



**A**nalyse

**E**ngage

**S**hare

**A**dvocate

Sharing, Learning and Networking for Innovation  
[www.aesnetwork.org](http://www.aesnetwork.org)

aesa

The First



Years

**A**gricultural **E**xtension in **S**outh **A**sia

## Vision

Improving food and nutrition security through efficient and effective extension and advisory services

## Mission

Sharing, learning and networking for building effective and efficient extension and advisory services

Regional Context	01
Introduction	02
Knowledge Management	06
Capacity Development	12
Strengthening Research in Extension	18
Curricula Reforms	23
Policy Dialogue	24
Networking	26
Governance	31
Acknowledgements	34
Finances (2013-2019)	35
Partnership	36
The Road Ahead	39





## REGIONAL CONTEXT

About 80% of South Asia's poor live in rural areas. Most depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Agricultural and rural development is the key to eradicate poverty and creating conditions for sustainable and equitable growth. South Asian agriculture faces several new challenges ranging from deteriorating natural resources base, climate change and increasing deregulation of trade. Moreover, the sector is dominated by small farmers often with weak bargaining powers and limited political voice. Women constitute the majority of the agricultural labour force in small-scale and subsistence farming in the region. A pluralistic, demand driven and gender responsive extension provision, that offers a much broader support to rural producers, is critical for agricultural development and poverty reduction in South Asia.

Though, South Asian countries have a long history of organising and reforming extension services, much more needs to be done to strengthen their capacities to deal with the rapidly evolving challenges in agriculture. Commitment to pluralism is central to the discussion on extension reforms as it is now widely accepted that no single actor or agency is best placed to offer the wide range of services required by the rural communities. While several new approaches are being tried by varied extension providers in the public, private and NGO sector in different countries, these experiences are not shared due to lack of a platform for sharing and networking among extension professionals in South Asia.



## INTRODUCTION

Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs) network was formed to meet the demand for a network of all those interested in extension and advisory services (EAS) articulated in some of the global and regional consultations on extension organised by the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS).

AESA was established in early 2013 as a virtual platform with a website ([www.aesa-gfras.net](http://www.aesa-gfras.net)) and a Facebook group named as Agricultural Extension in South Asia (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/428431183848161/>). These efforts helped in identifying several key individuals and organisations interested in contributing to the AESA network.

Gradually it was realized that for the network to function optimally full time

staff and resources were needed. Hence, to expand the network and to upgrade and maintain the AESA website, a proposal seeking funding was developed by the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP). In April 2013, the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC) funded AESA for a 2 year period (May 2013- May 2015) which was further extended up to June 2016. These resources were utilised to strengthen its communication and networking activities and also for organizing the first face to face meeting.

From July 2016, AESA received funding support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) project titled 'Supporting Smallholder Farmers in Asia and Pacific Islands Region through Strengthened Agricultural Advisory Services (SAAS)' managed by SEARCA, Philippines. AESA is currently the only regional network available for extension stakeholders in South Asia to share knowledge and experiences on EAS. AESA is hosted by CRISP at Hyderabad, India.



*Since its inception, AESA has been working closely with me and my colleagues from various organizations serving the Agricultural Extension needs in Sri Lanka. The collaborative seminars, training programs and policy dialogues conducted in Sri Lanka have paved the way to improve the professionalism in the Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association and the National Network of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (NAEASSL). The working papers, informative blogs, meeting notes, and other detailed learning materials have been the major source of updating the theoretical and practical knowledge of many managers engaged in the field of agricultural advisory services. The frequently updated AESA website is extremely useful for the practitioners to connect with AESA and GFRAS. I would like to recommend to every extension worker, researcher, and scholar in Agricultural Extension and Rural Advisory services to keep close links with the able team of AESA and contribute to strengthening the discipline of Agricultural Extension.*

**Amal Anurappriya, Specialist,**

Institutional Development and Capacity Building, Climate Smart Irrigated Agriculture Project, Ministry of Agriculture, Colombo



# FIRST FACE TO FACE MEETING

AESA organized meetings with key stakeholders in extension and advisory provision in 3 countries prior to organizing its first face to face meeting on 14-15 January 2014, Kathmandu, Nepal.

