



Local Agri-Business Network (LAN) Sector Brief

Why are we in this sector?

The productivity of farmers largely depends on the usage of modern cultivation techniques they adopt from agriculture information and training services. Katalyst's Local Agri-Business Network (LAN) brings both the public and private sectors together in order to deliver timely and reliable agriculture information and training services to rural farmers across Bangladesh. This is in line with the Government of Bangladesh's updated National Agriculture Policy, identifying public-private partnerships as a key tool to increase productivity in the agriculture sector.

Most farmers rely on public extension offices as main source of agriculture information. However, due to limited human resources, public extension departments are not able to cater to all farmers individually and to cover all relevant issues. This negatively affects the performance and productivity of farmers, having no access to the information and training they need to improve their yields and increase their incomes. Katalyst identified that local traders, who are organised in upazila-level trader associations and interact with both farmers and extension

officers, can act as a conduit to deliver agriculture information services directly to the farmers.

Katalyst's LAN model is utilising the existing structure and strengths of local trader associations in order to reach a vast number of farmers by developing the trader associations into focal points for agriculture information. The primary focus of LAN is to create a complementary channel to support the government public extension services to reach rural farmers more efficiently.

Vision

"Networks between upazila trader associations and farmer groups will be strengthened and used by public and private sectors as a complementary mechanism to reach more farmers."

Implemented by



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What constraints do we address?

Public extension services are not able to cater to the whole spectrum of agriculture information and services, or to reach out to all farmers individually. Another constraint is the limited information diversity of the public extension services, which leaves out crucial market-related information that the farmers need in order to sell their produce for a fair price. Additionally, public extension services focus mainly on production knowledge, ascribing less importance to marketing and post-harvest handling advice. Katalyst's LAN model is addressing these constraints in order to provide small farmers with the agriculture information and training they need to become successful cultivators.

What changes do we want to see?

Katalyst aims to increase the number of upazilas in which the LAN model is being implemented in order to reach out to more farmers. Katalyst also wants to ensure a wider acceptance of the LAN model in central extension offices and harness the potential of the network to deliver more diversified services to farmers: Public extension departments will increasingly collaborate with private sector actors to deliver improved agricultural services, central offices of extension agencies will increasingly adopt public-private partnerships in service delivery functions, and agricultural traders and other private stakeholders will provide more diversified agricultural services to targeted farmer groups.

How do we realise these changes?

In order to increase farmers' on-time access to public extension and advisory services, Katalyst builds the capacity and skills of local upazila Trader Associations (TAs). As part of the expansion process, Katalyst organised Organisational Development and Management Training, followed by trainings on information management, advocacy, and gender issues. This helps the selected TA members to understand the benefits they get from being an active information linkage between local extension service providers and the farmers.

One of the most significant achievements of the LAN model has been the formation of Public-Private Initiative (PPI) committees. PPIs offer an effective platform where farmers can make their voices heard by participating in the planning process to address all resource concerns associated with channeling improved, demand-led extension services to the farmers. The committee consists of farmer group representatives, TA members and extension officers who, thanks to training from Katalyst, are now capable of jointly solving agriculture production issues before and throughout the growing season.

In Phase 3 (2014 - 2017) of the project, Katalyst is closely working with agriculture universities and central offices of extension departments to institutionalise the LAN approach in the public extension service delivery system. The interventions are designed to integrate the model in the curriculum of the graduating extension officials and in the extension manual followed by the current officials, ensuring that the model spreads to all parts of Bangladesh. Until December 2015, Katalyst's interventions in the LAN sector have benefitted 154,450 small farmers*.



*Validated until September 2015.

Katalyst Project Office

House 20, Road 6, Baridhara ■ Dhaka 1212 ■ Bangladesh
 Phone +88 (02) 883 3172-4 ■ Fax +88 (02) 883 5452
www.katalyst.com.bd ■ www.swisscontact.org