

# South Asia : Extension Needs and Programmes

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# South Asia

- **8 Countries** (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)
- Witnessed increased food grain productivity and increase in rural wages;
- Except Afghanistan and Nepal, rest are food self sufficient at national level;
- **Household food security is still a problem**
- 571 million people on less than 1.25 US\$ per day);  
**Poverty largely rural**- dependent on rainfed agriculture, livestock, fragile forests, casual/migratory employment
- **70% of employed women in SA work in Agriculture** (UN Women, 2012)

# Extension in South Asia

- **Dominated by the public sector**, though a diverse mix of extension service providers exists;
- T&V was in place in 5 countries
- Guided and Supported by the National Ministries/Departments (of Agriculture) and implemented by the provincial/state governments through district level offices
- Mostly top-down and supply driven; implementing several schemes involving distribution of inputs and subsidies
- Decentralised to a great extent in Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka-increased accountability but weakened capacity in all cases

# Extension in South Asia

Increasing involvement of **private sector, producer organisations and NGO**

- Input companies, agri-business firms (on contract)
- Farmer co-operatives (Pakistan-mango, cotton, sugarcane; India-dairy, sugarcane, grapes)
- NGOs (national and International) especially in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan

**ICT initiatives-** both public and private

Several **Rural Development Initiatives** that also work on Agriculture especially with rural women [eg: India -rural livelihood projects; Pakistan -National Rural Support Programmes]

**Commodity Boards** in specific crops

Major donor funding: WB (Bangladesh/NATP); USAID (Afghanistan) ; several IFAD projects and many other donor initiatives in agriculture

# Needs/Challenges-1

- Deal with new and complex challenges with less support
  - Low operational funds
  - Limited number of personnel
  - Extension not getting its due from local/provincial governments, increasing dependency on central grants for extension
  - More focus on implementation of schemes and technology transfer (demonstration/training) and less on advisory support and facilitation of learning.
  - Limited opportunities for capacity enhancement
  - Low emphasis on developing functional skills
  - Extension is weak in livestock and fisheries sector

## Needs/Challenges-2

- **Lack of collaboration/partnership with other actors in the Agricultural Innovation System (AIS)**
  - Extension seen as mostly a mechanism for transferring technologies developed by research
  - Weak linkages between research and extension
  - Limited collaboration with other public departments/schemes/programmes
  - Lack of partnerships with other providers in the private/NGOs/Pos
  - Lack of policies and implementation guidelines to support extension in general and partnership development in particular

## Needs/Challenges-3

- **Narrow understanding on the role of extension**
  - Several universities offer courses in extension, but new understandings on concepts underlying the discipline yet to find a place in extension curricula (academic as well as training programmes)
  - Research in extension (mostly student research) too narrowly focused on micro-level problems
  - Lack of basic research (how innovation happens) as well as policy relevant research on extension
    - Evaluation- quick or systematic
    - Documentation and analysis of good practices

## Needs/Challenges-4

- **No mechanism for learning and policy engagement**
  - Lot of interesting experiments, but opportunities for documenting, analysing , sharing poorly developed. AESA ([www.aesa-gfras.net](http://www.aesa-gfras.net)) trying to address this currently at the regional level
  - No formal mechanism/platforms to continuously learn from on-going initiatives or jointly plan initiatives at the country level;
  - Research in extension too disconnected from the policy questions on extension.
  - Reforms mostly in response to other considerations and not based on sound research, monitoring or evaluation

# Conclusions

- Agriculture and Extension will continue to remain critical for food security and poverty reduction in South Asia
- Extension faces 4 major challenges:
  - Financial (including human resources)
  - Institutional
  - Conceptual
  - Learning

While increased funding (donor/national) addresses some of the challenges related to finances and manpower, it hasn't addressed the rest of the challenges related to institutional changes, conceptual evolution and learning capacity

# Thanks

[www.aesa-gfras.net](http://www.aesa-gfras.net)

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