USAID Agricultural Extension Support Activity (AESA)

AESC-Model towards strengthening agricultural extension service in Bangladesh

Dhaka Ahsania Mission

CARE-Bangladesh and mPower

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Submitted to

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Executive summary

The value of effective agricultural extension services in Bangladesh is enormous in order to ensuring the needful production against continued increasing population. The USAID-AESA project has introduced AESC-Model towards strengthening country's agricultural extension service. This report provides an assessment of the performance of the AESC-Model.

This study compared agricultural extension service in 24 'blocks' under the existing system (DAE-Model) against 24 'blocks' under AESC-Model. A 'block' is the work-area of a frontline extension agent (SAAO). Data were collected through separately interviewing three classes of respondents – Class-1: senior DAE officials (N=11); Class-2: SAAOs (N=48) and Class-3: farmers (N=192, equal number of male and female). The criteria of assessment included the design of the models and relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of services, services to women farmers and use of ICT. Data were summarized as means (either percentage of responses or number by count) and their corresponding confidence intervals at 95% probability level. The statistical significance were compared between 'control' group (DAE-Model) and 'treatment' group (AESC-Model).

In the existing DAE-Model, a front line extension agent (SAAO) has no office in the work-place ('block'), no work vehicle and no official mobile phone. The AESC-Model was designed to overcome such difficulties the SAAOs had been encountering. The new design was fully endorsed by all classes of respondents. The AESC-Model intervention provided SAAOs with enhanced social status and job satisfaction, which impacted on their work efficiency and work credibility. In turn, farmers received significantly more and relevant services. To the farmers and senior DAE officials, agricultural extension service in Bangladesh had already been providing benefits to farm family income, but with AESC-Model those benefits felt in significantly larger scale. Two other benefits stem from the AESC-Model - increasing services to women farmers and more use of ICT tools. In spite of significant benefits received from AESC-Model, individual farmers and senior DAE officials raised concerns on full effectiveness of the model. This study also observed that AESCs in all the piloted locations were not performing equally.

If proper implementation is ensured, AESC-Model has the potential of increasing the relevancy of current extension service by over 30%, resulting in increase in crop productivity @ 0.35% for every 1% of increase in service relevancy.