



**MANAGE, AESA, IAEN, CRISP
Training Workshop for
Promoting 'The New Extensionist Learning Kit'
MANAGE, Hyderabad, October 5-6, 2017**



The Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP) in association with National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Indian Agricultural Extension Network (IAEN) and Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AES A) network organised a training workshop to promote The New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK). Dr Aparna Radhakrishnan and Dr Prakashkumar Rathod, who participated in the workshop, share their experiences here.

THE CONTEXT

Rural development is often constrained by new and rapidly evolving challenges. Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) have to acknowledge these and develop new capacities to deal with them. To fully support farmers, EAS need to play an expanded role within the Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS). The New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK) has been developed specifically by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) as a knowledge resource to support development of these capacities. NELK contains 15 modules designed for self-directed, face-to-face, or blended learning and can be a useful tool for (not exclusively) individual extension field staff, managers, lecturers and non-governmental organisations, and other training institutions(<http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/new-extensionist-learning-kit-nelk.html>). Unfortunately, many of the intended users are not aware of the NELK. Further, those who might know about the NELK, also lack confidence on how to use it. This training workshop was organised specifically to promote the NELK among key personnel engaged in training and education of field level extension professionals in India.



THE PROGRAMME

Inaugural Session

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Dr R Saravanan, Director (Agricultural Extension), MANAGE. After self-introduction of participants, Dr Rasheed Sulaiman, Director, CRISP, showcased the significance of organizing this training workshop and the journey of the NELK from the New Extensionist position paper to a learning kit to address new capacities needed by extension professionals. The NELK was developed by GFRAS through broad consultations, discussions, and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. The anticipated outcomes of the workshop were to help the participants train other colleagues and help academicians design new courses that would improve awareness, enhance knowledge, provide motivation and increase confidence among extension agents.



Smt Usha Rani, IAS, Director General, MANAGE, in her inaugural address, expressed her concerns that the role of an extensionist was getting confined to welfare programme implementation. She emphasised that ATMA principles were hardly being followed at the field level, their implementation concluding merely with quarterly meetings. There exists a wide gap between farmers' aspirations and system delivery. Village-level relevance of a particular package of practice is not taken into consideration by extension agents. Farmers do not aim at enhanced production and productivity but at an increase in income and livelihood through better market facilities/linkages. Effective convergence between different actors is a major challenge and hence, there is a necessity for self-learning modules and learning kits. She also emphasised the need to add marketing to the job chart of extensionists.

Technical Sessions

Session 1

Module 1: Introduction to the New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)

This session started with a card exercise (individual) by Dr Rasheed Sulaiman on the most important capacities that need to be developed, how these capacities are currently enhanced and what limitations constrain capacity development of extension/rural advisory services

(RAS) providers. Non-scientific capacity need assessment and training for training's sake are some of the major issues that came up during the discussion. Thus, the need of a learning kit that updates you as a future extension professional emerged.



In Module 1, the changing context of rural communities and its implications on extension activities was discussed. This discussion facilitated an understanding on the emergence of the concept of agricultural innovation system (AIS), the individual roles of

different types of RAS providers and the inter-linkages within these. The second part of the module dealt with the vision, mission and guiding principles that form the core of GFRAS.

Module 2: Extension Approaches and Tools

The role of extension in innovation and development was discussed by Dr Rasheed Sulaiman in this session. This module gives an overview on the history of extension, its development and its status as a science and profession. It also delves into the tools and approaches available to an extension practitioner, and their applications.

Session 2

Module 6: Basic Knowledge Management and Extension

Dr Saravanan divided the participants into three groups at the beginning of this session. Each group was asked to list the changes they experience in research-extension-farmer linkages, the knowledge component and application of ICT in extension. He pointed out that the intra- and inter-component linkages, effective communication of knowledge and coordination between research, extension and farmer is essential for the success of AIS. This module outlines different types of knowledge, situations that an extension agent will need to deal with on a day-to-day basis, as well as the different sources through which knowledge can be gained/accessed.



Session 3

Module 8: Community Mobilisation

Nimisha Mittal started this session with a card exercise (individual) that elucidated the concept of community mobilisation and its importance by discussing its roles in diverse communities and organisations. The session gave an outline of the appropriate approaches for community mobilisation including planning, carrying out a livelihood assets assessment,

analysing, interpreting and applying the information from these assessments. She also discussed different problem-solving approaches, designing processes and methods that involve women and youth, the role of leadership development in community mobilisation and application of resource mobilisation strategies in community mobilisation.

Session 4

Module 13: Risk Mitigation and Adaptation in Extension



Dr Sethuraman familiarised the trainees with risk management and adaptation planning in EAS. He introduced the concepts of risk and uncertainty in order to better understand the impact of factors such as market and climate variability in the agricultural sector. He also added research studies on coping strategy index and tribal livelihood sustainability for linking risk, mitigation, coping and adaptation to sustainability.

Module 5: Adult Learning for Behavioural Change

Dr Sethuraman started the session by interpreting extension as a mechanism of creating favourable environment. He explained that this module would provide an introduction to behaviour change, the factors that can influence behaviour, important concepts for the facilitation of learning, factors to consider in order to develop a successful training programme and why evaluation is vital in educational programmes.

