



The Department of Agricultural Extension

Strategic Plan

1999-2002



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DAE MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Agricultural Extension's mission is to provide efficient and effective needs based extension services to all categories of farmer, to enable them to optimize their use of resources, in order to promote sustainable agricultural and socio-economic development.

Chapter 1

THE NEW AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION POLICY

As an agency within the Ministry of Agriculture the overall purpose of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) is the effective implementation of government policy. There are relevant policies specific to the agricultural sector as well as cross cutting commitments such as those concerning environmental management, social development or gender.

The Policy most directly related to the core operations of DAE and for which DAE is a lead implementing agency is the New Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) which was published in 1996.

The principles of the NAEP have been incorporated into the DAE Mission Statement and the Revised Extension Approach (REA). They provide a framework for this Strategic Plan which presents a structure of objectives and actions designed to further the implementation of the NAEP.

The Goal of the New Agricultural Extension Policy

“encourage the various partners and agencies within the national agricultural extension system to provide efficient and effective services which complement and reinforce each other, in an effort to increase the efficiency and productivity of agriculture in Bangladesh”.

NAEP Principles

Extension support to all categories of farmers: All members, male and female, of all types of rural households are entitled to extension services.

Efficient Extension Services: Cost-effective services, provided by well-trained, highly skilled extension agents, must be provided to solve farmers’ problems. Cost-effectiveness will be enhanced by co-operation between extension providers.

Decentralisation: As agricultural conditions and farmers information needs vary from place to place, extension programmes must be decided locally.

Demand-led Extension: Farmers problems, needs and demands will set the extension agenda. Issues requiring attention will be identified jointly by farmers and extension staff using participatory techniques.

Working with Groups of all Kinds: Working with groups offers the opportunity for more cost-effective use of limited extension resources, improved sharing of information, and the opportunity for grassroots decision making and participation.

Strengthened Extension-Research Linkage: Extension and research agencies cannot function separately. There must be free flow of information between extension and research to deliver an effective service to farmers.

Training of Extension Personnel: All extension agents need to be confident of their ability to solve farmers problems, work together with all types of clients and collaborate with other agencies or individuals. Training is essential for this purpose.

Appropriate Extension Methodology: No single extension method is suitable for all extension activities. Extension agents can use farm visits, mass media, training, demonstrations, group meetings, farmer field schools and many other methods.

Integrated Extension Support to Farmers: Advice and information provided to farmers must take an integrated farming systems perspective. Extension agencies with differing expertise must collaborate if they are to provide whole farm advice.

Coordinated Extension Activities: Co-ordination underlines all components of the NAEP. Extension services provided by different agencies must be coordinated at all levels in order to optimise the use of resources. This can be achieved by sharing information and expertise between the agencies involved.

Integrated Environmental Support: The NAEP supports extension programmes seeking to encourage farmers to apply sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Efforts should be made to support and learn from farmers as well as from the formal research system.

Chapter 2

DAE ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

This Strategic Plan has been produced because the Department of Agricultural Extension intends to continue to change and develop over coming years. Furthermore the Department wishes to take control of this change process so that it is consistent with the departmental mission. The Strategic Plan will assist DAE achieve this in an organised way rather than the process being chaotic or purely reactive and externally driven.

Prior to drafting the Plan widespread consultation took place with DAE staff. The honest feedback from participants in these consultative meetings, as well as views expressed by external stakeholders and project review missions, have been incorporated in drafting the Plan. Each section starts with a review of the status quo that reveals some weaknesses as well as achievements over recent years. A set of strategic objectives is then presented. These will be used to guide the development of detailed action plans that specify responsibilities for implementing change as well as resource requirements.

The Plan has a three year time horizon because at least three years will be needed to make significant progress against all sixty eight Strategic Objectives. Progress against the Plan will however be reviewed on at least an annual basis and action plans will be amended to reflect achievement and changing priorities.

A variety of themes run through the entire document. These include partnership working, continually improving the quality of extension services for all farmers, and providing scope for creativity and innovation. To achieve the Plan all the resources available to DAE will have to be used effectively and in a consistent manner. Co-ordination across Wings and projects is therefore another theme as is valuing and developing DAE's human resources.