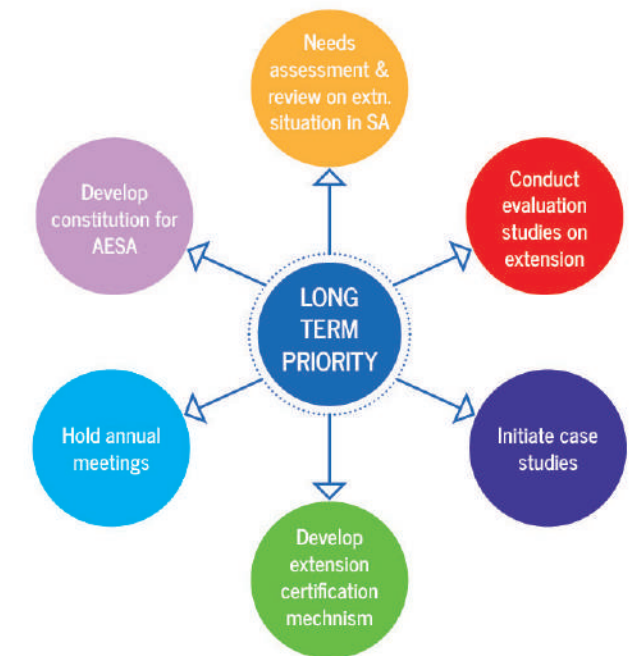
- ▶ Bangladesh at the Bangladesh Agricultural University, Department of Agricultural Extension and SAARC Agricultural Centre (June 2013)
- ▶ Sri Lanka at the University of Peradeniya (August 2013)
- ▶ Nepal at the Department of Agriculture (November 2013)

These meetings helped in creating awareness about AESA and GFRAS,

developing new contacts in the region and also led to the establishment of three country fora of extensionists in South Asia.

The First face-to-face meeting of AESA finalized the vision, mission and functions

of AESA, its governance structure and also identified the short-term and long-term priorities of AESA.



# KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Since its inception, AESA focused on knowledge management through its website and Facebook group. While initially AESA focused on compiling information to develop an organised database of different knowledge products on EAS and providing information on new publications, workshops and organisations related to EAS (through the website and Facebook), it started developing its own publication soon in the form of blogs, good practice notes, meeting notes, book reviews, working papers, AESA updates, etc.

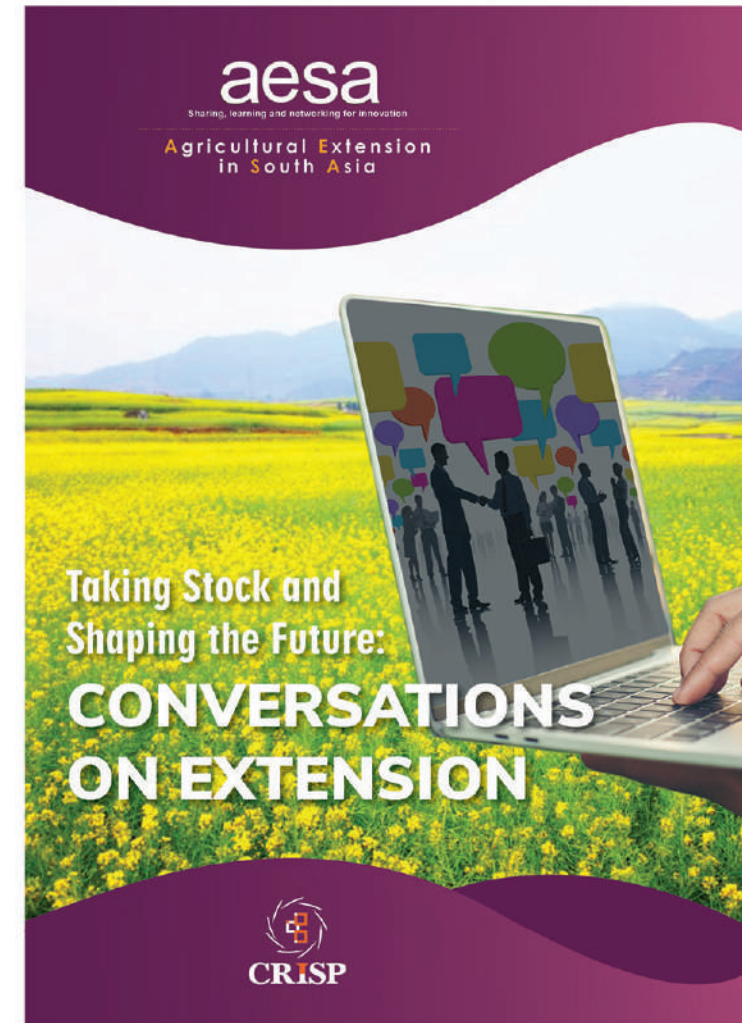
## AESA Knowledge Products (2013-2019)





