

## CHAPTER 8 EXTENSION STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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### 8.0 INTRODUCTION

#### Impact of Bottom-up Demand Driven Extension Planning on Capacity

A bottom-up, demand driven extension system must be able to respond to whatever problems farmers identify. One of the difficulties faced is to ensure the skills and capacity to solve farmers problems. DAE can only provide immediate assistance that is within its capacity.

Capacity is the overall ability of an organisation or unit to carry out various activities. Capacity always has limits. Each extension manager needs to know the limits of their staff. Work plans must be within limits or within their 'capacity'.

#### Relationship Between Capacity Required and Staff Development

There are many problems to overcome to meet the demands of extension clients. This means that extension staff need to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to be able to provide the correct response to farmers. This might mean technical knowledge about a particular crop and/or skills in extension such as how to handle a group of farmers so as to be sure the messages are understood.

District and thana extension managers need to be sure of the competence of their staff before selecting and assigning activities as part of the extension plan. The knowledge and skills required to carry out work plans determine any immediate additional training required. This means both the technical content of the extension programme and the ability to carry out the extension method to be used.

#### Training Needs are Directly Linked to the Extension Planning Process

The Revised Extension Approach is centred on farmers needs. These needs are diverse. Responding to diverse farmer information needs requires equally diverse extension programming. Each thana and district have their own locally responsive extension programmes, which require specific staff knowledge and skills. Because each plan is different, the responsibility for staff development rests with the District Deputy Director, the District Training Officer, and at Thana level with the Thana Agricultural Officer. DAE Headquarters provides additional assistance and resources but does not have the capacity to respond to all the extension staff development demands.

During the planning process:

- it is essential that staff *ability* be considered; and
- it is essential that training possibilities be assessed.

Extension plans can only include those activities that staff are already able to do, or can be adequately trained to do before the activity is implemented.

## EXAMPLE

Female farmers have requested, and the extension plan contains, method demonstrations on soybean storage. The BS assigned this responsibility does not know how to store soybeans, how to conduct a method demonstration, or how to work effectively with women's groups.

What are the options?

- Provide the required training to the BS before implementation of this activity, **OR**
- Give this assignment to another staff member who has the necessary expertise; **OR**
- Remove this activity from the extension plan. This may mean postponing this activity until the following year in order to train the BS. (District Specialists and AEO/AAO may also need this training).

In order to assess the ability of staff to carry out the extension plan district and thana managers **must**:

- know what skills and knowledge are required to carry out the planned activity;
- know what skills and knowledge staff currently have; and
- identify any gaps in the skills and knowledge that are required.

Once it is known what training is required, an assessment can be made of the feasibility of providing this training in time to implement the planned extension activity.

Staff skills and knowledge are an essential factor in deciding what extension activities can be undertaken. If training of staff can not be ensured in time to implement the activity, it cannot be included in the current extension plan.

It is the responsibility of District and Thana managers to ensure that their staff are adequately trained to carry out their assignments under the District and Thana extension plans.

## **8.1 ASSESSING STAFF COMPETENCE**

Competence is the level of knowledge, skills and experience of an individual to carry out specific tasks. People have differing degrees of competence in different skill areas. No one is completely competent at all things. An individual's overall competence is usually related to the opportunities they have had to develop new skills and to practice the skills they have.

In DAE the main areas of competence are:

- agricultural technical knowledge and skills;
- agricultural extension knowledge and skills; and
- management knowledge and skills.

**All staff members should periodically assess their levels of competency in all general skill areas.** To do this, staff should complete an annual staff competence form (see **Annex X**). The completed forms should be analysed by the DTO/TAO and kept as a record of competence. This is best done as part of the "work programming" process, particularly for Block Supervisors. Completed annual staff competence forms should be entered on computer wherever possible to enable quick and ready analysis.

The work programming process, particularly with Block Supervisors, also identifies small gaps in knowledge and skills where remedial action should be taken.

The information collected through the Annual Competence Assessment forms a database for the thana and district to use as a basis for extension planning and for assisting in identifying areas of training need. If it is done by all field staff in a District, extension managers will be able to see where further actions are required.

The staff competence database enables extension managers to:

- assess staff competence to implement proposed extension assignments;
- assign activities to individual staff members which they are fully competent to carry out; and
- identify areas of extension work which cannot be undertaken due to limitations in staff capacity.

