



MY MEETING NOTES

International Conference On "Good Governance in Agricultural Extension" Centre for Good Governance, Gachibowli Campus, Hyderabad, India 3 - 4 September, 2015



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF AGRICULTURAL
EXTENSION
MANAGEMENT



CENTRE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
Knowledge • Technology • People



This International conference, jointly organized by MANAGE & CGG, discussed the governance issues impacting agricultural extension management specifically in the context of developing countries in Asia and Africa. Dr Mahesh Chander reflects on his participation at this event here.

CONTEXT

The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, has important responsibility concerned with management issues related to agricultural extension in India (<http://www.manage.gov.in/aboutUs/ourMandate.asp>). The Centre for Good Governance (CGG) aims to guide governance reforms in India, by bringing together and harnessing the power of knowledge, technology and people for good governance (http://www.cgg.gov.in/our_vision.html). These two important organizations joined hands to organize this conference by combining the expertise and strength of each other. The conference was organized mainly to share the lessons and best practices related to governance of agricultural sector in general and extension systems in particular.



PROGRAMME

Inaugural Session

Ms Amb. Bellinda Achieng Omino, H.E. the Hon'ble Dy High Commissioner, Republic of Kenya at New Delhi graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. She spoke on the importance of agricultural extension for developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia. Ms Usha Rani, the Director General, MANAGE spoke on important issues affecting agricultural development especially in India and other developing countries. She emphasized on sharing of experiences between India and Africa for mutual benefit as there are many commonalities among India and African countries in the field of agriculture. The inaugural function also had a brief presentation on the meeting objectives and the agenda followed by introduction of participants. Appreciably, the inaugural session was not stretched too long and fortunately it has no detailed speeches praising the dignitaries present, which we usually witness in most conferences in India.

Technical sessions

The conference had nearly 80 presentations spread over following five technical sessions:

- ▶ Good governance in International extension models
- ▶ Good governance in public extension
- ▶ Good Governance in Private Extension
- ▶ Good governance in ICT led extension
- ▶ Gender in Agricultural extension

The session on International extension models had a good mix of experience sharing from African countries like Malawi, Kenya and Liberia representing various institutions public, private and cooperatives in these African nations. This session was dominated by African experiences with no presentation from any Indian delegate except the two eminent key note speakers, Prof S V Reddy and Dr R Ratnakar, who presented an overview of International extension models.

The Session on Public extension had about 25 presentations, well balanced with respect to Indian and African experiences in agricultural extension services delivery by public agencies like KVKs, SAMETIs, SAUs, ICAR institutes and Ministries of



Agriculture, Horticulture, Livestock, and Fisheries in these countries. Here the prominent keynote speakers like Dr R M Prasad and Prof K Narayana Gowda, presented detailed overview of problems and prospects of public extension in developing countries with respect to good governance.

The session on Private extension had 12 presentations representing experiences from African continent and Indian experiences like public-private partnerships, contractual agricultural extension services delivery in Kenya, success stories on farmer producer organizations, to name a few. The lead

presentation on Good governance in private extension and PPP models by Dr V V Sadamate [Agricultural extension specialist and former advisor (Agriculture), Planning Commission, Government of India] was an enriching opportunity for the participants.

The session on Good governance in ICT-led extension explored the current status, opportunities, evidences, and experiences of using ICTs as enablers of capacity development in agricultural extension and advisory services. The participants deliberated on the role of web portals, digital videos, knowledge networks, digital repositories, mobile applications, social media like Facebook and open access initiatives for capacity development. The experiences on ICT applications by TNAU (Dr Kartikeyan), IIT, Hyderabad (Dr P Krishna Reddy) were interesting models for replication.

The session on Gender in Agricultural Extension, had least number of presentations (only 6). The keynote presentation on Gender issues in agriculture was delivered by Dr M Suryamani, Director, Extension Education Institute, Hyderabad.

There were some interesting experiences on women focused initiatives taken in African countries like Liberia, Kenya and Malawi. I believe there was ample scope of having many good experiences from India on this theme. Only one experience was shared from India on gender though there are lot many activities going on in this area in India.



MY IMPRESSIONS

Thank God, this conference is not crowded, commented one of the participants!

This was true since the total attendance was limited close to 100. The international conferences are usually well-advertised and well in advance (at least 1-2 years). However, this one was organized at a very short time with apparently little publicity. The organizers seem to have deliberately kept it as a low-profile activity given the resources available with them in terms of funding and infrastructure. Besides, it was aimed to give chance to all the presenters, so it was well intentioned to keep the attendance at low level to keep pace with the logistics and convenience. Limited participation was a blessing in disguise, since all the presenters got sufficient time to make presentations, which is often not the case in conferences with huge/unlimited attendance.

Time Management: All sessions including the inaugural programme finished well within the scheduled time. The organizers had given top priority to stick to the schedule so as to give equal opportunity to all the presenters. In many conferences it is common that the initial



speakers take away most of the time leaving no time for the speakers towards the end of the session. All the speakers present could present their papers within the allocated time.

Participants and their participation: The participants were mainly from African countries like Kenya, Malawi, Liberia, Nigeria and Ghana. The Indian participants represented almost all the stakeholders such as ICAR institutes, SAUs, KVKs, SAMETIs, Ministries, private sector, state government, students and entrepreneurs. The limited number of participants could be supported well with logistics so that they could be actively involved in all the sessions. The participants remained engaged with all technical sessions with no thought of excursions, shopping etc.

FINAL WORDS

The big message from this conference was that the pluralism and partnerships among agricultural extension service providers is going to grow in coming years. The donor agencies may keep funding agricultural extension initiatives in developing countries but these countries must develop their infrastructure and capacities as early as possible. The farmer producer organizations/associations, if not the cooperatives *per se* have potential to play a very big role in agricultural extension services.



The success and failures of agricultural extension services, be it by private, public, cooperatives/farmer organizations depends on the good governance and managerial skills. This conference was a unique opportunity for the participants to share their experiences (what they have done in the field), not the results of their academic/research activity. This conference was more important for the African delegates, since they got very good overview of agricultural extension in India as also in other African countries. The delegates carry back home several lessons on developing agricultural extension services in their respective countries. The Indian participants also benefitted greatly by knowing more on the status of extension services in the African continent.

Dr Mahesh Chander is Head, Division of Extension Education, ICAR- Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar (UP), India (drmahesh.chander@gmail.com)