senior level managers to develop their perspectives on global developments in extension science and experiences with extension reforms in different countries.

Recognition on the role of extension

Extension is a well-developed discipline and is recognized as a profession. As a profession, it has its own special body of knowledge and values. However, extension professional's distinct knowledge and skills are not recognized in appointments and promotions. This has created a perception that anyone can do extension and it doesn't need any special knowledge of expertise. This has diluted the professional standards and has weakened the quality of EAS provision.

This capacity could be enhanced through the following:

- Consider education/training in extension as an essential qualification for key extension positions
- Developing a national extension policy for Sri Lanka that recognize the importance of academic training in extension discipline
- Develop standards to undertake performance based evaluation of key extension functionaries

Culture of collaboration and learning in EAS

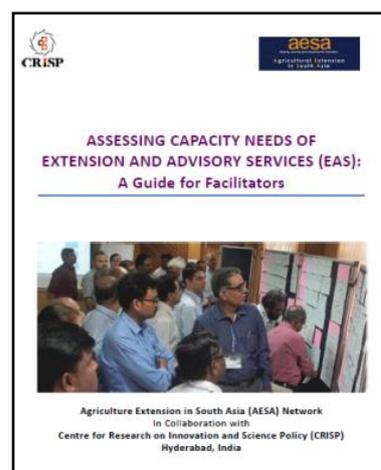
Establishing and maintaining collaborative relationship with other organizations that are involved in extension and those that can support EAS provision (research, training and policy making) can enhance the organizational capacity of EAS. There should also be a culture of learning within the organization that recognizes the value of feedback and introspection as this is critical for the continuous performance improvement.

- Develop a web portal on EAS in Sri Lanka that showcases EAS provision by all the different actors, share best practices in different extension themes, recognize outstanding performance and provide space to articulate the key challenges in EAS provision (eg: as blogs).
- Identify nodal staff from each EAS that takes responsibility to report from their organizations
- Allocate human and financial resources to continuously update the web portal and link all the EAS providers through social media
- Create space within EAS organizations to reflect on performance and review progress (eg: an open session with all the staff in the organization on the last Saturday every month)

Proceedings of the workshop is given in Annexure 3.

FACILITATORS GUIDE (Draft)

This guide intends to enable the use of a blend of interactive approaches that include sessions on reflection of participants' personal experience, card exercise and group work. This guide encompasses methods and modules for each session inbuilt with tips for facilitators for effective delivery. We developed a draft methodology which was adapted at this CNA workshop. We are enriching the same with experiences from CNA workshops held in India, Bangladesh and Nepal in 2016.



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Annexure

Annexure 1: Summary of E-Discussion on Capacity Development for Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) Providers, 4-25 June 2015

Context

While everybody recognizes the need for extension and advisory service (EAS) professionals to have new capacities (also articulated in the first meeting of the Agricultural Extension in South Asia AESA Network) to deal with the emerging challenges (declining natural resource base, supporting adaptation to climate change, linking farmers to high value markets, conforming to new standards and certification norms, etc), very little is known regarding how these capacities could be really developed. AESA (www.aesa-gfras.net) organised an e-discussion on the “Capacity Development for Extension and Advisory Service Providers” during 4-25 June 2015. Twenty-four extension professionals participated in this discussion.

Questions

The questions posed for the e-discussion are given in Box 1.

Box 1: Questions posed for e-discussion

1. Do you think EAS providers need new capacities? GFRAS Position Paper: The New Extensionist (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications/file/126-the-new-extensionist-position-paper.html>) lists several areas where capacity needs to be developed at the individual, organisational and the enabling environment levels. What are the other areas which you think capacities need to be developed? What methods and approaches are to be followed in developing these capacities among EAS providers?
2. As you are aware, capacity development is not confined to training, though many consider training as the main strategy for capacity development. Quite often, the topics for training are often decided by the training organisations. Do you think this type of supply driven approach to training is helping capacity development among EAS providers to improve their performance? What is your experience in this regard?
3. Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) is considered as the first step in organising effective capacity development programmes. What are your experiences (methodologies/approaches) with CNA in your organisation/ sector?
4. EAS providers need new capacities at the organisational level too (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications/file/126-the-new-extensionist-position-paper.html>). These include capacities related to (a) strategic management functions, (b) operational capacity (relationships, processes, systems, procedures, sanctions, incentives and values), (c) human and financial resources (policies, deployment and performance), (d) knowledge and information resources and (e) infrastructure. How can we develop these capacities? What is your experience in this regard? Where to start?
5. How do you assess capacity gaps in your organisation? What are your experiences (methodologies/approaches) with CNA (both at the individual and the organisational level) in your organisation/sector? Should there be a National Policy Framework for Capacity Development of EAS providers? If so, how to implement it?
6. How do you assess the impact of capacity development programmes at the functional level? Or in other words, how do you assess the contribution of capacity development to individual and organisational performance?