# CONVERSATIONS ON EXTENSION: TAKING STOCK AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

During the past six years, AESA served as a virtual platform for EAS professionals to share their concerns on the present and future of extension and advisory services (EAS) in the form of blog conversations. In March 2019, we published our 100<sup>th</sup> blog. Several of our readers have been asking us to compile all these reflections into a single document so that these are available as a good reference document for the wide spectrum of actors involved in EAS- scholars, practitioners, trainers, faculty, innovation intermediaries, mentors, leaders and managers involved in bringing forth agricultural and rural transformation.





www.aesaneetwork.org



*The small financial support of SDC to AESA was an excellent investment. I observed the development, launch and active use of an attractive Internet Web-Page. The number of people using the web-page showed a strong increase. I also observed how AESA organized very attractive workshops with extension experts from all the countries of South Asia. AESA indeed covers an important need for the region. Its success is greatly possible due to the strong leadership of Dr. Rasheed.*

**Felix Fellmann, Head of International Cooperation Division**  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), China

# AESA - A ONE STOP SHOP

AESA website serves the information needs of users in varied forms. All the information is compiled and posted under different headings on its website and simultaneously shared on the social media.



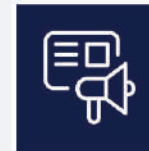
## Resources on EAS

Publications on EAS are organised thematically across 14 themes and 8 countries.



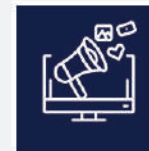
## Useful links

This section has three major categories of information: allied organisations, networks and country-wise information on EAS in the region.



## New Publications and Events

Announcements/links to new publications, workshops, conferences and meetings related to EAS and job openings for EAS professionals are included in this section.



## Social Media

AESA uses its social media platform actively. All the documents are made available on the social media platforms.



(with > 19450 members)



# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

## Capacity Needs Assessment Workshops

With GFRAS support, AESA organised Workshops on Capacity Needs Assessment of Extension and Advisory Services in 4 South Asian Countries (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal) with the following objectives:

- ▶ Identify capacity gaps among EAS providers
- ▶ Finalise a methodology for undertaking capacity needs assessment

### ASSESSING CAPACITY NEEDS OF EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES (EAS) PROVIDERS: A Guide for Facilitators



### Policy Brief

Nov 1 July 2014

#### Capacity Needs of Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) in South Asia

##### INTRODUCTION

South Asia's food and nutrition security is under threat. Rapid population growth, coupled with the loss of arable land, is leading to a decline in agricultural productivity and a corresponding increase in food insecurity. The region's agricultural sector is facing several challenges, including climate change, soil degradation, and a lack of access to modern agricultural technologies and services. This policy brief outlines the capacity needs of extension and advisory services (EAS) providers in the region and provides recommendations for addressing these needs.

A global and demand-driven extension process that offers a much broader support to small producers, is critical for agricultural development and growth in South Asia. Commitment to a paradigm shift in the extension system is a prerequisite for a more vibrant and resilient agricultural sector. Through South Asian countries have a long history of engaging and supporting extension services, much more needs to be done to address the capacity gaps in the region and to ensure that extension services are able to address the rapidly changing challenges in agriculture.

