



**MANAGE & TNAU**  
**Collaborative Training Program On**  
**mExtension: “all-in-one” Mobile Phones for Agricultural Extension**  
**12-16 September, 2016**  
**Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai**



*MANAGE and TNAU organized a collaborative Training Programme on mExtension: “all-in-one” Mobile Phones for Agricultural Extension from 12-16 September, 2016 at Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai. K. Qudsiya Jamal participated in this training as a training facilitator and she shares her experiences here.*

**BACKGROUND**

Mobile phones have transformed the way we communicate and they are one of the most dependent communication tools today. Mobile internet, another boon of this information era has enhanced the potential of mobile phones in accessing information. The National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) and TNAU jointly organized a training programme on *mExtension “all-in-one” Mobile Phones for Agricultural Extension* at the Agricultural College and Research institute, Madurai from 12-16 September 2016. This training introduced different mobile based applications relevant for extension professionals.



## THE PROGRAMME

Dr Saravanan Raj (Director Agricultural Extension, National institute of Agricultural Extension Management) welcomed the participants and gave a brief introduction about the training programme, its objectives and the broad content planned to be covered. Dr. I. Muthuchamy (Dean, Agricultural College and Research institute, Madurai) gave the presidential address in which he quoted that “change is inevitable” stressing the need for change to better adapt to new situations. The emerging ICT applications have provided new and effective ways of creating, storing and sharing of information, he said.



### Expert Presentations

Dr. R. Saravanan, gave an exploratory presentation about mExtension. He talked about the expanding reach of mobile phones and mobile internet in recent years and its application in different fields including agriculture. He also emphasized the growing role of social media in agricultural extension and how the extension networks and farmers are currently using social media to share information. In another presentation, Dr. Saravanan shared his experiences in Integrated Information Dissemination System (IIDS) from m4agriNEI a project which he led previously.

Dr. K. Kamaraj, founder of Vidiyal NGO highlighted about Life Long Learning for farmers (L3F) program. In collaboration with IKSL, information regarding goat rearing through voice messages is forwarded to registered members with the help of group leaders via push messages. The knowledge impact is such that it attracted many women to take up loan to start up their own goat rearing ventures by joining the SHG groups.

Dr. N. Sriram, Program Coordinator, KVK, Sandiyur, TNAU, briefed the participants about the interactive multimedia based agro-advisory system and expert system by TNAU. He explained in detail about the Expert System, an offline module for a farmer, which can be installed into the Android and Windows devices like tablets, smartphone, laptops, etc.

Dr. S. Selvam, Professor. ADAC & RI, Trichy, highlighted about the role of mobile phones in market intelligence, where mobiles have turned up into a major handy marketing platform, which is no longer viewed as a trend but as a business tool. He detailed about the activities of agro-market intelligence cell and business promotion center where information on market price and price forecast are delivered to farmers through mobile phones. The lecture threw light on mExtension having a way forward in agro markets.

Mr. Arun, State head of IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd (IKSL), Tamil Nadu, enlightened the gathering about different services of IKSL like Green SIM, Helpline, Kisan call center, mobile app, expert advice, etc. He explained about the services being offered through the IFFCO KISAN mobile App viz., information related to weather, news, market rates, agriculture library, business, job opportunities, etc. including sharing of need-based agricultural videos, voice calling, along with the on-time expert advice.



Mr. U. K. Balaji Saravanan, Department of Information Technology, Salem, handled a technical session with Android basics and about how to create a mobile application, writing codes and online software for creating Mobile apps.

### Presentation by the participants

Dr. C. K. Timbadia, Programme Co-ordinator, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Navsari, Gujarat, shared his understanding of the mExtension activities of KVK. The KVK has established e-Connectivity centre which enables the farming communities to get regular text messages on all agricultural and allied sector information. The KVK has also organized awareness programmes which are broadcasted live in N7 channel.

Dr. K. Dattatri, Principal Scientist, ICAR-ATARI, CRIDA, Hyderabad presented about Annapurna Krishi Prasaar Seva project, an ICT model using Information Technology for agricultural extension. The farmers who were registered in this project can utilize free call service by calling on to a toll free number 18004253141 for interacting with the scientists directly to aid them in solving their problems. The project also offers regular voice calls and text messages on the season, climate and crops cultivated in the area.