A number of interesting issues related to capacity development of EAS providers were raised in the e-discussion. These are summarized below.

New Areas for Capacity Development

Capacity development is important not only at the production/cultivation stage, but across entire value chain including processing, packaging, marketing etc. The conventional extension approaches have traditionally focused on production advice only. But with the new set of demands from the ground, farmers as well as EAS providers have to equip themselves with information related to the entire value chain. Capacity development for EAS should focus on these new knowledge demands at different levels. Capacity development of young farmers needs emphasis as they will be taking care of farming in the coming years.

The new requirements for trading/agri-business such as traceability, good agricultural practices etc, especially those requirements which have emerged after WTO agreements, have created new demands for enhanced capacities of extension personnel on these aspects. This is not going to be addressed by simply opening new Agricultural universities and research institutes but by improving the quality of education at existing institutions so that scarce funds are better utilized.

Almost every participant recognised the need for developing new capacities among EAS providers. The New Extensionist document articulates some of the major areas for developing capacities among EAS at the individual, organisational and enabling environment levels. The major areas identified in this e-discussion are as follows:

- Developing producers as effective producer groups/organisations- mobilising farmers into groups and developing forward and backward linkages,
- Management of natural resources
- Contingency crop planning to better adapt to climate change
- Capacities for partnering and implementation
- Developing value chains and sustainable farmer business enterprises
- Entrepreneurship and business management
- Support farmers to move from subsistence farming to commercial farming
- EAS providers should become more of a facilitator than disseminator of technologies
- Developing specific competencies among extension providers and certifying them as recognised advisors

However, all these competencies are not required by all EAS providers. Depending on the job profile and area of work (production, processing, marketing etc), the EAS providers should develop specific or core competencies at each level. For instance what core competencies are required at the levels of (a) field extension personnel, (b) extension research level and (c) extension educator (teachers) level? We need to identify these to really support capacity development of EAS.

The discussion also raised the issue of capacity development of researchers and faculty in extension. The areas suggested include the following:

- Research methodology
- Impact evaluation
- Designing, testing and evaluation of new modes of EAS delivery
- Development of intrinsic motivation to participate in e-discussions, webinars etc.

Challenges in Identifying the Capacity Gaps

- Lack of role clarity: If the roles of EAS providers are not clear and if different stakeholders have different expectations of EAS, how can they self assess their capacity gaps?
- Focus only on individual capacity: More focus on addressing individual capacities and low or no emphasis on addressing capacity gaps at the organisational and enabling environment level
- No mechanisms to undertake capacity needs assessment that should ideally determine the content of the capacity development programmes. Sometimes individuals are asked to identify their training needs, but that alone cannot determine the capacity development requirements at different levels
- Low personal motivation: There is neither a desire to provide or acquire new competencies nor the ability and willingness to pay for it, both from the trainer and trainee side.
- Different EAS providers need different types of capacities: Requirements of public sector EAS providers which focus more on free advice vary with those from the private sector where the cost of services is directly or indirectly paid by the farmers.
- No framework or specific manpower for providing EAS in the livestock sector and so no effort to identify the capacity gaps of EAS

Limitations of Existing Programmes for Capacity Development

- Mostly restricted to training individuals
- More focus on sharing knowledge and less emphasis on developing skills
- Mostly supply driven and not based on the analysis of capacity development needs
- Learning objective is not set and the contents are not decided based on meeting specific learning objectives
- Training organisations in most cases decide on the training topics (mostly title of the lecture only and leave the rest to the available faculty)
- Trainings are evaluated based on number of participants and expenditure utilised. However, these trainings are not evaluated based on the behavioural changes that are brought about.
- Trainers are not exposed to other forms of capacity development.
- Content, duration and purpose of training are inconsistent in many cases
- Seminars and workshops are often attended by researchers and teachers and only a few field professionals participate in such events
- While designing training and capacity development interventions, gender perspective is ignored or underrepresented

Varying Perception on Capacity Development

There is no clarity on the use of the term “capacity development” and people have different perceptions on this topic. Capacity development is not merely training individuals and it is more about organisational development. We need to do more to make our research and extension managers aware about the role of capacity development in organisational development. There is also a need to address rivalry among different layers of the organisational hierarchy (eg: Para veterinarians vs veterinary doctors) in having specific types of knowledge, keeping in view the interest of the sector.