One of the major priorities identified during the meeting of the Asia Agricultural Extension in South Asia's extension and advisory services (EAS) providers. The focus of this document is to assess the capacity gaps among the EAS through undertaking a capacity needs assessment at the national level in each country in the region.

##### CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF EAS

Undertaking Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) is critical for designing appropriate support to extension service providers. Lack of a clearly articulated list of core competencies for EAS advisory staff, the recruitment of new staff, professional development of existing staff, and the quality of professional education or training.

##### Addressing Extension and Advisory Services in South Asia

EAS providers need to be able to deliver extension services in a way that is relevant to the needs of small producers. This requires a focus on the quality of the extension services, rather than just the quantity. The region's extension services need to be able to address the specific needs of small producers, including the need for access to modern agricultural technologies and services. This policy brief outlines the capacity needs of extension and advisory services (EAS) providers in the region and provides recommendations for addressing these needs.

##### The "New Extensionist"

The Global Forum for Food Advisory Services (GFRAS) has identified a new vision for Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) within the Agricultural Extension System (AES). The vision is based on the development of the "New Extensionist" service. This service is based on the following principles: 1. Focus on the needs of small producers. 2. Provide a range of services, including access to modern agricultural technologies and services. 3. Be demand-driven and responsive to the needs of small producers. 4. Be able to address the specific needs of small producers, including the need for access to modern agricultural technologies and services. 5. Be able to deliver extension services in a way that is relevant to the needs of small producers.

# FACILITATORS GUIDE

## FOR ASSESSING CAPACITY NEEDS OF EAS

We developed a Facilitators Guide for Assessing Capacity Needs of EAS. This guide builds on the outputs of the four National Workshops held at India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and it uses a blend of interactive approaches for different sessions with tips for facilitators for effective delivery. This guide is intended to assist facilitators in conducting a workshop with Extension and Advisory Service (EAS) providers for assessing their capacity needs.

Based on the findings from the Capacity Needs Assessment Workshops in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, AESA published a Policy Brief on Capacity Needs of Extension and Advisory Services in South Asia. This policy brief illustrates the processes adopted for assessing the capacity gaps in the region and the outputs of the assessment exercise (including the capacity needs and ways of addressing these).

# CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS



## INDIA



**Partner** | ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management

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**Date** 6-7 Oct 2015      **Location** Hyderabad

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**Number of participants** 34

**Number of organizations** 20

## BANGLADESH



**Partner** | Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network

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**Date** 27-28 Feb 2016      **Location** Manikgonj

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**Number of participants** 24

**Number of organizations** 15

## SRI LANKA



**Partner** | Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association

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**Date** 10-11 Feb 2016      **Location** Peradeniya

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**Number of participants** 24

**Number of organizations** 18

## NEPAL



**Partner** | Nepal Agriculture Extension Association

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**Date** 31 May-01 Jun 2016      **Location** Kathmandu

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**Number of participants** 38

