



ICT-enabled knowledge brokering for rural farmers in Bangladesh — Faisal Islam

Globalisation is increasingly exposing small-scale entrepreneurs, the majority of which are women, to market conditions for which they are ill-prepared. Therefore, (women) farmers need to adopt new means such as diversification, value-addition, non-farm production and marketing mechanisms. There is growing acceptance that appropriate use of ICT can lead to improved



knowledge and productivity necessary for long-term economic stability and resilience of farming communities in developing economies such as Bangladesh.

Rural agricultural communities in Bangladesh face a number of issues. Bangladesh is at the forefront of climate change, which translates into frequent flooding and soil salinity. In addition, farming communities are marginalised in terms of timely access to cropping and market knowledge. Thus, rural farmers are in dire need of permanent solutions to overcome barriers to production.

This case study highlights an ICT-enabled knowledge brokerage system which has been developed by a regional NGO working in the Jhenidah district of Bangladesh. The Agricultural Knowledge

Management System (AKMS), which brings together organizations, a variety of sources of knowledge, methods of communication, and behaviours involved in the agricultural process, supports farmers' critical decisions throughout the year, e.g. credit applications, crop selection, tillage methods, pest control, harvesting, post-processing, and marketing. The system is based on a participatory content development model that meets several development objectives simultaneously: it identifies gaps in needed content, develops them in a language and terminology accessible to target users, increases demand for rural ICT access, builds individual and organizational ICT skills in rural communities, and strengthens the capacity of communities to engage in dialogue, and access /contribute to regional and global knowledge.

The NGO has trained from educated youth from

participating rural farming communities ~ who are deeply rooted in the community and highly accepted within their society ~ as knowledge brokers. Assisted by knowledge provided in Bangla in both online and offline format, these brokers map the information and communication needs of clients within their agricultural economic/social system, find and provide the information they need, when they need it, in accessible terms and language, and at prices that are realistic given available resources and sustainable



the role of local intermediaries, and is leading to more sustainable farming practices and climate change adaptation.

The system is not without its problems. There are knowledge transfer challenges related to literacy/understanding, currency of information, coordination among stakeholders, the farmers, market management committee, and input providers. Effective performance of knowledge brokers is essential to overcome issues as they are catalysts for the participatory content development approach.

