

Agricultural Extension Manual

Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3 PARTNERSHIP

3.0 INTRODUCTION

There are many valid reasons for working in partnership with other extension providers but the central reasons are that partnership enables extension organisations to:

- provide an integrated service to farmers; and
- share their strengths and resources, and learn from each other.

Integrated Service

The NAEP recognises the integrated nature of agricultural practises in Bangladesh and, as a result, a number of institutional mechanisms to encourage partnership between different types of extension agents have been established (see **Chapter 1**). This supporting environment enables GOs, NGOs and the private sector, all of whom have different services to offer, to work together so that they are able to provide an integrated service to farmers.

For example, most farmers in Bangladesh are not just dependent on crop production. They also rear livestock and fish, manage trees and maintain the environment surrounding their homesteads and land. Often, these practises are related or are dependent upon one another in some way i.e. they are *integrated*. For example, rice fish cultivation is an integrated system because it is a combination of fish and rice production. It can also be linked to other agricultural practices such as: bund cropping, integrated pest management and poultry / duck production.

DAE is heavily biased towards crop production but the services it provides do not have to be solely related to food crop production. For example, DAE can support the Department of Livestock with extension services related to fodder production or the use of farm yard manure to improve soil fertility. Other extension agencies may be keen to utilise the services of DAE because it employs the most field staff in the Government agricultural sector and has national coverage.

Sharing Strengths and Resources

The NAEP makes a commitment to developing all types of partnership between GO and NGO extension agencies. Only by utilising the strengths of all concerned agencies is it possible to meet the diverse and specific extension needs of all categories of farmers throughout Bangladesh. Improved co-ordination through the various committees established under the NAEP, enables extension providers to share their strengths and resources. Different agencies working in the same area may have complementary expertise and when this is brought together the effectiveness of services can be significantly improved.

As **Chapter 1** briefly outlined, DAE recognises the importance of partnership and is committed to working with other extension providers. Partnership has become an important part of DAE's overall strategy for achieving its mission statement in line with the NAEP. This chapter looks in detail at what partnership is and how DAE encourages its staff to work in partnership with other agencies.