Three years is a fairly short time in the life of a large organisation. The 1999 –2002 Strategic Plan will continue a number of changes, particularly the implementation of the Revised Extension Approach, which started some time ago. In other fields such as mainstreaming environmental and gender issues and the integration of crops and non-crops extension activities the organisation is at an earlier stage of development. This Strategic Plan provides a benchmark against which to measure progress and a framework to prepare the organisation to participate in a subsequent agricultural sector programme. A new strategic plan will be prepared in the year 2002.

The responsibility for the implementation of the Strategic Plan rests with all DAE staff through the leadership of the Director General and the Management Committee. As such there will be regular reporting to Management Committee regarding the status of Strategic Plan implementation.

Chapter 3

EXTENSION APPROACH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Status Quo

DAE implements the New Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP) through the Revised Extension Approach (REA). It adopts five key principles:

- ❖ Decentralisation;
- ❖ Responsiveness to farmers needs;
- ❖ Working with groups;
- ❖ Targeting;
- ❖ Using a range of extension methods.

Since Kharif II season 1997 DAE field staff have been planning on an annual basis, recording extension activities at Thana and District levels using the Extension Planning System (EPS). This planning information is collated at Regional level by Statistical Officers and forwarded to DAE Headquarters for consolidation and budgetary approval.

Extension technologies are decided after a process of Farmer Information Needs Assessment (FINA), organised by DAE field staff (usually Block Supervisors). Fifty-four specific extension methods are currently available for the transfer of information to farmers. These range from method demonstrations to folk art performances.

DAE activities are targeted to ensure that relevant information reaches all sections of the farming community in accordance with the DAE Mission.

DAE Targeting Criteria

All Farmers	30% of the total budgeted activities	Men and Women (e.g. district fair)	
Less than one Hectare Landholding	80 % of the remainder budgeted activities	30%	Women
		70%	Men
More than one Hectare Landholding	20% of the remainder budgeted activities	30%	Women
		70%	Men

All extension activities are monitored using the Seasonal Extension Monitoring System (SEMS) with primary data consolidated at District offices using SEMS computer software. DAE officers can also use Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys to monitor the uptake of technologies. Regional Officers have been trained in the use of Technical Audit (TA) to monitor field level activities. These techniques and information systems are designed to assist management regarding the continued implementation of the Revised Extension Approach.

At present DAE contacts about 7.5% of all farmers in Bangladesh through extension events. Contact has been as high as 15% but has declined due to the end of World Bank funding for core extension work. Plans for the agricultural year 1999 – 2000 will include activities funded by the GoB Development Budget, donor projects and no cost extension work.

DAE has produced a new extension manual distributed in Bengali and English during June 1999. This is for all field staff and incorporates detailed instruction on all the key features of the Revised Extension Approach, as well as containing information about DAE as an organisation and the NewAgricultural Extension Policy.

The experience of DAE in developing and implementing the Revised Extension Approach has led to a continuous improvement in the quality and relevance of services provided to the farming community. Linkages with external partners, including NGOs and government agencies, have been established and strengthened through active participation in the system of co-ordinating committees at National, Regional, District and Thana levels (EPICC, ATC, DEPC, TAECC).

DAE recognises some weaknesses in the current status of REA implementation:

- ❖ Farmer Information Needs Assessment has been adopted in principle as the basis for all extension activities, but Block Supervisors (BS) lack the facilitation and group motivation skills to implement this meaningfully. In addition, the FINA process is poorly monitored.
- ❖ The decentralisation of extension planning is a significant achievement. The process however needs to mature to a point where Thana staff have the ability to identify locally relevant technologies, rather than offering only standard off the shelf solutions.
- ❖ The majority of groups used by DAE are temporary and relatively weak as channels for achieving effective technology transfer.
- ❖ DAE targets its technologies according to landholding criteria, which, it is acknowledged, may not be a good reflection of wealth.

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- ❖ Despite a major training programme, DAE personnel are not yet fully committed to the SEMS monitoring and evaluation system. Implementation of the system therefore remains partial. KAP has yet to be adopted in practice and there is little evidence that monitoring data (when produced) is being used for the critical evaluation of extension services.
 - ❖ The role of the Regional Additional Directors, with regard to the effective supervision of District and Thana staff, remains weak and this has constrained the full implementation of the Revised Extension Approach.
 - ❖ Not all DAE projects and special programmes have adopted the Revised Extension Approach. As a result the REA is strongly associated with the ASSP project and not all extension activities are included in the planning and monitoring systems.

