

MANAGE Agricultural Extension "Evening4Learning (E4L)" Webinar Series

Topic: "New Extensionist: Enhancing Capacities to Strengthen Extension Advisory Services"

Schedule:
21-11-2022, 19:00-19:30 PM

MANAGE - Center for Agricultural Extension Innovations, Reforms and Agripreneurship (MANAGE- CAEIRA)
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad- 500 030, INDIA



About the Program

The MANAGE Agricultural Extension "Evening4Learning" Webinar Series is aimed at enhancing knowledge and professional engagement in the field of agricultural extension. The twelve-day series is structured with each day focusing on a distinct topic under a common theme, allowing participants to gain comprehensive insights into key areas of extension. The program is intended for a diverse audience, including postgraduate and doctoral students, agricultural faculty, and industry professionals. It covers broad themes ranging from entrepreneurship and sustainability to emerging technologies in agriculture.





Speaker

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About the Speaker

Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman V. is the Director, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), Hyderabad, and serves as the Focal Point of Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA). He holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Extension from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and has extensive experience in agricultural extension, innovation systems, capacity development, extension policy and reform. He joined the ICAR system as a Scientist in Agricultural Extension in 1993 and has been associated with CRISP since 2006. His professional work focuses on strengthening agricultural extension and advisory services, developing new competencies for extension professionals, agricultural innovation systems, policy engagement and evidence-based extension.

Introduction

There is a need to change the roles of agricultural extension and develop new competencies among extension professionals to respond effectively to emerging challenges in agriculture. Agricultural and rural advisory services are undergoing significant transformation due to changing farmer needs, sustainability concerns, market dynamics, climate change, policy changes, pluralistic extension systems, and the growing importance of innovation and partnerships.

Extension can no longer remain confined to increasing agricultural production and productivity. Contemporary extension professionals are increasingly required to facilitate collective action, build partnerships, support farmer organizations, strengthen market linkages, contribute to agricultural innovation systems, and demonstrate measurable outcomes and impacts.

Rationale for Developing New Competencies

The context in which agricultural extension operates has changed considerably. Farmers are now confronted with challenges related to sustainability, markets, food safety standards, climate change, nutrition, gender, youth participation, poverty, and changing regulations. These emerging challenges require extension professionals to acquire competencies beyond conventional technical knowledge.

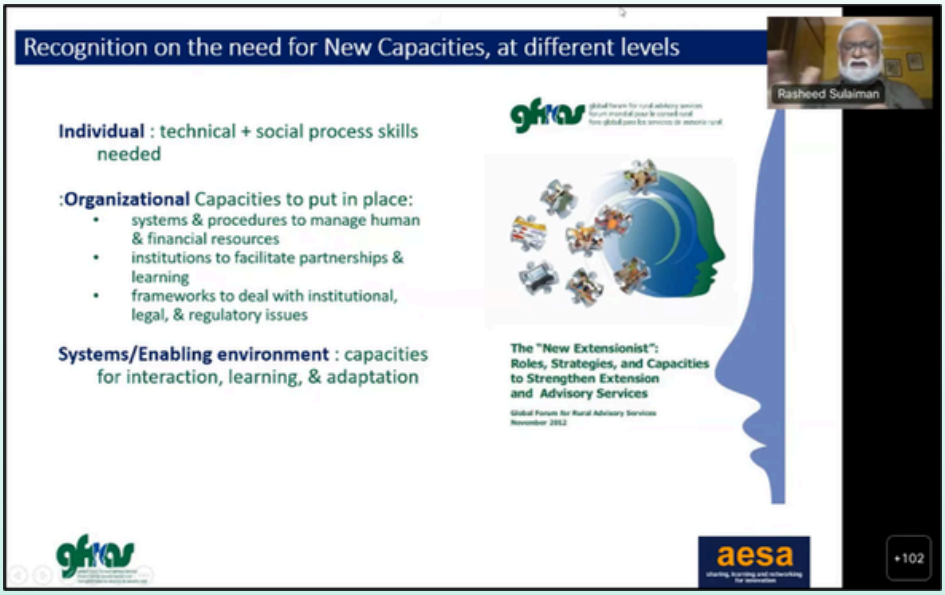
Capacity development should be considered at **three interconnected levels:**

Individual level – competencies and skills of extension professionals.