Dr. Bimal. P. Bashir, Senior Research Fellow-AICRP, Kerala shared a different arena i.e., goat improvement through the usage of mExtension. He presented about opportunities in this sector like developing mobile apps for management and consultancy services, developing websites for online sales of goats and providing training to the farmers with advanced ICT tools.

Dr. Ravdeep Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Veterinary & AH, GADVASU, Ludhiana, made a brief presentation where he highlighted about the activities of PAU & GADVASU using mExtension. His Ph.D. research was about developing mobile app for dairy farmers which included need survey, application development, pretesting, validation of content & app.



Dr. D. A. Nithya Shree, Professor AICRP (H.Sc. extension), Dharwad, Karnataka, shared her experiences on mExtension, where she developed some video modules on women health. The videos were stored in Micro SD cards which were distributed to rural women. It served as a platform for them to gain knowledge on women health in an offline mode. She pointed that this innovation had two major advantages:

- Videos can be watched at their convenience as time is the major constraint for household women,
- The offline mode facility eluded the data & network complexities.

Dr. C. H. Padmavathi, Deputy Director Horticulture, Andhra Pradesh, explained about online farmers database management through HORTNET and networking farmers online by saving time and travel to department offices. She explained the various features and functioning of the website which gave a deep insight to the activities of Andhra government through IT applications.



The entire session comprised a series of presentations by the trainees where they shared their experiences & knowledge, on the use of ICT tools especially through mobile phones which threw some light on the scope, importance, and challenges in mExtension.

## Demonstrations

Dr. Parthasarathy, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Telangana, took a technical session on the aspects related to creating a Blog channel and social media account. He demonstrated creation of blogs and how other online services are provided. Dr. P. Mooventhan, Scientist- ICAR, Raipur, one of the trainees gave a procedural presentation on video making. He explained about the technical aspects of making a video clipping like formats, pre-production, post production, exporting, importing audio video files and many more. He demonstrated how to edit videos using Non-linear Video Editing System (NLE). These practical sessions gave an opportunity to gain practical skills in handling ICT tools with much ease and convenience.

## Visits

The participants had an opportunity to visit the MSSRF centre at Kannivadi Village. The center in-charge started the session by briefing the activities of MSSRF, mainly focusing on the mobile based services. Several farmers during the interactive session shared their experiences with use of information available through ICTs especially through mobile phone.



## MY IMPRESSIONS

- The training programme had a mix of learning events such as lectures, demonstrations, field visits, documented videos, energizers and experience sharing and these helped participants to learn from wider experiences
- The programme started with the pairing up of participants for mutual introduction with interesting facets of each other. This helped each one to know the rest of the participants better and made interactions easier
- The world café exercise on day 1, wherein participants participated in four conversational rounds to answer specific questions related to current initiatives, good practices, strengths and challenges in mExtension helped participants to share their experiences and perspectives on the topic.

- The ice breaking session and the motivational videos kept the participants alive and active throughout the training program. The video on mobile phones filmed with animation characters in a real time, showed the wonders that mobile phones could do instigating the participants to use them to support farmers.



- The experience sharing session by the participants added extra essence to the training programme, creating a discussion platform.
- Interactions with farmers who are using ICTs provided the trainees an opportunity to have a closer understanding of their experiences with use of ICTs
- Resource materials and photos were provided in CD-ROM for their future references along with the participation certificates.
- Participants could share their feedback and take home messages in the closing ceremony
- A WhatsApp group was created with all the participants so that each could share relevant experiences and resources with the rest of the participants

The participants shared their opinions and about their learnt piece from the training programme. Dr. Ravdeep Singh, one of the trainees, observed that this training gave him insights into using mobiles to reach the unreached more efficiently. Dr. Bimal P. Bashir, another trainee, spoke about developing a mobile app for selling goats and creating an exclusive online platform to connect the farmers. Some shared that they are planning to create farmers group to connect them with IKSL to give location specific voice message services.





## FINAL REMARKS

The week long training programme provided several new insights on the use of mobile phones in agricultural extension. It was all about learning, connecting, sharing, exploring and networking and I really enjoyed every moment of this wonderful experience.

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