

CHAPTER 9 APPROPRIATE EXTENSION METHODS

9.0 INTRODUCTION

A principle of the Department's Extension Approach is the use of a wide range of different extension methods. This Chapter outlines the main extension methods which can be used and contains some guidance on how to choose appropriate methods for different target groups.

The majority of methods used by the Department are group based, and most print media and audio-visual aids are used to support group events. These methods are detailed in **Chapters 10 and 11**. The Department now places less emphasis on individual visits but they can be important in some circumstances and **Section 9.2** contains more detail.

The extension methods which are described in this Manual are summarised in **Table 9.1**.

TABLE 9.1: MASS, GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL EXTENSION METHODS

Category	Events
Mass Media and Audio Visual Aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio • Newspapers • Print Media and Audio Visual Aids
Group Extension Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations • Field Days • District and Thana Fairs • Farm Walks • Farmers Rallies • Folk Media • Group Meetings • Motivational Tours • Participatory Technology Development • Training Days • Farmer Field School
Individual Extension Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Farm Visit

9.1 ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The decisions farmers take about what is to be done on their farms, by whom, how and when, are complicated. Decisions are based on information which is available, partly from the Department of Agricultural Extension. The process which farmers undertake in deciding whether or not to use new ideas is known as the adoption process.

The adoption process has five generally recognised stages:

- 1. Awareness or Knowledge**
Through the gradual accumulation of knowledge, becoming aware of new ideas.
- 2. Interest or Persuasion**
Seeking out more information and forming and changing attitudes about a new idea.
- 3. Evaluation or Decision**
Collecting detailed information and making judgements about whether to try something or reject the idea.

4. **Trial** or **Implementation**

Testing out or trying the idea on a small scale.

5. **Adoption** or **Confirmation**

Deciding to apply the innovation comprehensively in preference to old methods.

A **sixth** stage is often referred to as **Reinforcement** which simply means gathering additional information after which simply means adoption to reconfirm that the right decision has been made.

The adoption process does not always follow this sequence in practice. This is particularly true when dealing with a package of innovations. For example, after a farmer has decided to adopt vegetable growing, the implementation or trial of this decision requires considerable additional learning and evaluation. Similarly, interest may precede awareness where farmers are looking for a solution to a specific problem, or it may not be possible to test out an idea on a small scale.

Importance of the Adoption Process in Selecting Extension Methods

Farmers have different information requirements at each stage of the adoption process. This means that extension staff must understand which stage farmers are at before planning subject matter and extension methods. Questions to help understand this process include:

- *Should information be provided to make farmers **aware** of a new idea?*
If yes, perhaps radio and posters, or folk drama and folk song might be the most effective methods.
- *Should detailed information be provided when farmers have become aware and are **interested**?*
If yes, perhaps leaflets with detailed technical information should be printed and circulated, or group discussion meetings arranged, or field days held at a demonstration site, or articles published in local newspapers.
- *Should information be provided to increase specific skills in the use of a new technique so that farmers can make a full **evaluation**?*
If yes, perhaps method demonstrations and formal training days would be the most useful extension method.
- *Should information and support be provided to farmers when they are **trying** a new idea for the first time?*
If yes, perhaps individual farm visits and group discussions would be the most useful extension method. Perhaps extension staff could also meet with the whole farm family to discuss the new idea.
- *Should support be provided to farmers to **reinforce** the benefits of a new idea which has been adopted?*
If yes, perhaps group discussion meetings should be arranged, or a radio interview with the farmer, or the farmer could be invited as a resource person to a DAE extension event.

At a group extension event, different individuals may be at different stages. Where possible activities should be planned with groups which are at a similar stage.