Organizational level – institutional systems, resources, leadership, and opportunities for professional development.

Enabling-environment level – policies, regulations, partnerships, and institutional frameworks.

Training individuals alone may not be sufficient if the organization lacks supportive systems, resources, personnel, travel facilities, budgets, and opportunities for continuous learning.



Changing Roles of Extension Professionals

There are several emerging responsibilities of 21st-century extension professionals. These include:

a. Facilitating Collective Action

Extension professionals need to organize farmers into groups and facilitate collective action in areas such as natural resource management, watershed management, and participatory irrigation management.

b. Supporting Farmer Organizations

The increasing importance of cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organizations requires extension professionals to support farmers in accessing credit, inputs, markets, and other services.

c. Partnership and Network Building

Many agricultural problems require coordinated action among multiple institutions. Extension professionals therefore need competencies in developing partnerships and facilitating multi-stakeholder platforms.

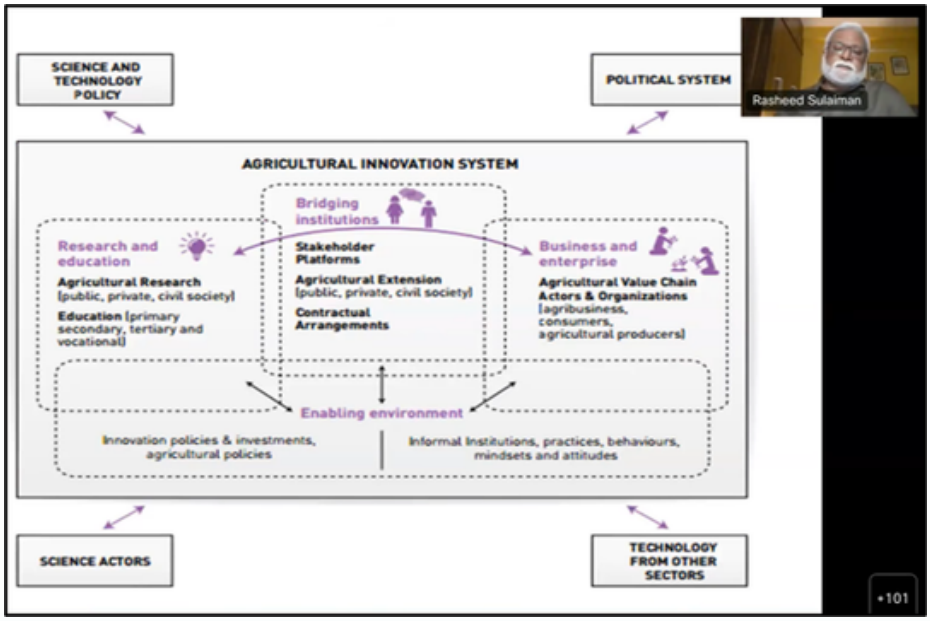


d. Working within Pluralistic Extension Systems

The extension landscape now includes public agencies, private companies, business consultants, NGOs, producer organizations, and ICT-based organizations. Coordinating these diverse actors has become an important extension function.

e. Contributing to Agricultural Innovation Systems

Innovation is increasingly understood as a process of generating, accessing, and putting knowledge into use. Extension professionals therefore need to work beyond traditional research–extension–farmer linkages and connect with a wider range of actors in agricultural innovation systems.



Emerging Competency Areas

There is a broad range of competencies required by contemporary extension professionals.

Technical Competencies

Technical knowledge continues to remain important in areas such as crop production, fertilizer management, integrated pest management, post-harvest practices, and other agricultural technologies.