Capacity development is a long term process. Therefore, there should be a strategy for continuous capacity development for EAS including KVKs & ATMA that lead extension provisions at the district level.

Training vs Other Forms of Capacity Development:

- Capacity development is an organic process of developing new competencies through experimentation and continuous learning. There is a need to recognise that participation in one or two trainings is not enough.
- Trainings (including workshops, seminars, conferences etc) in most cases only help in building awareness and less in developing analytical and decision-making capacities.
- Apart from building awareness, capacity development should also include, exposure visits, documentation of good practices, networking, dissemination of relevant information, programmes for self-paced learning etc
- To be effective, EAS providers should be exposed to real field problems through placing them in farms, farmer organisations, mandies (markets), retail chain aggregation points, contract/corporate farming enterprises, agri business outlets, implementation sites of NGOs and development departments etc
- Need to build the capacities of training organisations to organise effective capacity development programmes
- Partner with NGOs and organisations in the private sector to support capacity development on soft skills
- Undertake nation-wide survey on capacity development needs of EAS providers (differentiated by their role- example; KVKs, agri-business companies, ATMA, NGOs, producer organisations, agripreneurs etc)
- Other methods might include (a) organising intensive Focus Group Discussions to elicit capacity gaps, (b) using self-assessment questionnaires(c) monthly review meetings, (d) suggestion boxes and(e) discussions on the current challenges and limitations in project management meetings.
- Development of a competency framework for Extension personnel (similar to competency framework for Civil Services in India)
- Undertake research on effective methods of capacity development
- Use of distance education – web-based interactive learning to support capacity development among EAS providers
- Linking of promotions with capacity development
- Development and use of a database (Management Information System) for a systematic selection of trainees (e.g., who has participated in which type of training and when?)

Capacity development is required not just for delivering information related to technology, but on the enabling processes as well. Design of a training course for maximum impact, conflict resolution, negotiation skills, formation and management of farmer producer organizations etc are some areas to be paid attention too. It is also important to introduce paid training courses to improve trainee and trainer commitments.

Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) happens to be a key agency at district level responsible for overall management of agriculture extension system including preparation of Strategic Research and Extension Plan (SREP). ATMA personnel ,including Project Director, Deputy Project Director, Block Technology Managers, Assistant Block Technology Managers and Farmer Friend, should be targeted for continuous capacity development.

Lack of Supporting Environment

A “supporting environment” is required to take advantage of enhanced knowledge and skills gained by individuals through training. Quite often, lack of supporting environment such as lack of facilities in the host organization constrains those trained in new approaches and methods to put new knowledge into use. In some cases, lack of clear directions or thinking at the organisational level can be a disabling factor.

Lack of Efforts to Match Individual Competencies with Organisational Outputs

Lack of systematic efforts to identify the individual and organisational capacity gaps leads to mismatch of individual competencies and output. Most of the programmes are supply driven. The programmes often come with specific budget allocations for training in areas which are less important and the schemes are mostly funded centrally. Efforts aimed at linking or skilfully matching individual competence with organisational output are few or non-existent especially in the agricultural sector. This often gives freedom to individuals to choose their own interests not necessarily linked to enhancing knowledge, but linked to places of their interest to visit for personal reasons.

Biased Selection of Training Topics

A lot of training in animal husbandry unit is organised for the field veterinarians. The focus of these trainings is on advanced disease diagnostic methods, though under real field conditions (with limited field facilities), which is not practical. Though there is an increasing demand for extension training, only few programmes are organised. In India, many veterinarians need training in “group dynamics” as this knowledge is important for implementing government schemes such as “dairy/poultry venture capital fund” that involves selection and organisation of beneficiaries into groups. Similarly “computer based expert system in animal husbandry” is required if Kisan Call Centres (KCCs) have to effectively answer the queries on animal husbandry.