Other Criteria to Use in Selecting Methods

Local staff are responsible for choosing which methods are used in local extension plans. How should staff decide which method is most appropriate? One key factor is the stage of the adoption process, but there are other criteria which staff can use. For example:

OTHER CRITERIA

- **cost** - selecting methods which can be implemented within a budget, and are cost effective;
- **coverage** - choosing group extension methods which will reach more than one or a few farmers;
- **complexity** - selecting simple methods which do not need a lot of materials, or a lot of time to plan and implement;
- **skill** - choosing methods which extension staff have the capacity to implement, if not training may be required;
- **targeting** - selecting methods which are especially appropriate to categories of farmers;
- **participation** - choosing methods which enable farmers to participate in the learning process.

The choice depends on:

- the message;
- the participants;
- available resources; and
- complementarity.

The Message

The extension method should be appropriate to the subject, or message. For example, a method demonstration might be the most appropriate way to show a group of farmers how to graft mango.

The Participants

The extension method should be suitable for farmers, the participants. For example, a method demonstration in the homestead area might be the most appropriate for female farmers.

Available Resources

The extension method should be cost effective. Using materials which have been borrowed or re-used is a good way to increase cost-effectiveness. The Seasonal Extension Monitoring System measures cost-effectiveness, by taking the total cost of an event, and dividing it by the number of farmers who participated. This is an extremely rough guide, but can help extension staff select the most cost-effective methods.

Complementarity

The extension method should complement any other methods which have already been used to deliver a particular message. For example, demonstrations and field days are perfect compliments, as is the use of visual aids in formal training days or group discussions.

Complementarity enables extension staff to develop local campaigns to address important issues identified in FINA. The Thana Planning Form (A1) has been designed with objectives to assist extension staff utilise a number of methods in sequence to solve a main problem or identified need.

Appropriate Extension Methods for Working with Women

Women are responsible for many agricultural development tasks, especially in female headed households, and should therefore be specifically targeted for certain extension services.

However, there are constraints:

- there are only about 500 female Block Supervisors, and this is unlikely to rise much further in the near future;
- it is sometimes difficult for male Block Supervisors to work directly with female farmers in conservative areas for social reasons, such as purdah or restrictions on talking to men outside the immediate family;
- there are constraints faced by women themselves, such as illiteracy, lack of capital to invest in new ideas, fear of authority and officialdom, or shyness and fear of ridicule from men.

To overcome these constraints, there are a number of innovative approaches which can be used to communicate with women. Some examples are given below:

EXAMPLES

Radio: Approximately 75 per cent of households have radio. Extension staff can encourage radio listening groups for women, and can encourage radio staff to air programmes about innovations in areas of agriculture for which women are responsible.

Group Activities: Discussions, meetings, or village level training days can be implemented with groups of women. Working with groups of women gives male field staff greater access to women farmers as they do not have to be alone with an individual woman. Many NGOs are now forming small women's groups for the purpose of savings and credit, or health programmes. Thana and district level extension staff can approach these organisations for permission to work with their affiliated groups (see **Chapter 4**).

Demonstrations: Demonstrations can be established for women to manage in their own homestead, with only occasional visits by extension staff.

Fairs and Field Days: Extension staff can provide women with opportunities to attend extension events outside the homestead in groups, or with their husbands. Extension events with families can often be highly effective, as any sequence of agricultural operations is implemented by both men and women. Joint events can also promote the role of women in agricultural decision making.

Extension staff can also use extension methods and audio visual aids which do not require literacy. These include folk drama, song, puppets and other traditional media, and drawings and cartoons on flash cards.

There are number of important factors to consider when planning extension activities with women's groups:

- timing;
- children; and
- location.

Timing

Extension staff should consider whether the activity needs to be scheduled at a particular time of day. For women's groups this may be very different to the times that male farmers groups meet. For example, during a Participatory Rural Appraisal in one area of Bangladesh, Enfants du Monde staff found that women preferred activities to take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., after they had fed the household at lunchtime, and before preparing dinner. Men preferred activities to take place between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Extension staff should aim to plan the timing of activities in consultation with the groups they are working with. PRA Technique Number 6 "Daily Routine" is one way which can be used to agree suitable times. This technique is described in **Annex VII**.