Functional Competencies

Technical knowledge alone is insufficient. Extension professionals also require competencies in:

- Farmer mobilization and organization
- Facilitation
- Community engagement
- Multi-stakeholder platform management
- Farmer organization development
- Value-chain development
- Entrepreneurship
- Gender-responsive extension
- Climate-change adaptation
- Partnership development
- Innovation management

These are important social, functional, and process-oriented competencies that are often insufficiently covered in conventional training programmes.

Institutional and Organizational Capacities

Competent individuals require an enabling organizational environment. Organizations need systematic approaches to capacity development, partnership building, appropriate policies, adequate resources, and institutional guidelines.

The importance of clear rules, regulations, and legal frameworks should also be considered when working with private-sector organizations and other non-governmental actors.

New Extensionist Initiative and Learning Resources

The New Extensionist approach emerged from the recognition that changing agricultural challenges require new roles, strategies, and capacities within advisory services

Subsequently, the **New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK)** was developed as a collection of learning resources for extension professionals. The materials were designed for both self-learning and use by teachers and trainers to develop or strengthen extension courses.

The learning resources covered areas such as:

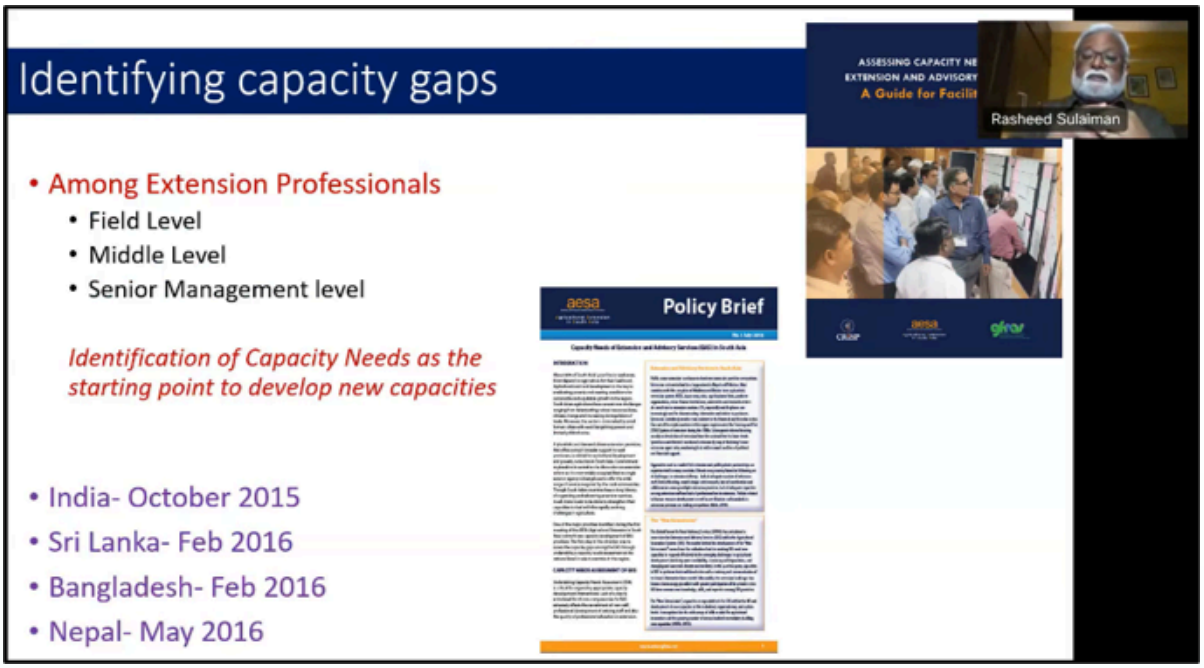
- Introduction to the New Extensionist
- Extension methods and tools
- Programme management
- Adult learning
- Facilitation for development
- Community mobilization
- Farmer organization development
- Extension and value-chain agriculture
- Agricultural entrepreneurship
- Gender
- Evaluation and capacity development
- Policy advocacy

The modules included manuals, lecturer guides, workbooks, activities, and PowerPoint presentations, making them adaptable to different learning requirements.