Lack of Capacity among the Training Organisations

Many training organisations lack capacity to train farmers or village youth in matters related to entrepreneurship development, value chain development or linking farmers to markets (e.g., Krishi Vigyan Kendras in India). Much of this knowledge is available with the private or NGO sector and the people in the sector should be invited to train the extension staff. Training in some of the new areas which are critical for extension (the core competencies) needs to be outsourced. Therefore, a strategy for capacity development of EAS at the organisational level is necessary. The strategy should focus on areas and organisations with different expertise and ways of accessing the knowledge and services.

“Anyone can be a trainer?” This is the kind of perception many managers have. While staff at the training institutes have to be highly motivated and intellectually strong, the staff should have capacities to execute training programmes, posting at the training centres is often considered as a punishment posting (depending on the location of the training centre too). It is felt that unwanted and incapable staff members are posted at the centres. Most of the staffing in the training centres is based on seniority and not on skills or aptitude needed for training. This adversely affects the quality of trainings.

Poor competency of extension personnel is a reflection of poor standards of agricultural education system in the country. This leads to incompetent institutions including teachers and scientists. The capacity development can be effectively dealt with through qualified and experienced internal staff and by outsourcing. New training processes and methods like experiential learning, travel workshops and, mentored sessions need to be explored and standardized for different situations. The titles of training courses should be attractive. For example, "How to produce 100 tonne sugarcane from one acre" is better than "Improved sugarcane cultivation practices".

Policy on Capacity Development of EAS

Every organisation involved in agricultural development should have a capacity development policy. Some areas for prioritized attention towards enhanced capacities of EAS providers are as follows:

- Moving capacity development sessions out of the classrooms
- Reducing emphasis on numbers while stressing on quality
- Reducing pressure on training institutes by de-emphasising on quantitative outputs
- Phasing out supply driven training courses
- Designing customized training/capacity development courses
- Building capacity of extension professionals to articulate current agrarian policies and generate evidence on the implementation of these policies

Different sectors viz fisheries, horticulture and livestock have varying requirements for capacity development. EAS in the aquaculture sector is generally very weak. It has fewer human resources and lacks infrastructure facilities to organize extension activities. Majority of public extension service providers in aquaculture are often engaged with implementing

welfare and other schemes rather than providing information, knowledge and skill to fish farmers. In order to improve fish production scenario, EAS in fisheries/aquaculture sector must be strengthened.

Annexure 2 - List of Participants

S. No.	Name	Designation	Postal Address	Contact Details Tel. No. & E - mail
1	J.Atapattu	Deputy Director/Extension	ETC, Department of Agriculture, Peradeiniya	0812388229, 0714417091 jyanthaatapattu@gmail.com
2	D.M.S.B.Dissanayaka	Deputy Director	Office of the Deputy Director of Agriculture Hospital Road- Ampara	0632223287, 0718482865 senarathbd@gmail.com
3	R.S.Wijesekara	Director/ Extension & Training	Department of Agriculture, PO.Box 18, Peradeniya	0812388098, 0777841528 rswijesekara@yahoo.com wijesekara.senarath@gmail.com
4	ThalathaChandranthiRatnayake	Livestock Officer	HRD Division, Department of Animal Production & Health, Gatambe	0812388178, 0718191393 talata.rupasinghe@gmail.com
5	A.G.K.Wijesinghe	Asst.General Manager (Exten./Devt.)	9/428, Coconut cultivation broad, Densilkobbekaduwa Mawatha, Battaramulla	0115549504, 0766904200 kasum_wijesinghe06@yahoo.com
6	M.S.Perera	Principal Research Officer	Sugarcane Research Institute, Udawalawe	0472233234, 0766916453 extensionsri@yahoo.com
7	P.M.Piyaratne	Manager, Dairy Development, Milco (Pvt) Ltd.	19/6, Naranwala, Handessa	0114062121, 0779170016 Piyaratne56@gmail.com
8	M.Dharmadasa	Rubber Extension Officer	Agalawatta, Nankoorugama, Mawanella	0757097281
9	NandanaJayasighe	General Manager – Milk Procurement Extension CIC Agri Business,	99, Ihankatuwa, Dambulla	0777570883 nandana@cicagri.com
10	G.B.B. Surendra	Assistant General Manager, Sri Lanka Cashew Corporation	9 – 6/3, windsor Avenue off, Vandervert Place, Dehiwala	0112884904, 0718015432 gbbsurendra@gmail.com
11	LasanthaPremachandra	Program Manager, Mundalama IPM ADP,	World Vision Lanka, Old AGA Office Building, Colombo Road, Mundalama.	0115509100, 0772984991 lasantha_premachandra@wvi.org
12	C.J.I.T.Fernando	Deputy General Manager (Extension)	Tea Small Holdings Development Authority, No.70, Parliament Rd, Pelawatta, Battaramulla	0117909034, 0777006701 cjitfernandi@gmail.com dgmetsdha@gmail.com
13	B.A.D.Samansiri	Head, Advisory & Extension Div. TRI, Talawakele	Head of Advisory & Extension Division Tea Research Institute, Talawakele	05222508201, 0714020310 samansiribad@gmail.com
14	S.B.U.S.K.	Assistant Director	Department of Export	0812388392, 0718397172