Children

Another important factor to consider when working with women is children. Women are usually responsible for looking after children, whether they are working in a homestead area, or participating in a group activity. Extension staff should make allowances for this, or plan a separate activity for children.

Location

While it is useful to meet a group of men in the field to discuss a crop related issue, it is easier to meet women in the homestead. Many NGO women's groups have regular meeting places. Extension staff can find out where these are, and whether it is possible to use them for extension events.

Finally, throughout the year, and once before preparing annual extension plans, Block Supervisors conduct FINA with female farmers. Problem Census meetings should enable female farmers to identify their own needs, generate some ideas for development, and help to plan activities that they need in order to develop their homestead and farm. If women are meaningfully involved in this way then extension plans are more likely to be gender responsive.

9.2 INDIVIDUAL VISITS

Although it is DAE's policy to work with groups, there are occasions when it is appropriate to visit an individual farmer or household. The main purpose of an individual farm visit is to identify and analyse the main problems facing an individual farmer or household and to provide advice on the best actions to take for overcoming them. Other situations where it may be necessary to organise individual visits include:

- specific advice has been requested by a farmer or member of the household;
- extension staff may wish to develop their knowledge of a particular area and identify some of the common problems farmers face;
- extension staff may want to create awareness amongst farmers they have visited and stimulate their involvement in extension activities;
- extension staff may want to familiarise themselves with a particular farm and farm family, including non agricultural activities which contribute to the family's livelihood;
- extension staff may wish to learn about innovative farm practices or on farm research conducted by a particular farmer;
- extension staff and a farmer may wish to discuss overall farm planning and management.

Whatever the main purpose of the visit it is likely to cover a whole range of activities. Farmers may need further explanation or information about a particular new practise and it may be necessary to show them how to do it through demonstration. Farmers may request technical information which field staff do not have. This can be noted down and appropriate action taken later (e.g. an appropriate leaflet or bulletin could be given to the farmer at a later date).

Individual visits also enable field staff to brief farmers on government agricultural policy, discuss the current market situation and provide information on extension activities in the area. Some visits may be of an emergency nature where the extension is required to provide on the spot advice (e.g. concerning a pest attack).

Individual visits also enable field staff to relate with other members of farm households. Different members may have different perceptions of problems and potential solutions. Field workers should encourage the participation of all family members. In this way further opportunities for the involvement of women and young people in local extension activities are created.

Although individual farm visits are an important way of establishing rapport with farmers in the area and building trust and confidence in the extension service they take time to plan and implement making them an ineffective method for reaching larger numbers of farmers. They are a costly extension method and should be carefully thought out and planned. The visits need to make an impact and lead to positive agricultural development if they are to justify their cost.

In addition, field staff should be careful not to visit the same set of farmers repeatedly as this severely limits the impact of extension activities and may also arouse resentment among other farmers who might feel extension service has nothing to offer them or has deliberately ignored them.

The checklist below can be used to plan individual visits:

CHECKLIST FOR AN INDIVIDUAL FARM VISIT

1. Before the visit:

- if possible, make an appointment;
- decide the purpose of the visit;
- review any information relating to previous visits;
- prepare any technical information that may be required;
- include proposed visit in work programme.

2. During the visit:

- be punctual and appropriately dressed;
- greet the farmer and members of the family;
- ask questions about the farm;
- listen to the farmer's problems and ideas she / he has for solving them;
- explain any technical information or advice clearly, and check that the farmer has understood;
- record any problems which cannot be solved and need to be referred to other extension partners or senior DAE staff;
- discuss aspects of the farm that are going well;
- make notes about the farm and visit;
- agree any follow up action and the date and purpose of the next visit - if required.

3. After the visit:

- make sure the information obtained during the visit has been accurately recorded;
- arrange any follow up action;
- schedule the next visit for inclusion in the next work programme.

During the visit field staff should always use words and language that the farmer understands and is accustomed to. In this respect BS need to be good listeners as well as good talkers. Farmers should be encouraged to explain and discuss issues at their own pace and in their own words. BS should ask appropriate questions so that she or he understands the nature of a farmer's concern.