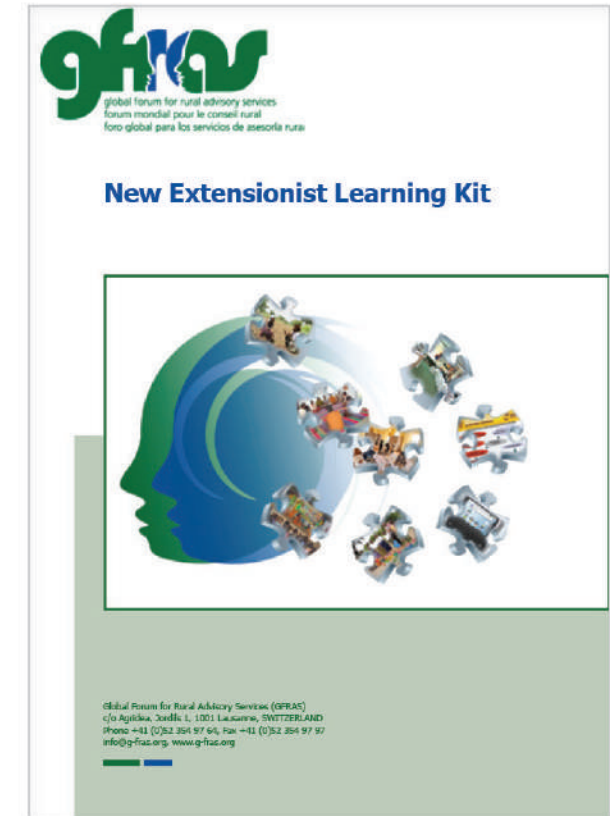
**Number of organizations** 15





AESA in collaboration with the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), the Indian Agricultural Extension Network (IAEN) and the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) organized a workshop on 'Promoting the NELK'. It took place on 5-6 October, 2017, MANAGE, Hyderabad, India.

AESA and Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN) jointly organized two workshops in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10-11 March, 2018. Topics of discussion were the NELK and writing Good Practice notes on extension and advisory services.



## NELK PROMOTION

AESA contributed to the development of the New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK). It is a learning resource for individual extension field staff, managers, and lecturers. It is based on the The 'New Extensionist' - Roles, Strategies, and Capacities to Strengthen Extension and Advisory Services, a GFRAS position paper

that discusses new capacities for rural advisory services and extension to address the current challenges in agriculture and to contribute better to agricultural innovation. The kit focuses on functional skills and is available for self-directed, face-to-face, or blended learning.



# STRENGTHENING RESEARCH IN EXTENSION

AESA organized a workshop on 'Good Practices in Extension Research and Evaluation' during 29 November - 2 December 2016 in Hyderabad, India. This workshop was held in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (ICAR-NAARM), the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), the ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (ICAR-CTCRI) and the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE). The workshop aimed at creating a cadre of professional extension researchers to carry out impact-oriented quality research in extension.

ICAR-CTCRI, AESA, CRISP and MANAGE co-hosted a Workshop on 'Quantitative Social Science Research', at the ICAR-CTCRI, Thiruvananthapuram, India, during 7-12 August, 2017. Thirty-eight young extension researchers from seven states of India participated in this workshop.





AESA in partnership with ICAR-CTCRI, MANAGE, ICAR-NAARM and CRISP organized National Workshop on 'Advances in Social and Behavioral Science Research' 12-17 November 2018 at ICAR-CTCRI, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

AESA co-organized a Training Workshop on 'Advances in Social and Behavioural Science Research' from 4-8 March, 2019, at SM Sehgal Foundation, Gurugram, India. This was done in collaboration with SM Sehgal Foundation, CRISP, ICAR-CTCRI and MANAGE.



**Wais Kabir, Executive Director**  
Krishi Gobeshona Foundation and  
Former Executive Chairman, Bangladesh  
Agricultural Research Council

*I have seen AESA facilitating the evolution of the Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN) which brought together all the extension stakeholders in Bangladesh on a common platform. This was absent in our agricultural extension system involving different service providers. The joint efforts of AESA and BAEN are currently contributing to development of new capacities of extension and advisory services in Bangladesh.*



AESA published a 'Manual on Good Practices in Extension Research and Evaluation' as a 'hands-on' reference manual to help young researchers, students and field extension functionaries, choose right research methods and conduct quality research and evaluation in extension.



*The Agricultural Extension in South Asia Network (AESAN) of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) is an example of a proactive and, professional network that is efficient and effective. AESAN is efficient because it does a lot with a little resources, and has mobilized a large number of champions to contribute in various ways. I always go to AESAN after various conferences because the meeting notes are concise and are good summaries of extension events around the world. AESAN is effective because of its reach and outputs. AESAN has produced 100 blogs since it started in 2013 and its facebook group has over 19,000 members.*

**Kristin Davis, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI & Co-Director**  
Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC)

## CURRICULA REFORMS

From 14-16 February, 2018, AESA participated in the National Workshop on 'Agricultural Extension in India: Time to Change' and led the session on reforming extension curricula in Indian universities. This workshop was organized by MANAGE.