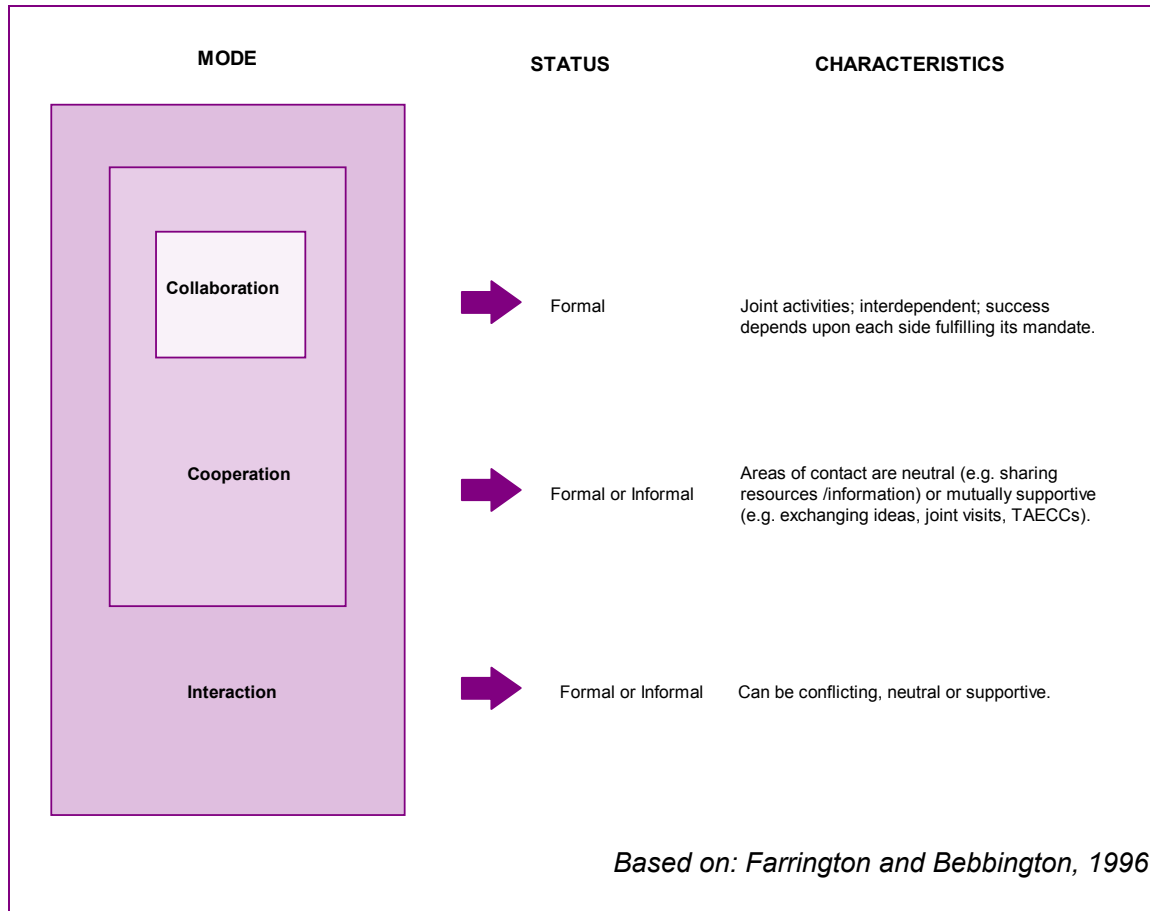
3.1 UNDERSTANDING PARTNERSHIP

There are two types of partnership:

- informal partnership; and
- a more formalised version or collaborative partnership.

They are shown in **Figure 3.1** and are briefly described below.

FIGURE 3.1: TYPES OF PARTNERSHIP



Partnership

DAE define partnership as being “a *voluntary relationship based on trust and respect in which DAE and a partner organisation work together to implement extension*”. Examples of this kind of partnership include:

- different extension providers participating in TAECCs and DEPCs;
- different organisations attending or participating in thana or district fairs;
- DAE staff working with groups formed by another organisation.

Partnership activities are usually no-cost, or financed from existing resources. For example, no extra funding is required for agencies to share training materials or share resource persons for training sessions. This is particularly true when an informal arrangement is made between agencies to provide staff or resources for a particular occasion.

Where minor additional expenditure is required, activities are included in the plans for the respective agencies, and submitted through their normal channels for approval. For example, DAE might add to its annual extension plan visits by Block Supervisors to the groups of a specific NGO. The NGO might add to its annual work plan the provision of training to Block Supervisors in working with its group members. The organisations would share the responsibility for planning, funding and implementing activities in partnership. In this way, partnership is formal in that it has been formally incorporated into normal practice but it does not require a detailed separate agreement for the activities to take place.

Collaboration

Collaboration is also a form of partnership i.e. where two or more agencies work together to provide services to farmers. However, collaborative partnership is defined as being formal in that a specific programme of activities are agreed in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This establishes mutual accountability for all programme activities as well as defining specific roles and financial arrangements for each collaborating partner. Collaboration is really a sub set of a general partnership relationship as shown in **Figure 3.1**.

TAECC meetings provide the ideal opportunity for GOs and NGOs to discuss and agree collaborative programmes. To assist the design of collaborative programmes TAECCs could use the following criteria:

CRITERIA FOR COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES

- the project should be concerned with agricultural extension;
- the project should be collaborative (joint implementation between one or more EPICC members);
- the extension approach is in line with NAEP components, particularly participatory approaches;
- it should benefit a local target group within the NAEP criteria;
- it promotes environmentally friendly activities;
- it is approved by the TAECC;
- adequate agreement i.e. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is drawn up; and
- arrangements for monitoring and dissemination are in place.

Annex V shows the MoU approved by EPICC's Institutions Sub-Committee which could be adopted by organisations which undertake collaborative projects. It outlines the responsibilities of each collaborating partner and provides details of the financial arrangements for collaboration.

3.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARTNER

A partner will usually fall into one of the three broad categories outlined in **Chapter 1**:

- Non Government Organisations;
- the Private Sector; or
- Government Organisations.

Just like DAE, organisations within each group will have their own ways of planning, implementing and monitoring their work programmes. This manual cannot provide detailed guidelines on how DAE should work with every kind of organisation. There are too many and the approach adopted needs to be locally applicable and relevant to all the agencies who agree to work together in partnership. However, this manual outlines some general

points for DAE to consider when working with NGOs. Although emphasis has been given to working with NGOs it is important to remember that partnerships between GOs can be as valuable in terms of providing a more efficient and effective integrated service to farmers. Likewise carefully planned and agreed work programmes in partnership with the private sector can also help field staff deliver a service which is better than DAE could provide on its own.