The annual staff competence form identifies six categories of competence as shown in **Table 8.1**.

**TABLE 8.1: LEVELS OF COMPETENCE**

Level of Competence		Gaps	Training Required
5	EXPERT	none, can train others	none
4	COMPLETELY COMPETENT	none, no supervision required	unsupervised practice
3	MOSTLY COMPETENT	requires adequate supervision	supervised practice, on-the-job training,
2	MODERATELY COMPETENT	requires some assistance and guidance	on-the-job training, self directed learning
1	PARTIALLY COMPETENT	cannot complete task alone, lacks some important knowledge and skills	on-the-job training, self directed learning, focused training exercises
0	NO COMPETENCE	cannot perform task, no significant knowledge or skill	comprehensive training course

## **8.2 INCREASING STAFF COMPETENCE**

It is the professional responsibility of each staff member to constantly increase their competence in both existing and new knowledge and skill areas. In a bottom-up demand driven system new skill areas are determined according to what is required to assist farmers with the problems they identify.

Training is an essential part of ensuring that the extension advice provided is correct and appropriate. DAE has over the years invested huge resources in training and continues to do so. However, formal organised training classes are often not the most effective or most cost effective way to increase competence. Everyone is responsible for his or her own learning development and the practice of learning from experiences should become an integral part of our daily lives.

DAE does not have the resources to provide formal training to meet all training needs and all staff and officers are encouraged to develop their own abilities. Officers are responsible to train and develop their staff and to help people to learn how to be more effective in their personal and working lives.

### How to Identify Training Needs

The competence assessment form gives an indication of general ability in different knowledge and skill areas. Where lack of competence is indicated, further analysis is necessary to identify exactly what knowledge and skill is lacking. This requires breaking down the knowledge and skill area into its component parts. This is called **job analysis**.

The job analysis process provides a comprehensive understanding of what is required to adequately perform the various tasks the job requires. Jobs usually include a number of different activity areas. Each activity area consists of a number of specific tasks which must be performed. Analysis of a specific task identifies a number of actions required to complete it. Finally, analysis of a specific action identifies a number of individual steps which are involved.

Once all of the activity areas are identified, the learner's competence in each can be measured. What the learner is currently able to do must be compared to what is required to adequately perform the job tasks. This is called **gap analysis**. There is a "gap" when the tasks require more skills and knowledge than the learner currently possesses. It is this "gap" that must be filled through training. The same competence assessment categories used to indicate competence in the overall knowledge and skill area, i.e. *expert, completely competent, mostly competent, moderately competent, partially competent, no competence*, can also be used to indicate ability to perform each of the component tasks, actions and steps.

At each stage of the training needs assessment process, it is only necessary to breakdown the items that competence assessment indicates require improvement. The process is a sequence of job analysis followed by gap analysis, again followed by job analysis and so on.

The component parts of a "job" can be described in different ways depending on how broadly the job itself is defined. Sometimes levels of breakdown are skipped. For example DAE's Job Descriptions go straight to "tasks", skipping the "activity area" level. This is useful when most of the activity areas within the scope of the job require similar sets of tasks.

The level of break down necessary will depend on the nature of the activity area and tasks concerned. Training will be most effective if it focuses on the particular areas where the learner requires additional knowledge and skills.

**Figure 8.1** provides an example of a job and gap analysis. In the **general knowledge and skill area** "Tomato Production", a person may have a competency assessment of "2. Moderately Competent". To find out what the actual training needs are it is necessary to break down the general area of Tomato Production into its **activity areas** as shown. This is the "job analysis". This is followed by a "gap analysis" exercise to focus in on the specific gaps in knowledge and skills that resulted in the initial general competence rating of "2. Moderately Competent".

Once the activity areas have been identified, competence can be assessed for each activity area. In this example the competence assessment of activity areas shows that the difficulties are in 'pest and disease management'. It is now necessary to break down this activity area into its component **tasks**. To identify learning needs in the 'pest and disease management' activity area, competence can then be assessed for each task which has been identified.

In this example, the task 'using a knapsack sprayer' has been identified as the difficulty. It is now necessary to breakdown the task 'using a knapsack sprayer' into its component **actions**. Competence assessment of each action reveals that the real problem is that the learner doesn't know how to operate the sprayer. This action can now be broken down into its component **steps**. The steps involved in correctly operating the sprayer should make up the training exercise.