Session 5

Module 11: Agricultural Entrepreneurship

This session started with a cartoon illustration depicting the story of a dog losing the meat barking over its reflection in water by Dr Ramkumar. He focused on how if one is original, creative and inquisitive, it translates into him/her having the requisite skills of entrepreneurship. He also discussed the applicability of related context, policy and extension to entrepreneurship. He explained how this module familiarises extensionists with the key terms and concepts required to introduce agricultural entrepreneurship to farmers, farmer groups and agricultural businesses and to support improved



productivity and market engagement. He emphasised that extension and entrepreneurship must go hand in hand in the changing scenario. The module provides a practical approach to improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of extension agents as they seek to help the farming community take on new entrepreneurial skills. The concept of entrepreneurship was clarified using the example of Gramashree, a breed of backyard poultry. In a card exercise, participants were asked to write the entrepreneurial activities undertaken by their organisation, their scope and limitations, on three different colour cards. He concluded the session by stating that every farmer is an entrepreneur in a sense, and entrepreneurship should be embedded within extension.

Module 10: The Role of Extension in Value Chains

In this module, Dr Ramkumar focused on the importance of agricultural marketing for farmers, analysis of the agricultural market and value chain, as well as market linkage methods. He also explained how extension agents can work with farmers and other key value chain actors to target market opportunities and to develop an action plan that farmers can use to engage effectively with markets. This module can be used to familiarise extension agents with the use of market analysis tools and value chain upgrading strategies, as well the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in value chains services.

Session 6

Module 7: Introduction for Facilitation for Development

Dr Suchiradiptra Bhattacharjee (MANAGE) presented this module by stating that the goal of extension professionals is to influence development change in the societies where they work. In the AIS context, this change can happen when good relationships are formed. A new extension approach that aims at participatory and group learning as well as networking, where the extensionist acts as a facilitator is needed. She concluded the session by quoting that facilitation is not about making groups and discussing, it is for creating platforms from high to low level, establishing strategic partnerships and it's the way every extensionist must work.



Session 7

Module 3: Agricultural Extension Programme Management

Dr P V K Sasidhar explained how agricultural extension is facing the challenge of establishing a well-managed, effective, and accountable system that meets the needs of many farmers engaged in diverse and complex farming systems, as well as effective monitoring, evaluating and assessing the impact of extension services. This module on Agricultural Extension Programme Management was intended to explain in detail the performance of agricultural research system and its feedback linkages as well as the inherent problems in ensuring political commitment and the economic sustainability of agricultural extension.

Session 8

Module 14: Developing Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Extension and Advisory Service

In this session, Dr Sasidhar introduced RAS in AIS and the basics of monitoring and evaluating RAS. This session started with a card exercise in which the participants were asked whether they had conducted any monitoring and evaluation. They were asked to describe the methodology used and its utility. He explained evaluation by citing an example of the impact of contract broiler system in South India. He described the empirical evidence given by the radio farm school evaluation study by ICAR-IVRI, Izatnagar. Dr Sasidhar discussed the types of evaluation, using the example of formative evaluation summary on Gyandhara, an alternative mode of Gyanvani, follow-up evaluation of the radio farm school programme and summative evaluation of integrated contract farming. He also explained how core competencies of extension professionals in India can be assessed using Bennett's theory of hierarchy and logical framework analysis.



Session 9

Module 9: Farmer Organisational (FO) Development



The final session was conducted by Nimisha Mittal in which she explained various factors that influence the successful operation of FOs, several internal and external challenges, as well as suggestions on how to address them. She also discussed the issues affecting sustainability of FOs. This would help extension agents guide farmers in forming and managing sustainable

organisations and the most important functions that FOs fulfil in the agricultural sector.

CLOSING SESSION

Dr Saravanan, while addressing the guests in the closing session, asked a few participants to share their experiences and feedback on NELK. The participants expressed their appreciation for participation in this training workshop. However, there were a few suggestions on a need to modify the NELK according to the Indian context, and for its translation into Indian



languages for more relevance. Participants also suggested, in-depth training programmes/workshops for each module for different stakeholders (academicians, NGO and KVK staff, policy makers, field officers etc).

In her valedictory remarks, Smt Usha Rani appreciated the collaboration and initiative taken by CRISP, MANAGE, IAEN and AESA in organising this workshop and the

diversity of participants from universities, research organisations and from private firms and NGOs. She remarked that extension is not merely a transfer of technology but a managerial leadership skill. This dialogue (workshop) is only a starting point. She further requested the participants to read, think, test and use the module effectively. The session ended with a vote of thanks by Nimisha Mittal.

OUR IMPRESSIONS

The workshop was well planned by the organisers who had handpicked 25 participants from 12 states of India. They came from different disciplines and organisations and were basically the master trainers involved in training field-level EAS providers. The sessions were well organised and systematic and participants were given the link to the NELK in advance, so that the sessions were more explanatory.



The inaugural session was short but focused to set the stage for rest of the 12 modules or technical sessions. The workshop, through presentations, interactions, card exercises and group exercises/discussions explored the latest trends, knowhow and practices related to the “New Extensionist Learning Kit” and its relevance in the changing times. The participants were actively involved in discussions in all sessions and engaged keenly in various individual/group exercises. Moreover, the participants were quite satisfied with being part of this kind of

workshop and were able to realise the importance of the NELK in the changing scenario/context of EAS to enable the providers in performing different roles and functions.

Unfortunately, lack of good quality books has been a major limitation in the subject and discipline of extension in recent years. As an academician, this kit is highly informative to update our subject knowledge since it encompasses the latest and most relevant information and helps in teaching the same to my undergraduate and postgraduate students. The workshop will be repeated in the future to test the applicability of NELK in field conditions by various participants. This workshop will unquestionably encourage and help extensionists and we wish that a quote made by a participant, “Professionalism powered by NELK”, comes true.

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