	Ranaweera		Agriculture, District Office, 1062, Gatambe, Peradeniya	upranweera@gmail.com
15	E.A.G.S. Amarawansa	Assistant Director	Department of Export Agriculture, Race Course Road, NuwaraEliya	0522222065, 0779949585 sanammaleeamarawansa@yahoo.com
16	W. Edward De Mel	Director/ Agriculture	Agri. Section, Sri Lanka Mahaweli Authority, 500, T.B.JayaMawata, Colombo	0112695057, 0714107939 wedemrambukkana@gmail.com
17	ShanthaJayasinghe	Deputy General Manager, Advisory & Extension,	A .Baur& Co.Pvt Ltd,260 BiyagamaRoad, Kelaniya.	0114732307, 0773028489 shanthijayasinghe@gmail.com
18	U.I.K.B. Wijesinghe	Veterinary Surgeon	Govt. Veterinary Office, Pussellawa	0812478262, 0718361057 ubkossalawatte@gmail.com
19	A.B. Sandika	Head of Department & Senior Lecturer	Dept of Ag. Economics & Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya.	0718180678, 0777545226 sandika@agecon.ruh.ac.lk
20	M.MahindaHerath	Extension Officer	Institute of Post Harvest Technology, Anuradhapura	0252222344, 0715342229 mahindah@yahoo.com
21	NandaniHerath	Senior Lecturer,	Department of Agricultural & Plantation Engineering, Open University Sri Lanka, Nawala.	nandaniherath22@gmail.com
22	W A D P Wanigasundera	Professor	Dept. of Agric. Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya	0714430501 wanigasundera@gmail.com
23	Wijaya Jayatilaka	Chairman, Board of Study, Agric. Extension	Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya.	0777258845 wijayajayatilaka@yahoo.co.uk
24	Dilini Gunasekara	Tutor, Board of Study, Agric. Extension	Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya.	0773676635 dilini.gunasekara@gmail.com
25	Rasheed Sulaiman V	Director Center for Research on Innovation & Science Policy (CRISP) & Agri. Ext in south Asia (AESAs)	Road 10, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 030	+91 40 23301976 +91 4023300844 Rasheed.sulaiman@gmail.com
26	Nimisha Mittal	Program Manager, CRISP	CRISP, Road 10, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad India	+91 40 23301976 +91 9958386688 Nimisha61@gmail.com

Annexure 3 - Conference Proceedings

AESA organized a Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) Workshop for EAS in Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA) from 10-11 February 2016 at In-service Training Institute, Department of Agriculture, Peradeniya. Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) need new capacities at different levels to effectively deal with the new and evolving challenges faced by rural communities. While the importance of developing new capacities among EAS providers is increasingly recognized, there is very little appreciation and acceptance on the need for a systematic CNA to guide CD interventions. Undertaking CNA is critical for organizing appropriate CD interventions. CNA is a capacity-strengthening process in its own right, and this process is as important as the outcomes. While several approaches and tools on CNA exist, these are yet to be adapted and used in the context of EAS. Lack of a clearly articulated list of core competencies for EAS adversely affect the recruitment of new staff, professional development of existing staff and also the quality of professional education in extension. The workshop was organized to achieve the following two objectives:

- To identify the capacity gaps among EAS providers
- To finalize a methodology for undertaking CNA



The workshop was moderated by Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, Faculty, University of Peradeniya. Rasheed Sulaiman V, Director, CRISP and Focal Point AESA; Nimisha Mittal, Programme Manager, CRISP were the resource persons.