Strategic Objectives: Extension Approach Development

The Strategic Plan addresses these weaknesses and supports a process of continuous service improvement. Furthermore, a variety of innovative service developments and pilot activities will take place and will be closely monitored with a view to carrying on the development process beyond 2002.

Objectives

- 01** Ensure full adoption of the Revised Extension Approach as the routine method for all DAE extension activities and projects.
- 02** Review and improve some aspects of the current REA including Farmer Information Needs Assessment; targeting of extension services; the use of groups; and monitoring and evaluation systems.
- 03** Improve the supervision of extension services (Chapter 7).
- 04** Restore the level of direct contact to at least 15% of the farming community.
- 05** Increase the use of low and no cost extension methods in order to make the level of contact less dependent on funding constraints.
- 06** Contribute to increases in the current level of coarse food grain production to help achieve the established target of 25 million tonnes produced by the year 2002.
- 07** Promote the production, utilisation and marketing of other food and non-food crops in line with GoB policy.

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- 08** Generate foreign currency earnings by encouraging the production and export of diversified crops.
 - 09** Mainstream gender and social development issues into extension service delivery (Chapter 5).
 - 010** Strengthen DAE's commitment to sustainable agricultural development incorporating environmental concerns (Chapter 6).
 - 011** Strengthen research - extension linkages and promote similar linkages with other agencies such as NGOs and other GO extension providers (Chapter 4).
 - 012** Further strengthen DAE capacity to use the mass media and build links with radio and television for more effective agricultural broadcasting.

Chapter 4

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Status Quo

In order for DAE to provide extension services to a large proportion of the farming population and to different categories of male and female farmers it is essential to establish linkages with NGOs. Furthermore, in order to meet the entire needs of farmers, crop based extension services must be co-ordinated with advice about fisheries, forestry and livestock. This requires that linkages be established with various organisations (GO and NGO) that are active in non-crop agricultural disciplines. Other necessary partnerships include the relationship between extension and research institutions, educational establishments and the private sector.

DAE has always had to work in partnership with other agencies but partnership is now of central importance to the achievement of the DAE Mission and the implementation of the NAEP. For this reason Partnerships Development is included as a core component of the Strategic Plan.

NGO Linkages

Some NGOs have their own extension strategy, but many lack trained personnel at grass roots level or access to higher levels of technical expertise. Many NGOs organise groups with the rural poor and plan comprehensive development programmes of which agricultural activities are an important part. Crops, fisheries, livestock, nurseries, tree planting and savings and credit may all be part of these programmes. However, the approach and scope of activities is not the same for all NGOs.

During 1995 -1999 a DAE/NGO liaison group and a Liaison Committee were established in order to implement and monitor the NGO component of the ASSP project. This provided an opportunity to support some models of integrated extension based on homestead resources. However, there were no formal ties with other agencies such as the Departments of Fisheries, Livestock or Forestry.

Other DAE implemented projects have also adopted NGO contracting mechanisms, or are being implemented in partnership with NGOs. These include the UNDP funded Integrated Nutrition Project and the IFAD funded Agricultural Intensification and Diversification Project. In addition, DAE has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with CARE to promote partnership working.

Research - Extension Linkages

Research and extension agencies are two parts of a single system for developing and disseminating appropriate agricultural technology in response to farmers needs. However the linkage between extension agencies and the research institutes has long been identified as an area of weakness.

The main components of the present system for research extension linkage are:

- ❖ The National Agricultural Technical Coordination Committee (NATCC).
- ❖ The Research Institute Coordination Committee (RICC).
- ❖ Research institute planning meetings.
- ❖ The Agricultural Technical Committee (ATC).
- ❖ Research-Extension Workshops.
- ❖ On-Farm Research.
- ❖ District Extension Planning Committees (DEPCs).
- ❖ Thana Agricultural Extension Co-ordinating Committees (TAECCs).