Using the process of job and gap analysis helps to focus limited resources on the training needs which are most critical. After the training needs have been identified it is useful to determine the frequency, relative importance and learning difficulty for each component.

**FIGURE 8.1: EXAMPLE OF JOB AND GAP ANALYSIS BREAKDOWN OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

JOB AREAS	ACTIVITY	CL*	TASKS	CL	ACTIONS	CL	STEPS
Tomato Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>soil requirements</li> <li>soil preparation</li> <li>planting times, growing season</li> <li>planting/seeding rates</li> <li>water requirements, application</li> <li>fertilising needs, application</li> <li><b>pest and disease mgt.</b></li> <li>weeding needs, techniques</li> <li>thinning needs, techniques</li> <li>pruning needs, techniques</li> <li>maturity characteristics</li> <li>harvesting needs, techniques</li> <li>post-harvest handling</li> <li>processing</li> </ul>	4 4 4 4 3 3 2 4 4 4 4 4 3 3 3					
	PROBLEM ACTIVITY AREA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>pest and disease mgt.</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pest identification</li> <li>pest counting</li> <li>disease identification</li> <li>selecting control method</li> <li>selecting pesticide</li> <li>determining quantities to use</li> <li>determining cost-effectiveness</li> <li><b>using a knapsack sprayer</b></li> <li>assessing effects of control</li> </ul>	4 5 5 3 4 4 3 2 3			
			PROBLEM TASK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>using a knapsack sprayer</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>checking equipment</li> <li>calibration</li> <li>mixing</li> <li>protection</li> <li><b>operating sprayer</b></li> <li>cleaning up</li> </ul>	3 3 4 5 1 4	
					PROBLEM ACTION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>operating sprayer</b></li> </ul>		STEPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pressure control</li> <li>pace/speed</li> <li>nozzle height</li> <li>coverage</li> </ul>

\*CL = Competence Level

If individuals are already moderately competent in a knowledge and skill area, they likely know what specific tasks they find difficult and can focus their own learning accordingly. When the annual competence assessment form indicates staff have little or no competence, and organised training may be required, it is very important to know exactly what deficiencies in knowledge and skills really exist. Training resources can then be effectively utilised.

### How Individuals can Learn What they Need to Know

Most extension staff are already "Moderately Competent", "Mostly Competent" or "Completely Competent" in many commonly required technical skill areas.

Most learning needs can be overcome through on-the-job training/supervised practice, self directed learning, and informal training. These learning methods are generally low or no-cost and comprise experiences which should be an integral part of daily professional lives.

If enough Block Supervisors or other staff have requested the same training, a course may be arranged by District or Thana officers for the regular monthly formal training session. If there is a general need for training in a particular subject, DAE headquarters will arrange country-wide training.

***Improving competence is the individual's responsibility. No one can assist farmers if:***

- ***they do not know how to use the extension method properly;***
- ***they do not know about the technology being discussed.***

***Individuals must decide what training they need. This will depend on:***

- ***what extension methods are the best to use with their farmers;***
- ***what information and assistance their farmers have asked for;***
- ***what they already know and feel confident about doing.***

***If it is felt that training is needed in order to carry out assigned extension activities properly, training needs should be discussed with supervisors. This advice will help them to choose training topics for the on-going formal monthly training sessions.***

### Assistance from DAE Headquarters

DAE Training Wing should be informed when:

- a district has a significant number of staff with a common learning need;
- the area of required knowledge and skills is comprehensive; and
- that learning need cannot be satisfactorily achieved with local resources.

These requests should be documented in detail and passed to the Director Training at DAE Headquarters in December of each year as noted on the Extension Planner. An additional copy of these requests could also be attached as an Annex, to the annual District and Thana Extension Plans. Each request should specify:

- the training topic and content;
- the suggested duration;
- the number and designation of officers to be trained; and
- the urgency of the training i.e. is it required for implementation of that annual extension plan?

DAE Training Wing will develop and organise the training centrally as soon as is feasible, or will include trainees in an appropriate scheduled training course.