AESA is part of the Sub Committee constituted by MANAGE for developing a more relevant Agricultural Extension Curricula at different levels. Meetings of these committees were held on 22 June, 2018 and 28-29 September, 2018, respectively at Hyderabad, India. AESA works closely with the Broad Subject Matter Area (BSMA) committee for Social Sciences to develop revised extension curricula at the MSc and PhD levels in Indian Universities. BSMA committee is constituted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).



# POLICY DIALOGUE



## SRI LANKA 2016

AESA collaborated with the Sri Lanka Association for Agricultural Extension (SLAEA) in organising the National Conference on Agricultural Extension & Policy Dialogue on 12 February, 2016. This conference highlighted the importance of having a policy for agricultural extension in Sri Lanka. AESA is working closely with the SLAEA in developing this policy.



## NEPAL 2017

AESA organized a Policy Dialogue at Kathmandu, Nepal, on 25 July, 2017, in collaboration with the Nepal Agricultural Extension Association (NAEA). The policy dialogue was organised in the backdrop of transforming Nepal into a federalist structure. The concerns of the extension community on the future of agricultural extension in federal Nepal were discussed in detail, and similar experiences from other countries were also shared at this event.



## SRI LANKA 2018

AESA organized a South Asia Policy Dialogue on the 'Role of EAS in Scaling-up Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)' on 5 October, 2018, at Colombo, Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the IRRI-South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC), CRISP, and Sri Lanka Network of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (NAEASSL). It served as a forum for stakeholders from government, private, non-governmental, and multilateral organizations to explore the issues and evidence related to scaling-up climate smart agriculture through extension and advisory services, and to chart a way forward in terms of policy and programme development.

# NETWORKING

## AESA FACILITATED SETTING UP OF 4 COUNTRY FORA IN THE REGION

In Bangladesh, the meeting to launch the **Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN)** was organized on 01 September, 2014 by the Second Crop Diversification project of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). Over the past 3 years BAEN evolved itself as an independent network with its own governance and funding arrangement.



A meeting to establish the **Indian Agricultural Extension Network (IAEN)** was organized at the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) on 26 August, 2014.



*AESA has brought visibility to the varied dimensions of Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) in South Asia through networking, knowledge management and partnerships. MANAGE and AESA have jointly initiated a dialogue on curricula reforms in extension in India, promoted the New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK) and collaborated for hosting several training workshops. I believe these efforts would bring synergy to the capacity development of EAS providers and lead to more impactful last mile delivery.*

**V Usha Rani IAS, Director General,**  
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE),  
Hyderabad, India





The first meeting of Pakistan Extension Network (PEN) was held on 01 September, 2015 at the Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

The first meeting of the Sri Lanka Network of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services took place on 22 November, 2017 in Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. AESA participated in this event.



**AESA members have been contributing to the technical discussion on EAS at the GFRAS Annual Meetings**



AESA co-organised and participated in 'Reaching the Millions: A face-to-face workshop on Rural Advisory Services' held at Hanoi, Vietnam during 2-7 March, 2015. The workshop hosted by the Agriculture and Food Security (A&FS) Network and organised by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in collaboration with the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), the Asia Pacific Islands Network for Rural Advisory Services (APIRAS) and AESA came up with the 'The Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Service Systems' which was endorsed by 68 RAS experts and practitioners.



# GOVERNANCE

AESA Governance Board Meeting was held on 13 February, 2016 at Kandy, Sri Lanka. AESA focal points from seven countries in the region (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) participated in this meeting. The meeting reviewed the progress of AESA during the last two years and took several decisions to strengthen AESA.



2016

AESA organized its Governance Board Meeting at Kathmandu on 24 July, 2017. The meeting reviewed the progress made by AESA during the last two years and discussed the findings from the 'Online capacity assessment' of AESA.



