

Meeting Memo

Access to information

Venue: Intercooperation

Date: 5th November

Participants:

SL	Name	Organization
1	Mr. M. Harunur Rashid	DG-BARI
2	Mr. Abeed Hossain Chowdhury	BARC
3.	Mr. Alain Cuvelier	Intercooperation
4.	Ms. Shirin Biswas	Intercooperation
5.	Mr. A. K. Osman Haruni	Intercooperation
6.	Dr. Kh. Shafiqul Islam	Intercooperation
7.	Mr. Badrul Alam	IDE - Bangladesh
8.	Mr. Maksudur Rahman	Plan International
9.	Mr. Manzure Aziz	BASC
10.	Mr. Abdul Awal	Katalyst
11.	Mr. Khaled Khan	Katalyst
12	Mr. Maksudur Rahman	Plan International
13	Mr. Tahsin Akbar	Coordinator, MDF

Ms. Shirin Biswas, Intercooperation welcomed everyone in the meeting and gave the introduction on the topic to everyone. The first presentation was given by Mr. Harunur Rashid. Following issues came up from his presentation,

- The population density of Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world. Singapore and Hong Kong has higher density than Bangladesh. But they do not have to rely on their own crop for subsistence.
- The population density of Bangladesh is also increasing at an alarming rate. Upon comparison, population density of Bangladesh is higher than that of India which makes it hard for us to be self sufficient in all crops in the long run. The population growth also increasing at an alarming rate. This is causing a decrease in cultivable land.
- The cropping intensity in Bangladesh is 1.8 yields per year. 62% of the total population is engaged in farming. Farm family is 60% of Bangladesh. 21% contribution to GDP comes from Agriculture.
- The govt.'s policy is to make the country self sufficient in food producing through increasing production of cereals and to ensure a dependable food security system for all.
- In the 'Poverty Reduction Strategy', agriculture and rural sector has been given top priority. In the Millennium development goal, agriculture has been selected as critical component.

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- The information generated by the researchers in govt. agencies are distributed through agencies such as DAE, DLS etc. There are five national agencies engaged in disseminating information. In addition to the govt. agencies, NGO's also plays a vital role in disseminating the information.
- There are 10 organizations who generates the information, 1500 researchers, 15 public universities are engaged in generating the information.
- To disseminate the information, activities like drama, training, study tours are undertaken. Print and electronic media is also used for this purpose. The TV program of 'Mati O Manush's role is notable for disseminating the information. Electronic media is most potent in effective dissemination.
- Information are given by journal, manual, booklet, posters etc. Information is also available in BARI website.
- Main problem for the researchers is that they do not receive adequate feedback from the grassroots level.
- For disseminating the information, govt. has taken ICT initiative. This initiative includes organizational website, TV/ radio program, Rice knowledge bank, GIS database and Community information center.
- Recent govt. initiatives have been taken for grass root people to have access to information. These include 'KRISHI', 'Right to information ordinance 2008, presence of researchers in the filed, talk shows, 'Esho Bangladesh Gori' etc.
- Following challenges have been pointed out.
 - Technological knowledge gap between researchers and farmers.
 - Inadequate ICT Infrastructure
 - Lack of trained manpower.
 - Lack of reliable data
 - Lack of access to market and market information
 - Inadequate agro-processing facility/ technology
 - Poor early warning system
 - Food and Nutrition Security and Safe Food
 - Increasing Food need for growing population from declining agricultural land
 - Deterioration of natural resource base and depletion of Genetic Resources
 - Technology for less favored agro-eco system and stress situations
- Main challenges have been identified as Food security, shrinking arable land, high population increment, food habit changing, post harvest losses etc.
- Recommendation includes
 - KRISHI TV
 - E-KRISHI
 - Capacity development of the line agencies in providing feedback.
 - Partnership with private sector
 - Establishing rural telecenters
 - Market price information availability in root level
 - Using mobile phone in dissemination of information.

Upon discussion following points were raised in the event.