### Low and No-cost ways to Increase Staff Competence

#### On-the-Job Training

The most common way that competence is increased is through **on-the-job training**. On-the-job training is where training is carried out as part of supervising or coaching a BS or other staff member. On the job training is common in DAE. It is when guidance is provided to another staff member to help them do the job better. Supervising officers are doing this when, for example, they provide guidance on how to improve a demonstration plot or on how to complete the BS diary, answer technical questions about crops or procedures, or demonstrate how to do a particular task. Competence always improves with practice. Practising tasks in the presence of a "mentor" provides opportunity for advice on improving one's ability.

On-the-job training is a joint responsibility. Individuals should realise where they need extra assistance and ask for it, and supervisors should recognise where staff require extra guidance and provide it.

#### Self-Directed Learning

The primary way for individuals to increase their own competence is through **self-directed learning**, where the individual is responsible for keeping themselves updated and seeking solutions to their own questions. Self directed learning is ideal for keeping up with changes and advances in technologies.

There are many ways to pursue one's own learning. Some examples are:

- seeking out and discussing problems with professional colleagues and other local experts. These may be senior DAE staff, or perhaps specialised farmers, NGO staff, private sector businessmen or others with special knowledge and skills. This is the quickest way to get the information needed;
- consulting books and other technical reference information. Training materials and other information can be found at the local District or Thana office, or with input dealers, NGOs and others. What is needed can be learnt by studying these materials independently or with guidance from a supervisor. This allows focusing on exactly the information needed;
- listening to relevant radio and TV broadcasts;

- visiting agricultural research facilities;
- participating in an appropriate training course in your area being conducted by another organisation such as an NGO;
- conducting one's own research trials;
- joining groups with similar interests.

Managers must ensure that staff have sufficient time and resources to undertake self directed learning, and that it is recognised as an important and valuable use of time.

## Informal Training

Informal training is where information is given or skills demonstrated to a group of people often assembled for another purpose. Gatherings of extension staff such as meetings provide opportunities for informal staff training. Examples of informal staff training are:

- briefing staff on methods to control an insect pest outbreak;
- introducing a new technology of interest to farmers;
- updating staff about new market conditions;
- demonstrating a piece of equipment;
- discussing current production problems and solutions

This type of training often occurs at regular meetings of BSs at the Thana Office or elsewhere. This should not be confused with the BS monthly training session which is regarded as formal training.

On-the-job training and supervised practice, self directed learning, and informal training provide low-cost or no-cost ways to significantly increase staff competence.

## Formal Training

Formal training can be costly and is the best option only if a large number of staff lack significant competence in a broad area of knowledge and skills. Formal training requires a prepared course of study, and often training aids and handout materials for participants.

Courses may be run at Thana, District, National or even international level.

### *Formal Training of District Officers*

Most formal training for district officers is managed and financed centrally by the Training Wing. Courses may be arranged in central locations, or Districts and Thanas may be instructed to arrange courses locally. Course training guides and other materials are usually provided from Headquarters.

### *Formal Training of Thana Staff*

Formal Training of Thana officers and Block Supervisors may also be directed from Headquarters, usually as part of specific development assistance projects.

In addition to the formal training programme directed from Headquarters, each district may develop some of its own training courses for Thana Officers. Regular formal training of Block Supervisors takes place one day each month.



### **8.3 DISTRICT TRAINING MANAGEMENT**

District management of locally organised training has several components and responsibilities. The DD must determine the component tasks of training management, define the order and time frame for each task, and identify persons to be responsible for each component.

#### **Component tasks:**

- identify areas of knowledge and skill where additional competence is required. Competence assessment is discussed in **Section 8.1**. Where lack of competence is indicated it is important to isolate training needs from other factors affecting staff performance;
- determine the context in which training needs should be assessed;
- relate training needs to tasks assigned to each staff member,
- identify areas and types of specific and general training required;
- determine options for local skill development;
- identify sources of local technical expertise;
- define mechanisms for utilising local technical expertise in staff training;
- integrate staff training into local work plans;
- link trainees with local training resources and opportunities;
- budget time and financial resources required for local staff training;
- develop training courses locally;
- define and obtain required assistance from DAE Training Wing.

Responsibility for the overall supervision of the training programmes rests with the District Training Officer and includes:

- ensuring that determination of training needs is integrated into the bottom up extension planning process;
- correlating training to the extension plan and the individual work programme, in both content and timing;
- encouraging on-the-job training and self-learning amongst all extension staff and providing appropriate resource materials.

