Skills required for successful extension

Mark Bell and Paul Marcotte 2012

Extension – which can be defined as:

getting knowledge to farmers, so that they will make a positive change
can be presented as a 5 part framework (Figure at right - Bell and Marcotte, 2012)

"A" for Audience and Needs - Who are the audience and what do they need?

"S" for Solutions – What are the viable, appropriate solutions?

"K" for Key message – Which part of the solution message do farmers need to hear (to understand and be able to change)?

"M" for Message - Packaging and delivery – what is the best way to package and deliver the message to help farmers make a positive change?

"E" for Evaluation – How can you collect information to improve both the extension process and the message while also identifying emerging needs and opportunities?

Elements required for a successful extension system:

1. **Technical** – extension workers need sufficient technical knowledge to be able to identify problems, suggest potential solutions and/or know who to contact for more technical expertise.
2. **Delivery** - extension workers need to understand how to package, deliver and communicate with farmers and providers of technical content.
3. **Institutional** - extension workers need adequate institutional support and structures to be sufficiently motivated and able to effectively work with farmers.
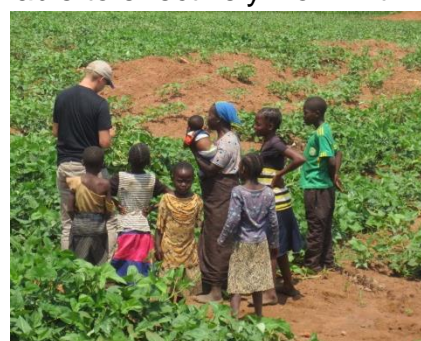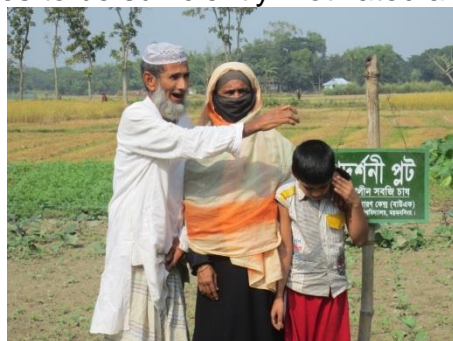
Good Extension requires a wide range of skills and expertise from running farmers meetings to field diagnostics and providing sound recommendations (Photos Mark Bell).

The table below outlines a number of key skills required for successful extension.

Bell and Marcotte, UC Davis © 2012

Steps in extension and Skills required

Audience and identifying needs

Collecting and assessing Secondary data	Recommendation Domain development	Working with farmers. Focal groups; planning:
Prioritizing problems	Identifying true Cause	Audience analysis
Participatory assessment	Field technical evaluation	Technical knowledge

Solutions

Assuring credibility of source	Assessing relevance and credibility	Technical knowledge to know what makes sense
Role of farmers in early assessment	Field testing	Prioritizing solutions/options

Key message

Understanding your audience	Technical knowledge	Prioritizing content
Breaking down the message	Communication skills	

Message packaging and delivery

Field demonstration implementation	Poster development	Fact sheet development
Designing and implementing events	Presentation skills	Cell phones as a tool?
Radio and TV as tools	Working with farmers	Farm walks
Web/repository development	Communication skills	Video development
Persuasive writing		

Evaluation

Collecting feedback: technical, process and form of material	Iterative learning	Event evaluation

General extension skills

Planning and prioritization	Meeting management	Budget management
Time management	Facilitation	SWOC
Understanding the extension process	Prioritization skills	Conflict resolution
Proposal and report writing	Presentation skills	Communication skills
Team management	Assigning work	Resource allocation
Use of ICT	Audience analysis	