Capacity Needs and Capacity Gap Assessment

Capacity development should begin with the systematic identification and prioritization of capacity gaps. A facilitator guide was developed to support capacity-gap assessment at different levels. This approach was applied across India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, focusing on identifying capacity requirements at the individual, organizational, and enabling-environment levels.

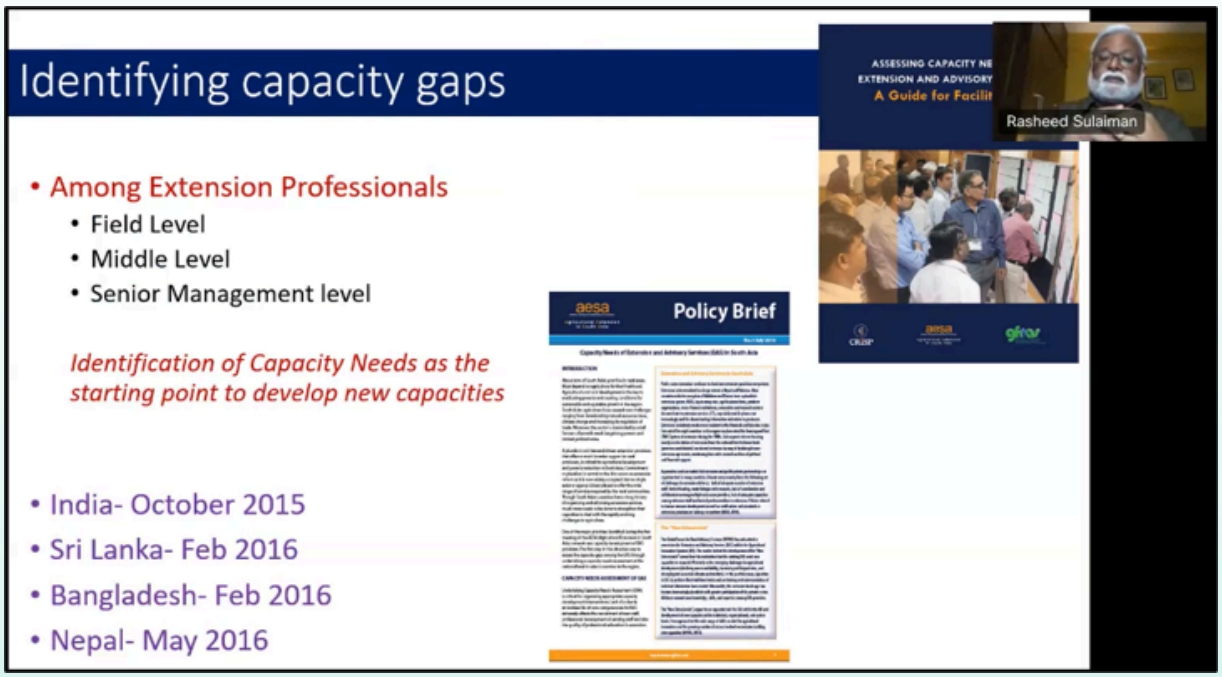
An important lesson was that capacity development should not focus exclusively on junior extension personnel. Senior professionals, managers, and policymakers also require competencies related to policy formulation, institutional coordination, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder partnerships.



Strengthening Training Systems

There is a need to strengthen the capacity of organizations responsible for training extension personnel. Capacity assessment revealed challenges related to trainer preparation, the availability of structured training modules, consistency in learning objectives, and systematic approaches to training.

In response, initiatives such as Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes and the development of structured training modules were undertaken to strengthen training systems.