Participants

Twenty six (26) participants representing 18 public and private organizations with diverse backgrounds and experiences in EAS participated in the Workshop (Annexure 2). The participants belonged to the following organizations:

Public Universities	University of Peradeniya University of Ruhuna Open University of Sri Lanka
Public Extension Organizations	Department of Agriculture Department of Export Agriculture Department of Animal Production & Health Tea Small Holdings Development Authority Coconut Cultivation Board

	Institute of Post Harvest Technology Sri Lanka Mahaweli Authority Cashew Corporation of Sri Lanka
Public Research Organizations	Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka Rubber Research Institute of Sri Lanka Sugarcane Research Institute of Sri Lanka
Private Companies	CIC Agribusiness Pvt. Ltd. A. Baur & Company Pvt. Ltd. MilcoPvt Ltd.
International Non Governmental Organizations	World Vision Lanka

DAY 01

SESSION 1- Introduction

W.A.D.P Wanigasundera, President of the Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA), welcomed the participants and appreciated their presence at this important national event. He wished that the deliberations would result in important outputs that would contribute to the “National Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Extension in Sri Lanka” (which was held immediately after this workshop by SLAEA under the theme “New Extensionist”).



This was followed by a self-introduction by all participants. The participants included members working at the field, middle and senior management levels from all the major EAS providers and Training and Education institutions of Sri Lanka.

Rasheed, who served as the main resource person explained the objectives of the Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) workshop. The AESA and its core functions were also introduced. Rasheed highlighted the following major challenges faced by the extension professionals:

1. Extension needs to support the farming communities in addressing the newer challenges such as climate change, marketing (direct access to high value markets, value addition, new standards and regulations)
2. It should support a wide range of actors, beyond farmers, farmer organizations, NGO personnel and industry
3. It needs to coordinate an increasingly pluralistic extension system
4. Quite often extension has limited capacity to support different actors in the Agricultural Innovation System to deal with new challenges.

Historically, extension dealt mostly with technical information and acted as a link between research and farmers. But the new Extensionist has to deal with many more services, which

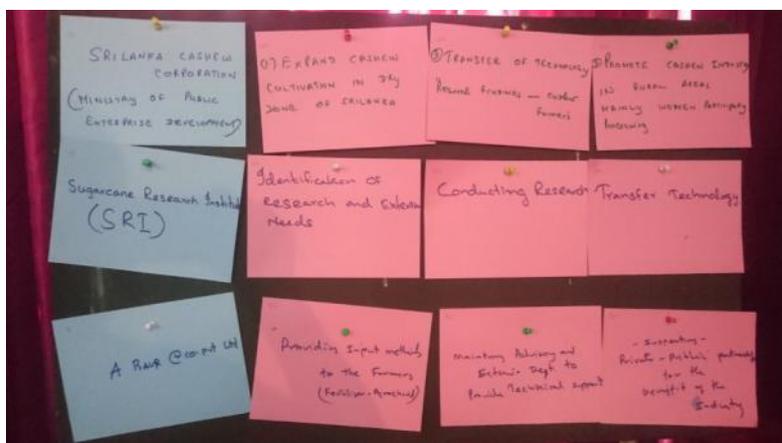
requires diverse approaches beyond dissemination of new technical information. Extension therefore needs new capacities. This would imply assessing the existing capacities at the different levels, developing new curricula (education and training) and designing new and more relevant capacity development interventions.

Rasheed also briefed about outcomes of the first regional meeting of AESA held in 2014 and how AESA has tried to address the issue of capacity development which was identified as one of the most important priority in South Asia. AESA organized an e-discussion held during 4-25 June 2015 and developed a review paper on Capacity Development of EAS. Based on the experienced gathered so far a facilitator’s guide to identify capacity gaps of extension professionals has been developed.

Wijaya Jayatilaka, who served as the moderator of the workshop, mentioned about SLAEA’s plan to hold a National Agriculture Extension Conference just after CNA workshop. The CNA workshop participants and all other stakeholders including the representatives of farmer communities may meet with the policy makers during and after the workshop to proceed with further advocacy consultations on strengthening EAS in Sri Lanka.