2017

# GOVERNANCE BOARD



**Hamdullah Hamdard**, Director General  
Extension and Agriculture Development,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Afghanistan



**Mohammad Sekender Ali**, Secretary General  
Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN) and  
Pro- Vice Chancellor, Sher-a-Bangla Agricultural University, Bangladesh



**Mohamed Rihvaan**, Assistant Director  
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Division, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, Maldives



**Niru Dahal Pandey**, Chief  
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Ministry of Agriculture Development, Lalitpur, Nepal



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

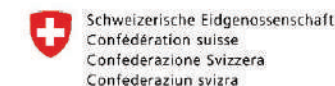
First of all our thanks to all the donors and partners who invested in and collaborated with AESA over the last six years. Our special thanks to the GFRAS Steering Committee, AESA Governance Board Members and our champions in the region who believed in AESA, especially, Saravanan Raj, Mahesh Chander, P V K Sasidhar, P S Sivakumar, S V N Rao, R M Prasad, Mandeep Pujara, Sreenath Dixit, M J Chandragowda, S Sureshkumar, V V Sadamate, T S Vamsidhar Reddy, Mruthyunjaya, S Ram Kumar, Sreeram Vishnu, Sagar Wadkar, Ajith Radhakrishnan, Subash S P and I S Rao (INDIA); Md Sekender Ali, Md Hamidur Rahman, M Abul Kashem, Ashoke Kumar Roy, Abu Wali Raghieb Hassan, Masuma Younus, Rafikul Amin, Md Afzal Hossain Bhuiyan and Sirajul Islam (BANGLADESH); Yamuna Ghale, Niru Dahal Pandey, Shridhar Adhikari and Kamal Devkota (NEPAL); W A D P Wanigasundera, C Sivayoganathan, Wijaya Jayatilaka, R S Wijesekara, Nandana Jayasinghe, Chandana Jayawardhana, M C Rasmin and Lalith Senaka (SRI LANKA); Muhammad Anjum Ali, Muhammad Ali and Abdur Rashid Chaudhary (PAKISTAN). We deeply acknowledge the contributions of many of our CRISP staff who helped in managing the AESA website, especially Kanika Singh, Kiran Yadav, Anthony Christopher, Rajeswari Aluri and Md Abdul Irshad. Contributions of Niharika Lenka for designing our documents and Alphy J Plakkoottam for language editing are also acknowledged.

# FINANCES (2013-2019)



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International Fund for Agricultural Development



Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services



# PARTNERSHIP

Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy, India



National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, India



Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture



Asia-Pacific Islands Rural Advisory Services Network



ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, India



ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, India



ICAR- Indian Veterinary Research Institute, India



IRRI South Asia Regional Centre



Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network



Sri Lanka Network of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services



Indian Agricultural Extension Network



SM Sehgal Foundation, India



Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies, Nepal



Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association



Nepal Agriculture Extension Association





## THE ROAD AHEAD

Agricultural Extension South Asia (AESAs) has emerged as a credible platform for those interested and involved in Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) in the region. Sustained efforts in the last six years have contributed to the development and promotion of new knowledge on extension research and practices and has influenced policies on EAS in the region. There is scope to accomplish a lot more to enhance EAS's contribution to transforming agriculture in South Asia.

As a priority, AESAs need to mentor and support emerging country networks in the region. While knowledge management will have to continue, both virtual interactions through webinars and e-discussions and hosting of face-to-face workshops and policy dialogues need to be promoted among network members to ensure that the new knowledge is applied and used. Organizing a South Asia Extension Week every two years to deliberate on the new challenges and opportunities in extension in the region could be a new step in this direction. There is also a need to initiate and support discussions on professionalising EAS in South Asian countries. It is imperative that AESAs respond to the increasing demand for training workshops on development and promotion of advanced research and evaluation methods in extension as well as the demand to develop more relevant and advanced extension curriculum. AESAs also plan to facilitate policy changes to strengthen extension.

AESAs will need more support - both human and financial - to address these issues. We look forward to buy-in from more investors, partners and champions to support AESAs in this endeavour.

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AESA is part of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS). The Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP) hosts the Secretariat of AESA. CRISP conducts policy relevant research on agricultural extension and rural innovation.

**April 2019**