Strengthening Research and Evaluation Capacities

Another major area was the need to strengthen competencies in research, evidence generation, and evaluation.

Extension managers increasingly need to demonstrate not merely the number of activities conducted but also their outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Questions concerning the effectiveness of interventions, partnerships, resource allocation, and evidence-based decision-making have therefore become increasingly important.

Training programmes on good practices in extension research and evaluation were subsequently developed, along with learning resources to strengthen evaluation capacity among researchers, students, and extension professionals.

Curriculum Reorientation

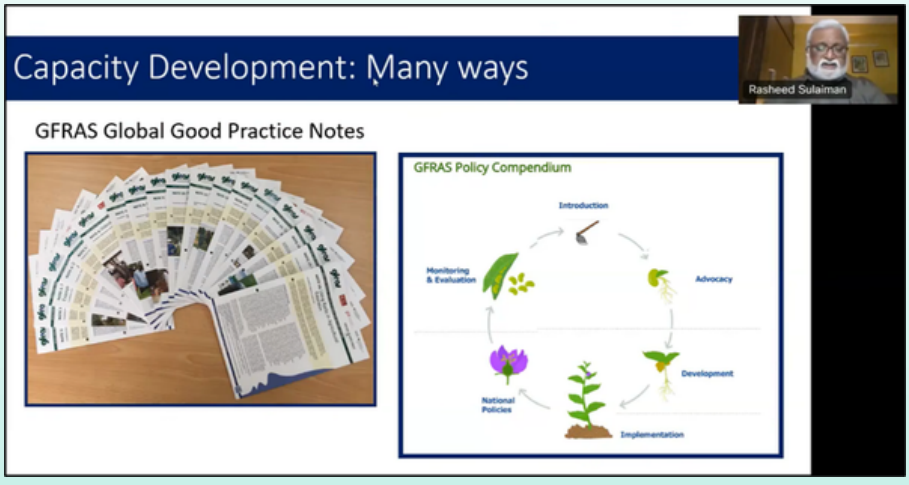
There is a need to integrate emerging competencies into formal agricultural extension education. Efforts were undertaken to strengthen postgraduate curricula by introducing new areas related to:

- ICTs
- Organizational management
- Innovation
- Research methodology
- Livelihoods
- Gender
- Entrepreneurship
- Agribusiness incubation

The objective was to reduce repetition in existing curricula and prepare students with competencies relevant to emerging employment and professional requirements.

Diverse Approaches to Continuous Learning

Capacity development should not be restricted to participation in formal training programmes. Extension professionals can also develop competencies through self-learning, good-practice resources, online materials, professional networks, publications, blogs, and knowledge-sharing platforms.



Global good-practice resources covering areas such as ICT applications, agricultural innovation systems, mobile-based advisory services, radio and video-based extension approaches, and other emerging practices can provide valuable opportunities for continuous professional learning.

Key Highlights

- **Reorientation of Extension Roles:** Agricultural extension is evolving from a production-focused approach towards facilitation, partnership building, innovation, and market-oriented advisory services.
- **New Competencies for Extension Professionals:** Extension professionals require both technical and functional competencies, including facilitation, farmer mobilization, value-chain development, entrepreneurship, gender responsiveness, climate adaptation, and innovation management.
- **Three-Level Capacity Development:** Capacity development needs to address the individual, organizational, and enabling-environment levels rather than focusing only on individual training.
- ·**Strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems:** Extension professionals need to work with diverse stakeholders and contribute to agricultural innovation systems through networking, partnerships, knowledge sharing, and collective action.
- **Evidence-Based Extension:** Greater emphasis is required on research, monitoring, evaluation, evidence generation, and demonstrating programme outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
- **Continuous Professional Learning:** Competency development should extend beyond formal training through self-learning, digital resources, good-practice materials, professional networks, and knowledge-sharing platforms.

YouTube Link:
https://youtu.be/gQwDALu9Fag?list=PLcfEugbo2RL0&t=2

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