SESSION 2: Vision mapping – Functional Assessment

This session started with a card exercise. Each participant was asked to put the name of his/her extension organization on a blue card and main functions s/he performs in his/her organization on a pink card to support EAS provision. Actually, the rationale behind this exercise was that before we explore new functions and new capacities, we should assess the current functions being performed by different organizations engaged in EAS provision.



A perusal of the displayed functions revealed the diverse functions being carried out in EAS delivery across the public, private and NGOs sectors. The participants realized that some of the extension services have started implementing newer activities such as project

implementation, extension partnerships and value chain interventions.

The current status of agriculture extension in Sri Lanka was presented by Rasheed. He drew upon the findings from the AESA Working Paper “Status of Extension and Advisory Services in Sri Lanka”. The findings from the e-discussion organized by SLAEA from December 2015 to January 2016 were also presented in this session. The presentation articulated the current weaknesses in EAS delivery, inadequacies in capacity development efforts and lack of adequate recognition of EAS contributions at the national level.



The group discussions that followed focused on the current functions performed by EAS and the new functions it should perform. The three groups worked on the following questions. Are the current functions performed by EAS adequate? If not, what other functions have to be performed?

The outcomes of this exercise are presented in the following table.

Group	Are the current functions performed by EAS adequate	What other functions have to be performed?
Group 1	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with market institution Promote e-extension activities Accurate data management Collaborative extension work model Extension research activities Work together with extension hub
Group 2	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More emphasis to ensure the adaptation Shared goal oriented integrated approach Be a partner in policy making process Market oriented linkage with marketing institutions Goal setting with shared understanding (Collaboration) Participatory planning (inter-institutional)
Group 3	Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value addition and networking Farmer----Market-----Consumer Capacity building of a traditional farmer to become as an entrepreneur (Agri Business) Facilitator of Public Private Partnership ICT- Expert officers

Introduction to the 'New Extensionist'

Rasheed while presenting the essence of "The New Extensionist: Roles, Strategies and Capacities to Strengthen EAS" summarized the new capacities needed at different levels.

This was followed by a group discussion on the three levels of CD. The discussion highlighted the importance of technical (knowledge on new technologies / practices/ standards / regulations) leadership, problem solving, partnership building, reflective learning, and brokering) capacities among EAS providers at the individual level and also the need for generalists and specialists in EAS provision. As all technical and functional capacities won't be found in one single individual/organization, emphasis was to be placed on targeting CD to the nature of the task to be performed.

SESSION 3: Introduction to capacity development and capacity needs assessment

In two brief presentations, Nimisha Mittal, CRISP discussed the core concepts of competency, capacity, capacity development vs. training, capacity assessment; capacity needs assessment and types of capacities. The FAO and UNDP frameworks on CNA were also discussed. Nimisha's presentation focused on the following:

1. Definitions given to the concept of capacity by different organizations such as IUCN, UNDP and FAO.
2. The differentiation between the competency and capacity
3. Capacity development is a process and it can't be achieved overnight.
4. Capacity assessment is important to identify the level of capacities available and the current gaps
5. Capacity development interventions should be based on the findings from the capacity needs assessment

SESSION 4: Capacity needs assessment at the Individual Level

Asset Mapping

Two exercises were conducted as part of this session. The first exercise was conducted to assess existing capacities at the individual level. Three cards (different colours) were provided to each participant (one for each level) and they were asked to list out existing capacities of extension staff in their organizations at three levels:

- field level - yellow card
- middle management level - green card
- senior management level - white card

These capacities were organized on three flannel boards separately for each level. In the second exercise, the participants were divided into four groups and each group discussed the areas where new capacities are required. The groups also discussed some of the existing capacities that need to be strengthened at the same levels



(field, middle management and senior management) in EAS (irrespective of organizational affiliation). The identified functions were organized on the flannel boards by four groups and from each group a facilitator presented the exercise outcome.