Formal training programmes are prepared each season by the District Training Officer with the assistance of the District Specialists and Thana Agricultural Officers. The formal training programme is primarily made up of all the courses specified for implementation by the Training Wing and development assistance projects. The training programme states the subjects to be presented at each session and who will present them. There may be more than one subject per session. The programme should also identify any outside assistance that is required, for example guest speakers, equipment or teaching aids. Responsibilities include:

- ensuring all training event organisers are familiar with the procedures and guidelines in the "DAE Trainers Guide for Officers";
- ensuring training event organisers complete training session guides, including the objectives, content, training methods and participants;
- training of trainers and close monitoring and supervision of training events at all levels;
- monitoring and evaluating training.

In addition to periodic courses in the Formal Training Programme, a half day per month is set aside exclusively for regular monthly training of Thana Officers. This is to ensure a minimum of time and access to learning resources.

Regular monthly training of Thana Officers is managed jointly by the DTO and the District Specialists at the District office. The session may be an organised lesson on a common topic of interest or current concern; or it can provide a forum for information updates on a variety of upcoming topics to be taught at the monthly training sessions for the BSs.

The time could also be utilised to obtain information from other district sources such as the District Learning Resource Centre, and specialised professionals of DAE and other extension partners. Training managers should ensure that training time is utilised to maximum benefit.

The remaining half day of the monthly training session is a forum to which field problems are brought for discussion and can provide an opportunity for informal training.

#### **8.4 THANA TRAINING MANAGEMENT**

The TAO is responsible for providing a basic training unit at the Thana Agricultural Office. This requires making best use of existing facilities. The basic requirements for the Training Unit are:

- suitable seating and lighting arrangement;
- storage facilities for reference books and other printed materials;
- storage facilities for training materials;
- training equipment (OHP, slide projector, flip board, etc.).

The TAO keeps records of all training sessions held in the Thana. These records include dates, places, attendance and a list of subjects. These are submitted to the Training Officer at the end of every month, with the relevant lesson plans or Training Modules attached.

#### **Management of the BS Training Programme**

Block Supervisor training is on-going with regular monthly training. Additional BS training is provided periodically as part of specific development assistance projects. This training is usually prescribed by the specific project and may involve external trainers and venues.

The TAO is responsible for the regular monthly training of the BSs, assisted by the AEO/AAO, who serve as principal trainers, Assistant Agricultural Extension Officers (AAEOs) and Junior Agricultural Extension Officers (JAEOs). District Specialists and the District Training Officer may also participate to ensure the quality of the training. The BS should record the training information in their diary.

The purpose of the BS training is:

- to prepare Block Supervisors to undertake their upcoming extension programme;
- to teach Block Supervisors agricultural practices which may be suitable for farmers in their block;
- to provide BSs with supporting technical knowledge and skills, which will improve their ability to analyse farmers' problems, understand the benefits of recommended practices and demonstrate these practices;
- to enable BSs to develop skills in communication and alternative extension methods which will improve their ability to interact effectively with farmers.

The Deputy Director, in consultation with the TAO, determines which day of the week the thana level training should take place.

BS attend technical meetings at the Thana office on two days of every month. One day is to be used as a **formal training session** and the other day is used for other types of interaction and information exchange.

### Meetings at the Thana Office

#### Technical Meeting: BS Formal Training Session

This training should follow the Training Wing guidelines for other in-service training components, including reporting and monitoring and standard documentation of planning i.e. a definite time frame, formal training programme and lesson preparation and evaluation.

Adequate technical training of Block Supervisors is of primary importance. BSs are traditionally the last and least trained while functioning as the main interface between DAE and its clients. The extension system requires one day per month for regular, un-funded BS training.

Emphasis should be on motivation though development of appropriate and relevant training topics directly related to the current extension programmes of each thana. The analysis of the individual annual competence forms will assist in identifying appropriate topics for training. For example in skill areas where farmers require extension assistance but staff competence is low.

Block Supervisors require practical training to develop sufficient extension and technical skill to give meaningful assistance to farmers. The training is normally held at the thana headquarters but practical training could be done at a research station, BADC farm, Horticulture Centre or a farmer's field.