These facilitate extension research links. However, these mechanisms are not functioning adequately and need to be strengthened and made more dynamic.

Among the research stations there are several weaknesses that hamper the links with extension. These include shortages of qualified scientists, lack of funds for research activities and inadequate facilities.

On the DAE side there are also weaknesses hampering effective linkages with research, including:

- ❖ limited capacity of regional offices;
- ❖ technical weaknesses amongst DAE staff;
- ❖ frequent transfers between posts (this reduces the ability to develop specialist skills amongst DAE staff);
- ❖ inadequate supervision and weak monitoring and evaluation systems.

Linkages with other GO Extension Providers

Providing integrated services is a core principle of the NAEP, and during the last three years some attempts have been made to improve the linkages between DAE and other GO extension service providers. The EPICC committees contain representatives from across the broad agricultural sector. Committee arrangements have recently been amended to allow the chairmanship of TAECC, DEPC and ATC to revolve amongst senior representatives of the different organisations. Three national workshops have been held on NAEP implementation and a pilot of fully integrated extension is to be conducted in 12 Thanas. In addition, DAE has established some specific collaborative activities such as that with the Department of Fisheries on rice cum fish culture.

Progress has therefore been made but a level of organisational rivalry and opposition to closer integration persists.

Education Linkages

DAE has 11 Agricultural Training Institutes. They provide:

- ❖ three year diploma courses;
- ❖ in-service training for Block Supervisors and other staff; and
- ❖ farmer training programmes.

In addition, the DAE Central Extension Resources Development Institute (CERDI) is used for staff training.

Outside DAE there are five agricultural colleges (three Government and two Private) which provide undergraduate courses in agriculture. The Bangladesh Agricultural University at Mymensingh also provides undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD courses in other agricultural disciplines. Bangabandhu Agricultural University (formerly IPISA) provides postgraduate degree courses in crop science.

DAE is a member of the Technical Education Board (TEB). The diploma courses conducted at the ATIs meet TEB standards. In recent years the Government has introduced agricultural science as one of the vocational courses in secondary level education.

Linkages between the public agricultural sector and the educational sector are however very weak. The culture of organisations in Bangladesh appears to habituate them to working in isolation. This represents a major constraint to partnership. In addition shortages of technical staff and a lack of equipment, facilities and budgets are seen as constraints.

Improving linkages with the education sector is one thrust of the DAE partnerships development strategy.

Bringing the Agricultural Training Institutes to the heart of the DAE organisation development process is another priority of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Objectives: Partnerships Development

Objectives

NGO Objectives

- O13** Institutionalise NGO linkages and joint working as a normal mode of operation throughout DAE.
- O14** Establish a Partnerships Unit answerable to the EPICC Committee. Members should include representatives from NGO and GO extension providers.
- O15** Continue to raise awareness about the benefits of working in partnership.
- O16** Increase the outreach capacity of DAE and other extension providers among grassroots farm families.
- O17** Increase the access of NGOs to the technical capacity available from DAE and other extension service providers and research institutes.
- O18** Increase the volume and range of partnership activities using a variety of funding sources for collaborative activities.

Research – Extension Objectives

- O19** Increase the effectiveness of the different components of the system that links extension to research.
- O20** Ensure the proper identification of topics requiring research investigation at grassroots level, and the efficient transfer of these topics to appropriate institutes.
- O21** Ensure that research programmes include effective extension messages as part of their output.
- O22** Promote the undertaking of research activities for topics identified during the FINA process.
- O23** Strengthen on-farm research and multi-locational trials.
- O24** Encourage partners to use participatory technology development.

GO Partnership Objectives

- O25** Pilot integrated extension programmes and monitor their effectiveness. Make recommendations for possible scaling up.
- O26** Develop other collaborative and resource sharing innovations with partner organisations in response to locally identified needs.

Educational Partnership Objectives

- O27** Develop links between ATIs and CERDI and local GOs and NGOs to allow more effective utilisation of their training capacity.
- O28** Develop forums for coordination and collaboration between extension and educational institutions.
- O29** Implement extension / education sector collaborative programmes.
- O30** Further develop the capacity of ATIs and ensure that this capacity is used effectively to meet DAE Human Resource Development needs.