Working with Non Governmental Organisations

NGOs can be useful partners because:

- **they can assist with ensuring that extension support is provided to all categories of farmers:** NGOs can often offer experience of working with small, marginal and women farmers;
- **they can assist with working with groups:** utilising existing groups within the community to disseminate extension messages is an efficient way of reaching a larger proportion the farming population and different categories of farmers (see **Chapter 4**). Most NGOs in Bangladesh form groups as the central forum through which their development activities take place. GO agencies utilising NGO groups requires a commitment to partnership by GO and NGO;
- **extension activities can be co-ordinated:** co-ordination of extension activities involves sharing of information and expertise between different extension agents in order to optimise resources.

Perspectives

The NAEP is a Government Policy which invites NGOs to work more closely with their counterparts in government agencies. It is a positive gesture but it should not be assumed that NGOs will adopt it in the same way that DAE has. There are a number of reasons for this which are briefly discussed below.

There is a lot of variety within the NGO sector and amongst NGOs involved in agriculture. Not all NGOs are good at the same thing. To maximise the skills and capabilities within the NGO sector, DAE should be aware of the different strengths of NGOs. This is particularly important for field staff when they are trying to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Many NGOs are keen to explore new methodologies and technologies. This requires that they have highly qualified technical staff and sufficiently flexible management structures to give local staff freedom to experiment. Once new technologies have been tested in pilots and proven successful, an NGO may seek the co-operation of a government department to replicate a new idea.

If DAE wishes to benefit fully from the capabilities of the NGO sector, as the NAEP suggests, then the ability of NGOs to *innovate* should be recognised and encouraged. The revised extension approach also emphasises the importance of decentralised decision making, which should mean that locally based government staff should be confident to introduce new ideas / technologies that they have heard about from NGOs.

As well as having a group of stronger well funded NGOs, Bangladesh has a growing number of small local NGOs. Their strength is often in having local contacts and being able to implement simple packages. They often need technical advice and cannot afford to pay for highly qualified staff. They are obvious partners for situations where DAE is trying to spread established technologies. The small NGO may be prepared to give DAE access to their groups, or to disseminate a message or a technique among group members.

Establishing Good Relations with NGOs

Partnership and collaboration initiatives are more likely to succeed if both partners are comfortable with the activities being implemented.

A useful guide for working with NGOs includes:

- recognising that NGOs have different strengths. For example, are they good at innovation, implementation, or other activities? NGOs are often very different from each other. Options for partnership should be built on the true strengths of an NGO;
- minimising differences in organisational procedures which could cause problems in the implementation of joint activities. This can be done through careful planning at the initial stages of partnership / collaboration.

Promoting and Monitoring DAE / NGO Activities

DAE needs to continue to promote and monitor its activities with NGOs regardless of whether they are formal or informal. The District Training Officers (DTOs) and the Regional Additional Directors are responsible for these tasks as shown below.

DAE / NGO LIAISON: THE ROLE OF DISTRICT TRAINING OFFICERS

In addition to managing the training activities in the district, DTOs are required to monitor DAE / NGO partnership within the district and promote DAE / NGO partnership. The specific activities for this are:

Monitoring:

- assimilating information from thana level about the extent of DAE's contact with NGOs by extracting and analysing data from SEMs showing 'collaborating agency' in consultation with the District Designated SEMs Officer;
- summarising the forms prepared at thana level which list 'groups' in each Block in a thana (i.e. community groups, NGO groups). See **Chapter 4** for further details;
- comparing SEMs results with Group Forms. This should show whether DAE is working with groups that have expressed a 'high' interest in receiving DAE support or whether there is more scope for working with NGOs in the district;
- finding out whether there are any successful collaborative initiatives between the DAE and NGOs in the district, whether there are any constraints to DAE / NGO collaboration and whether NGOs are attending TAECC meetings;
- speaking with thana and district staff to find out their attitudes to working with NGOs.

Promoting:

- consulting with the DD, to use the monthly TAO Briefing Meeting to collect information / problems about collaboration with NGOs and to encourage TAOs to invite NGOs to the TAECC meetings;
- making and sustaining contact with NGOs in the district and encouraging thana level staff to maintain good relations with NGOs in each thana;
- fostering NGO attendance and involvement in the TAECCs and the DEPCs according to the published criteria;
- encouraging district and thana staff to look for options for promoting joint activities with NGOs and solving problems concerning DAE / NGO liaison where possible;
- attending and supporting particular events which involve DAE and an NGO (for example a review meeting of a DAE / NGO collaborative project).

Performance Indicators:

Preparing a brief quarterly report which assesses the status of DAE / NGO relationships in the district for submission to the Regional Additional Director. This report should include:

- statistics on the number of NGOs that DAE has contact with;
- brief details of particular joint initiatives between DAE and NGOs;
- a brief description of activities undertaken to promote DAE / NGO liaison;
- problems or issues concerning working with NGOs that have been identified by field staff.