Local training of Block Supervisors focuses on learning applied skills through supervised practice and consists of a series of instruction modules and applied exercises. Modules are one day training sessions and exercises will be completed by the BS between instruction sessions. Each instruction module will guide trainees through case studies and examples of selected skill applications. Instruction modules are followed by applied exercises that Block Supervisors complete independently in their blocks. Each new instruction session will review exercise assignments from the previous session.

Modules are related to the specific kinds of demonstrations and other extension activities in the thana extension programme. The training programme for each thana will vary depending on the extension programme and the projects being targeted and implemented in the thana concerned.

The modules are studied and the teaching plan reviewed in the monthly training sessions for Thana Officers. District and thana staff select the modules to be taught to the Block Supervisors. District staff ensure that the thana staff have a clear understanding of the topics to be taught.

Each District should over time develop a bank of one day training modules on a wide range of topics, for use during these sessions. Training Wing and projects as well as extension partners may contribute additional training modules related to the technological knowledge and skills required in their respective programme and activity areas.

The TAECC can provide a good forum for discussing BS training needs with extension partners. This will help to identify knowledgeable local trainers outside of DAE. Extension partners also conduct training that may be beneficial to BSs. The TAO should ensure that BSs attend training offered by other extension partners when it is appropriate. Partners should also be encouraged to participate in DAE's BS monthly training programme where applicable.

### **Technical Meeting: Review of Activities and Field Situation, and Informal Training**

The other technical session in each four week period covers:

- a review of the current situation in the field, including discussion of farmers' problems, pest and disease incidence and availability of inputs;
- a summary of extension messages relevant to different categories of farmer and to the time of the year;
- a review of progress in implementation of the extension programme for the current season;
- a review of BS extension visits and diaries;
- a review of programmes at demonstration plots;
- a general technical discussion, in which BSs can seek advice on any subject not covered in the regular training programme and the trainers can determine BSs' level of knowledge on any topic which it is proposed for future training sessions.

This technical meeting provides opportunities for extensive informal training of Block Supervisors.

### **Other Monthly Meetings**

In the other two weeks of each four week period, Block Supervisors will also attend the thana office. Although these meetings are intended mainly to address administrative matters such as salaries, postings, leave, allowances, housing, work programme assessment, etc., some time critical items, for example review of demonstration plot progress, may also be discussed during these meetings.

## **8.5 LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRES**

The diversity of learning requirements arising from a bottom-up, demand driven system places a primary responsibility for learning on the individual. A key requirement of this "self directed" learning is access to information resources. Each district and thana must develop and expand their informational resource base. The TAECC can provide a way to make this a joint undertaking among local extension partners.

The objective of the District and Thana Learning Resource Centre is to assemble, preserve and manage books, documents and other materials in an organised manner.

**Types of resource materials** that can be collected include:

- printed leaflets and books;
- packaged training courses;
- technical reports;
- newspapers and journals;
- collections of insect, seeds, mounted plants etc.;
- audio and video cassettes, and computer discs containing relevant information.

**Primary sources** of reference and training materials include:

- DAE Headquarters;
- development assistance projects and donor agencies associated with DAE and other extension partners;
- agricultural research organisations such as BARC, AIS, BARI, BJRI, SRTI, SRDI;
- NGOs and other extension partner agencies and organisations;
- agricultural input suppliers.

There are many other sources of useful information. Officers should actively look for useful items on a continual basis.

### **Control and Use of Resource Centres**

To make good use of learning resource materials, they must be taken care of properly and be readily accessible to users. It is a challenge to maintain an environment where staff are encouraged to use the resource centre while also maintaining sufficient control to keep the collection intact.

Learning resources should be available at both the district and thana offices. District offices have much greater facilities and will likely have a much larger collection.

### **Control of Resource Materials**

The **District Office** should allocate a separate room as an information resource centre. The centre should be accessible and should have ample space for the collections of books and other materials. It should be adequately furnished to accommodate the materials collection itself, and to facilitate use of the materials. Basic furnishing might include: two almirahs with glass doors, one or two tables, chairs and a periodicals rack.

The District Training Officer should act as the officer-in-charge in addition to his own duties. The DTO should arrange for procurement of materials and search out materials from different organisations; and organise periodical assessment of the effectiveness of the existing materials and specific material needed.