- There could be conflict between researchers and agency

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- E-programs would be most efficient in dissemination of information.
- Instead of food security, now the nutrition security is required and dependence from single crop to multiple crop.
- The post harvest losses can be mitigated if proper measures are taken.
- Govt. may not always provide the adequate quantity of human resources. In this regard, Private Public partnership is important.
- Population growth is main problem where 20 -25 lac people is added every year.
- Removing subsidy can not be a policy realistic in Bangladesh. Other nations are also increasing subsidies. For example, China is increasing subsidy in agriculture sector and decreasing in industrial sector.

After the discussion Mr. A. K. Osman Haruni gave a presentation on the SAAKTI (Sustainable Access to Knowledge, Technology and Information) project of Intercooperation. His presentation included following points.

- The objective of the project is to increase income in rural households with special attention to extreme poor through access to sustainable and quality services.
- SAAKTI included capacity building of LSP's, strengthening the regional resource pool and strengthening of coordinated platforms. At present 2nd phase of SAAKTI is running.
- Major activities included
 - Capacity building of LSP:
 - Identification and development of LSPs in different domains (livestocks, vegetable, fruit tree, field crop. Fisheries, bamboo, timber tree, medicinal plant, TBA, marketing, off-farm etc.)
 - Developing Professional LSP with business orientation
 - Expertise LSP as per community demand
 - Diversified LSP and diversified skill and knowledge
- Promotion of SPA activities included
 - Capacity building on organizational development to be evolved as a professional platform of LSPs
 - Establish functional linkage with Public Sectors
 - Establish linkage with private sectors including potential NGOs. Projects etc.
 - Facilitate SPA with business/commercial orientation
- Strengthening of RRP's included
 - Identification of line experts as a member of RRP
 - Capacity building of RRP members on facilitation skill and technical know-how
 - Development and strengthening the taskforce
 - Training Need Assessment (TNA)
 - Training and exchange visit
 - Inclusion of private sector experts
- Market Development activities included,
 - Work on five value chains including vegetable, milk, medicinal plant, spices and fish.

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- Identification of actors in these VC's and public private sector partnership for monitoring and learning and expansion in new areas.
- The local level facilitations included facilitation in different level such as Regional, District, upazilla. Also facilitation included support from extension agencies.
- Intercooperation uses a 3 tier approach for their SAAKTI project. This 3 tier approach includes feedback from Upazilla/ UP level to national level agencies through regional and district level.
- Major achievements includes 5100 LSP has been promoted to provide services.
 - 48 SPA has been developed.
 - Linkage has been created among 10 research agencies and 15 private sector organizations.
 - Capacity development has been ensured for national research agencies.
 - LSP professionals income has increased to a range of 600 – 8000 taka per month. In case of livestock LSP it is even higher.
 - Revitalization of National Agroforestry Working Group (**NAWG**) under the leadership of BARC (Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council) was done during the 1st phase of SAAKTI, where -
 - A number of scholarships (for PhD and MSc) were provided to develop agroforestry professionals in Bangladesh
 - A knowledge bank (web-based) as well as secretariat was established to strengthen AF activities in Bangladesh
 - Definition and scope of AF, national AF policy development, coordinated research plan etc. were the major initiatives
 - Capacity building of stakeholders on agroforestry – 06 trainings, 05 international backstopping missions etc

Upon discussion following points were raised in the event.

- IC has been operating in North Bengal (all districts of Rajshahi) and also in Sunamganj.
- After the LSP's are trained and when the project assistance will be removed, LSP's will be able to function by itself. IC does not provide direct monetary assistance.
- Most of the LSP's are able to create a local demand. This will ultimately address the sustainability issue.
- Livestock service providers are more likely to sustain profitably than agro service providers LSPs.
- By committing to a BMO, the service providers have more power and also continues access new technology.
- Manpower is more important of sustainability. Exposure visits have been organized to increase their capacity.

Ms. Shirin Biswas thanked all for their participations.

Copy to: All participants
All members.

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