SESSION 5: Capacity Needs Assessment at the Organisational Level

Rasheed in his brief presentation introduced the new capacities required at organizational level:

- Institutions that enable sharing, interacting, learning
- Strategic management functions
- Structures and relationships
- Processes, systems and procedures
- Values, incentives/rewards
- Human and financial resource
- Infrastructure

Appreciative Inquiry

In this session, through a paired card exercise, individuals reflected on significant past achievements in their organisations to identify factors that led to the success. Participants are paired and each one interviewed the other to enquire on the organisational elements that contributed to the success and recorded this in the cards. The identified success factors were organized on the flannel boards by the individuals.



The participants were again divided into four groups with one facilitator in each group. Each group identified the desired capacities at organizational level and presented the findings.

SESSION 6: Capacity needs assessment at the Enabling Environment Level

In this session, Rasheed in his brief presentation introduced the new capacities required at enabling environment level:

- Macroeconomic policies, incentives to increase production
- Political commitment to agricultural development
- Availability of policy framework
- Capacity of policy making bodies to adapt policies based on learning
- Capacity and willingness of other actors to share resources and engage in joint action
- Institutions that facilitate collaboration
- Availability and access to inputs



After the brief presentation of Rasheed, the participants were divided into four groups and each group reflected on the forces in the external environment and the capacities that are needed at the enabling environmental level to make positive changes in EAS. This was followed by a group discussion. Each group made a 5-minute presentation on the new capacities required at the enabling environmental level. Everyone agreed that a different set of participants at higher level is required to assess CD needs at enabling environment level. Moreover, those who can fairly represent different actors in the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS) are also important for a discussion on this topic as capacities needed at the enabling environment cut across different actors in AIS.

SESSION 7: Prioritizing Capacity Development Needs

Prioritizing of the capacities identified and listed during the previous session was the task performed during this session.

The capacity development needs at individual (field level, middle level and senior level) and organizational levels identified by the four groups in the above sessions were summarized on four charts under the following heads:

- a. Capacity development needs at individual level: field level
- b. Capacity development needs at individual level: middle level
- c. Capacity development needs at individual level: senior level
- d. Capacity development needs at organizational level

Dotmocracy - Priority Setting on Capacity Development Needs

Dotmocracy is a facilitation methods used to describe voting with dot stickers. Participants voted on their favourite options using a limited number of stickers. It works well with large groups (e.g., 20-30 participants), in situations when a quick 'read' of the group feelings are required and when participants are not able to engage in very rigorous and analytical ranking processes.

In this exercise, each participant was provided with three dots (red stickers) per chart and they were invited to place the dots on top three priority capacity needs in each chart. Thus, each participant placed three dots in all the four charts and prioritized top three priority CD needs at the individual (field, middle, and senior) and organizational level. The first three capacities needed were identified through the ranking and discussed under each level.



Top Priority Capacity Development Areas

Individual Field Level

- Capacities on communication and use of mass media and ICTs
- Capacities on need-based planning and decision-making
- Capacities on linking farmers to markets

Individual Middle Level

- Organizational and coordination skills
- Public relations, networking and engagement with stakeholders
- Leadership and ability to coach and mentor subordinate staff

Individual Senior Level

- Leadership, Administration, Monitoring & Evaluation & coordination skills
- Networking and negotiation skills
- Policy advocacy and research based evidence

Organizational level

- Holistic/Broader vision on EAS provision
- Recognition on the role of extension
- Culture of collaboration and learning in EAS

SESSION 8: STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF EAS IN SRI LANKA: PRIORITIES AND WAYS FORWARD

World Café

This was a group interaction session focused on conversations to discuss the way forward on how to implement the top three priority areas identified through Dotmocracy exercise in the above session.



The participants were divided into four groups. They sat around a table and held a series of conversational rounds lasting for 10 minutes about the way forward to implement the above three top priority capacity needs at each level. At the end of each round, the facilitator in charge of each table remained there as the host, while the others moved to other table. The hosts welcomed newcomers to their tables and shared the essence of that table's conversation so far. The newcomers deepened the conversations so far through their insights as the round progressed. This process continued until all the four tables were visited by everyone in four sessions. Finally the four hosts from the four tables presented the outcome of the discussions on ways to implement the top priority CD needs at each level.

CLOSING SESSION

The participants were given one card each for feedback on both the positive and negative aspects of the workshop anonymously. This was followed by an open feedback of the participants about the workshop.



The participants were awarded certificates for successful participation in the workshop. All participants were invited for the National Conference scheduled on the 12 February 2016 to share the findings with a wider cross-section of stakeholders and decision-makers.