Much of the benefit of the farm visit will be lost if the content and conclusions are not recorded and followed up. The ideal place for recording information is in the BS diary. Important points to include are:

- the date;
- the purpose of the visit;
- the conclusions or recommendations that were agreed;
- any additional information or observations which the field worker feels may be useful.

It is important that the field worker follows up any issues or actions that could not be dealt with during the visit. Failure to do so will disappoint farmers and lessen their confidence in the services DAE provide. Confidence and trust can take many years to build up and field workers should take care to maintain it. If a further visit had been agreed with the farmer then it should be noted in the BS diary and put into the relevant work programme.

9.3 SUMMARY OF EXTENSION METHODS

Table 9.2 shows a summary of extension methods, and some key points to remember when planning them.

TABLE 9.2: SUMMARY OF EXTENSION METHODS

Extension Method	Key Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio 	Has the potential for large audiences. Use can be enhanced through the establishment of Radio Listening Groups and linking with Bangladesh Betar through the regional office.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers 	Has the potential for large audiences. Use can be enhanced through Newspaper Reading Groups with literate farmers. Articles can be submitted to local newspapers about successful technologies in thana and district extension plans or actions that should be taken in the event of emergency situations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print Media and Audio Visual Aids 	Help to make extension events more interesting. Scope for reusing resources particularly if a Resource Centre with a stock of flip charts, slide sets, real objects and displays, flash cards, posters and other materials is developed. Materials can also be shared with other organisations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrations 	There are numerous types of demonstrations which can be used to show farmers a new technology or the benefits of modifying existing practise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Days 	Enable groups of farmers to meet together to show first hand demonstration sites or PTD test sites. Encourages farmers to participate and allows the host farmer to act as the resource person.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and Thana Fairs 	Potential to reach large number of farmers. Show a variety of technologies and innovations and encourage partnership with other extension agents. Requires significant planning and funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm Walks 	Have a variety of uses. For example, they can be used at block level to show farmers a new technology, can help farmers analyse farm problems, or help groups plan further activities. They can also be used to stimulate permanent and temporary farmer groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers Rallies 	Use a combination of methods (e.g. song, drama, presentations, banners, prize giving) to introduce and / or reinforce a technology to a large number of farmers. Working with partner agencies increases cost effectiveness and interest.

TABLE 9.2: SUMMARY OF EXTENSION METHODS (continued)

Extension Method	Key Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folk Media 	<p>Effective when linked to other extension activities such as fairs or rallies. Simple messages are used to relay important information in an informal way. Examples include, puppet shows, drama and songs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Meetings 	<p>Many uses and are often low cost. For example, radio listening groups or as a way of enabling farmers to discuss problems, develop plans, plan extension events, and explore new ideas. Can be made more effective if visual aids are used to stimulate discussion e.g. flash cards, posters, or real objects.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivational Tours 	<p>Motivational tours are like farm walks but are conducted further away from the farmers homes e.g. visits to research stations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory Technology Development 	<p>A low cost method which encourages farmers to try new technologies on their farm as an experiment, rather than a demonstration. Farmers are able to adopt the technology according to their resources and local environment. Support and advice are provided but inputs are not.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal Training Days 	<p>Used to train groups of farmers in a particular technology. Can last one day and can be held at any level, village, block, thana or district. Are further enhanced if supported by audio / visual aids. Training materials require significant planning and preparation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer Field School 	<p>Enables groups of farmers to be trained over an extended period (e.g. a cropping season) using regular classroom and field activities. Emphasises participatory, action based and problem solving learning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Farm Visit 	<p>Enables field staff to identify and analyse the main problems facing an individual farmer or household and provide advice on possible solutions. Individual visits also provide opportunities for extension staff to learn about an area or innovative farm practices. A potentially expensive extension method which requires careful planning. DAE recommend working with groups of farmers wherever possible.</p>