DAE / NGO LIAISON: THE ROLE OF THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTORS

The main role of the Regional Additional Director is to support DTOs monitoring of DAE / NGO relationships. The main responsibilities for DAE / NGO Liaison are:

Reviewing Region wide DAE / NGO Liaison:

- ensuring that the DTOs produce a quarterly report on liaison in their respective Districts;
- convening a quarterly meeting with the DTOs, exclusively for the purpose of reviewing DAE / NGO Liaison. The DTOs should present their quarterly reports on DAE / NGO Liaison on this occasion. This meeting should be minuted and used as the basis for preparing a Regional Quarterly Report on DAE / NGO Liaison.

Supporting Partnership:

- attending events which foster DAE / NGO partnership (such as GO-NGO workshops);
- supporting joint DAE / NGO projects and events (for example meetings reviewing collaborative initiatives);
- attempting to solve problems concerning DAE / NGO liaison as highlighted in the DTO's quarterly report.

Reporting to the DAE / NGO Liaison Committee:

Regional Additional Directors may be invited to attend meetings of the DAE / NGO Liaison Committee (see below) if they choose to discuss issues raised in specific quarterly reports. Using the DTOs quarterly reports Regional Additional Directors are required to submit a quarterly summary of the District reports.

These should include:

- details of successful collaboration between DAE and an NGO;
- issues of particular concern which require policy decisions from the DAE / NGO Liaison Committee; i.e. problems that DAE encounter in the field concerning working with NGOs;
- suggestions (if any) for research / further investigation that could be undertaken by the DAE / NGO Liaison Committee to further understanding of DAE / NGO partnership.

The DAE / NGO Liaison Committee

The DAE / NGO Liaison Committee meets quarterly at DAE HQ to consider ways of fostering DAE / NGO partnership and to make policy decisions on DAE's activities with NGOs. It is chaired by the Director General DAE and is attended by senior representatives of the key NGOs involved in agriculture.

The committee is responsible for:

- recommending to DAE institutional mechanisms and procedures which will facilitate collaboration;
- identifying areas for possible DAE / NGO collaboration, keeping a linkage with the Extension Policy Implementation Co-ordination Committee (EPICC);
- developing a system for monitoring DAE / NGO collaborative activities including documenting of experiences gained within the DAE / NGO agriculture sector; and
- liaison with the DAE management committee to advise the review and testing of participatory planning.

A number of mechanisms are already in place for promoting partnership. Whether these mechanisms are useful depends most of all on the attitudes of both DAE staff and members of partner agencies. An attitude that welcomes and realises the potential of partnership takes time to develop. Informal contact with counterparts in other agencies, small scale experiments in joint activities and exchange of information regarding farmers needs represent the first steps towards embodying partnership as a normal way of working.

Partnership with the Private Sector

There is a rapidly growing private sector in Bangladesh, engaged in the sale of agricultural implements, inputs and outputs. Obviously, the private sector is interested in increasing its contact with farmers, to increase sales. Partnerships can be developed between DAE and the private sector, where the private sector meets part of the cost of an extension event, and DAE provides access to farmers for the private sector. However, DAE must remain non partisan and should not develop close relationships with specific private products. Here are some examples of partnership with the private sector.

EXAMPLES

- dealers could be invited to the thana or district fair to show their products to farmers, in return for the cost of the stall, or information leaflets. DAE could even assist the dealers in designing high quality leaflets;
- private sector representatives could be invited to TAECC, DEPC or ATC meetings to see if they are interested in funding specific events at which their products may form part of the event (for example, irrigation pump repair and maintenance training courses);
- the private sector and DAE could agree to exchange training for example, private sector pump dealers could train DAE staff (or farmers directly) in the operation and maintenance of its pumps. DAE could provide the dealers with irrigation information sheets to pass on to farmers who visit the dealer.

Partnership with Government Organisations

As the implementation of the NAEP begins to take effect agricultural services are likely to become more closely integrated. This may require that DAE staff work more closely with other Government agencies. For example, BS may be requested to provide basic information to farmers on behalf of other agencies.

In addition, there is likely to be an increase in joint activities between government organisations. These can be discussed and agreed during TAECC meetings. Where these activities are formal, they should be included in the annual plan. Less formal types of partnership can also take place between government agencies. For example:

- other departments could be invited to attend the thana or district fair; or
- government agencies, perhaps through the TAECC or DEPC, could agree to pool or share resources such as slide sets, flipcharts flash cards, training curricula or other visual aids.