



USAID AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SUPPORT ACTIVITY

Baseline Report

Dhaka Ahsania Mission
CARE-Bangladesh and mPower

November 2016



Executive Summary

This baseline survey was conducted on a small number of selected indicators to understand and document the role of government and private sector extension agents in accessing agricultural extension services and information by the smallholder farmers on six selected for intervention value chains. The information were collected from both the service providers and their users to identify the supply and demand side barriers and for triangulation of information. The survey covered 6000 smallholder farmers from 11 districts, 23 Upazilas, 162 unions of all three regions organized under six value chain farmer producer groups, all 477 government extension agents and 467 private extension agents from the 12 AESA working districts. The survey was conducted during October 2013 through September 2014.

Results of survey data presented in section five of this report has identified inadequacies in the delivery of services from mainly the government extension workers and the gap in accessing the extension services and information by the farmers. The survey found low yield rate of all the 6 value chains, underscored the importance of the extension information and services in productivity gains.

Access to Finance

The farmers had very low access to finances – only 10% of project beneficiaries had borrowed loan from any government approved sources before in the last cropping season. This figure was significantly less (only 4%) in Khulna region and for chilli, Mung bean and jute FPG groups.

Access to Government Extension Agents (GEAs)

Only 53% of the male and 22% of the female respondents reported that they knew their local government agricultural extension agents providing specialized services and information on their value chain practice areas, and around half of them who knew mentioned that they received services from them in the last one year. Responses related to their access also greatly varies among different value chain FPGs.

Sources of Extension Information

The farmers usually receive their desired extension related information mainly from neighbours (91%), input sellers (45%) and lead farmers of their locality (57%). Only a fourth (28%) named the government extension agents as one of the sources of their information and knowledge. Only 2% stated that they acquired their necessary farming and marketing information from either TV programmes or from other audio visuals they saw and no one mentioned about call centre.

Sources of Production Inputs and places of marketing

The farmers mostly use their own production sources and bought the remaining production inputs from the nearby shops and local hat. They also sell their produces in their local hat. One fourth of the farmers also mentioned that the middlemen also collected some of their produces and sold them at higher prices in the city centres.

Use of ICT

The government extension agents in the surveyed regions were not adequate in number when it comes to livestock and fisheries. For the latter one livestock and one fishery officer per upazila and even for two upazilas are posted. Therefore, it is often not possible for them to physically visit the farmers' field. The use of mobile phone was found to be very high for both way interaction with the farmers and their fellow colleagues and departments, as well as for updating and dissemination of information. Use of mobile apps, web browsing and query submission which require both internet connection and training was found to be very minimum.

Role of Private Extension Agents

The survey found private extension agents doing their business in the area since long, around 11.4 years on average. Of them 97% maintains regular and direct contacts with the farmers, 82% also mentioned about their over phone communication. Around 60% mentioned that they also made the field visits. To serve the farmers better 82% of the PEAs would like to receive advance training on production technology and 54% on business management. A higher number had also been looking for establishing linkages with reputed companies and increase the client base for their business. Linkages with government departments and access to extension materials were asked by 18% and 9% of the PEA respondents.

Summary Recommendations

Based on specific findings the study made a long list of recommendations to support the programme design and make adjustments in its implementation strategies:

- conduct stakeholder analysis to define the strategies for establishing effective linkages between extension service providers, market actors and beneficiary farmers/service recipients;
- apply a twin track approach for improving access to agricultural finances i.e., work with the FPG groups and identify low risk lenders; sole searching potential public financial institutions interested in small scale lending, design and pilot alternative products and solutions.
- Workout an incentive package for the govt. extension agents to ensure their regular on-site visits.
- Sensitize senior government officials and policymakers to recruit more female extension workers
- Develop customized and user friendly mobile apps for use by the farmers and extension agents
- Organize match making workshops and on-site training by engaging the government extension agents, farmers and private sector actors
- Include more socio-economic and demographic variables in the annual performance surveys.