An office assistant should be assigned to manage the centre in addition to their regular duties.

All information resource materials from any source should be officially received and registered by the office assistant in charge. Registration should be made in the receipt and delivery register. All entries in the register should be signed by the Training Officer or any officer designated as officer-in-charge.

The assistant-in-charge should immediately put identity numbers on the materials. After cataloguing the materials should be placed in the almirah.

A list of materials in the learning resource centre should be typed out and hung in the room, so that visitors may see what resource materials are available. The list should be regularly updated and circulated among district and thana staff and local extension partners.

The assistant in charge should draw out the materials that users ask for, and replace them in proper order afterwards. If a lending system is used, the assistant in charge must ensure that proper lending records are kept. These should include at least a description of the item,

the identity and how to contact the borrower, the date of lending and the date that the item is due to be returned.

The assistant in charge must also ensure that outstanding items are carefully tracked and follow-up action is taken immediately where items are overdue.

The management of learning resources at the **Thana Office** will be somewhat different. Learning resources at the Thana Office should be assembled in one place, not spread among the rooms of several officers. If possible the materials should be kept where they are accessible without disturbing any of the officers. There should be a designated officer-in-charge who should manage the resources similarly to the District Office. Opportunities for sharing local learning resources should be explored with other extension providers. If a learning resource centre is operated jointly among extension partners, the TAECC should establish management procedures and responsibilities.

### Use of Resource Centres

Intended users usually consist of District, Thana and Block level extension personnel. The staff of extension partners, and farmers may also use the materials during office hours. Thana Officers can access the district collection whenever they visit the district office and particularly on their monthly training day. Some materials are produced for use specially by the BSs and literate farmers. These should be placed in Thana collections.

Most of the materials are intended as reference materials for preparation of lesson sheets and technical papers and for self directed learning.

Staff of districts and Thanas, and especially Block Supervisors should be encouraged to make full use of the resource centre. Some ways to encourage usage are:

- publicise commitment to provision of reference information;
- make sure all staff are aware of the learning resource centre and what materials are available there, including regular updates;
- give staff training in the use of the resource centre;
- establish regular times for the resource centre to be open and staffed;
- ensure staff have sufficient official time to visit the resource centre;
- advise staff that their use of the learning resource centre is an indication of their commitment to continually increase their overall knowledge and skills through self directed learning;
- monitor usage of the resource centre and publicise it from time to time.

Learning resource centres are an increasingly important tool for increasing staff competence. Every effort must be made to expand and update collections and increase staff usage of the materials for self directed learning.

## **8.6 EVALUATION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

It is essential that progress in increasing staff competence to carry out extension assignments is measured. Progress should be examined in the medium to long term as staff development is a lifelong process.

Each individual should be made responsible and accountable for their improvement and this should be an important part of every performance evaluation.

Regular competence assessment using the Annual Staff Competence Form will indicate whether or not an individual has improved their knowledge and skills, or acquired new knowledge and skills.

Some other indicators of increasing training and learning commitment, and progress in improving competence are:

- increasing interest and commitment to work programming and assessment;
- increasing frequency of use of learning resource centres;
- increasing requests for specific learning materials;
- increasing requests for on-the-job training and guidance;
- increasing requests for specific training activities;
- improved attendance in scheduled training activities;
- increased numbers of new BS Training Modules developed locally;
- increasing regularity of BS monthly training;
- increasing participation of District Specialists in BS monthly training;
- increasing BS attendance at monthly training;
- increasing staff participation in training activities of extension partners;
- increasing numbers of new extension activities being undertaken;
- declining cases where training is required before an extension activity can be undertaken;
- declining cases where extension activities must be postponed due to lack of competence.

In addition to the Annual Staff Competence Form, individual and overall progress can be measured and tracked by keeping records of these and other indicators. Each individual should keep their own up-to-date records of their training and learning activities, and be able to discuss new competencies they have achieved.

The primary purpose of any evaluation activity is to use the results to improve the situation. This means that particularly the DTO and DD have to continually evaluate the training effort according to the type of indicators we have discussed and implement actions as a result of the evaluation. If competence is not improving in a District managers must accept responsibility and conduct a thorough investigation to determine why this is happening.

***Managers should continually encourage staff to improve their overall competence through continued acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills.***