Course Title: Agricultural Extension & Advisory Services for Rural Development

- **Duration: 5 Days (approximately 35-40 instructional hours)**
- **Course Goal: To empower agricultural extension professionals with an understanding of modern, participatory, and demand-driven extension approaches, and to develop their facilitation, communication, and adult learning skills to effectively engage with farmers, promote the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and technologies, and foster farmer-led innovation and problem-solving for holistic rural development.**
- **Core Focus: Mastering modern extension methodologies, advanced facilitation skills, and strategies for creating impactful, farmer-centric advisory services.**

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- **Analyze the evolution of agricultural extension and apply principles of modern, pluralistic, and demand-driven advisory systems.**
- **Utilize principles of adult learning to design and deliver effective training and learning events for farmers.**
- **Master core facilitation skills for leading participatory group discussions, workshops, and farmer-led experiments.**
- **Implement a range of modern extension methods, including Farmer Field Schools, participatory technology development, and value chain approaches.**
- **Leverage Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enhance the reach and effectiveness of extension services.**
- **Conduct participatory needs assessments to ensure extension programs are relevant and farmer-centric.**
- **Integrate gender and social inclusion (GESI) considerations into all aspects of extension programming.**
- **Foster farmer-to-farmer learning networks and strengthen local innovation systems.**
- **Develop simple Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) plans to assess the effectiveness and impact of their extension activities.**
- **Create a personal action plan to enhance their extension practice and better serve farming communities.**

Target Audience:

- **Agricultural Extension Officers and Field Staff (from government, NGOs, and the private sector).**
- **Lead Farmers and Community-Based Facilitators.**
- **Project Managers and Program Staff overseeing agricultural development and extension components.**
- **Researchers and technical specialists who want to improve the dissemination and adoption of their innovations.**

Prerequisites:

- **Basic understanding of agricultural practices and local farming systems.**
- **Experience or a strong interest in working directly with farmers and rural communities.**

Teaching Methodology:

This is a highly interactive and skills-based workshop, grounded in experiential learning. The methodology includes:

- **Interactive Lectures & Case Studies: Introducing modern extension theories using real-world examples.**
- **Intensive Role-Playing & Simulations: The core of the course. Participants practice facilitation, communication, and conflict resolution skills in coached scenarios.**
- **Practical Workshops: Participants will design extension session plans, develop communication materials, and create M&E frameworks.**
- **Field Visit/Analysis (if feasible): A visit to observe a farmer group, demonstration plot, or FFS, followed by a structured debrief.**
- **Group Discussions & Peer Learning: A collaborative environment for sharing field experiences, challenges, and solutions.**
- **Action Planning: Developing personal plans to implement new approaches.**

(For Online Delivery, this will be adapted using breakout rooms for role-playing, virtual whiteboards (e.g., Miro/Mural) for participatory tool practice, polls for engagement, and collaborative documents for developing extension plans.)

Materials Provided:

- **Comprehensive digital or printed workbook with key concepts, facilitation guides, and participatory toolkits.**
- **Templates for a Farmer Field School session plan, a demonstration plot plan, and a simple M&E framework for extension.**
- **A "Facilitator's Toolkit" with icebreakers, group management techniques, and question banks.**
- **Case study documents reflecting diverse extension challenges.**
- **A personal action plan template.**
- **Certificate of Completion.**

Detailed Day-by-Day Curriculum

Day 1: The New Paradigm of Agricultural Extension

- **Module 1: The Evolving Role of the Extension Professional (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - **Welcome, introductions, and course objectives.**
  - **The journey of extension: From "Transfer of Technology" to "Facilitator of Innovation."**
  - **Understanding modern extension systems: Pluralistic, demand-driven, and market-oriented.**
  - **The new role of the extension worker: Facilitator, coach, knowledge broker, and network weaver.**
  - **Activity: "My Role as an Extension Agent" – A personal reflection on current practices and future aspirations.**
- **Module 2: Adult Learning Principles for Farmer Engagement (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - **Why traditional "teaching" often fails with adult farmers.**
  - **Deep dive into Adult Learning Principles (Andragogy): Experience-based, problem-centered, self-directed, and relevance-oriented.**
  - **Creating a participatory and respectful learning environment.**
  - **Understanding and catering to different farmer learning styles.**
- **Module 3: Participatory Needs Assessment & Problem Diagnosis (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - **Moving from "top-down" to "bottom-up" program design.**
  - **Practical application of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools to understand farmer needs and priorities (e.g., Problem/Solution Ranking, Seasonal Calendars, Community Mapping).**
  - **Facilitating a root cause analysis of farmer-identified problems.**
  - **Workshop: Participants use a case study to conduct a mini-needs assessment and prioritize key issues for an extension program.**
  - **End of Day 1 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 2: Mastering Facilitation & Communication Skills

- **Module 4: The Art of Facilitation for Groups (Approx. 3 hours)**
  - **Core facilitation skills: Creating a safe space, managing group dynamics, ensuring inclusive participation.**
  - **The power of active listening and powerful, open-ended questioning.**
  - **Techniques for guiding a group to a decision or consensus without dictating the outcome.**
- **Module 5: Facilitation Practice Lab (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - **Intensive Role-Play Workshop: Participants work in small groups to facilitate short discussions or problem-solving sessions.**
  - **Focus on practicing specific skills: asking probing questions, managing a dominant participant, encouraging a quiet participant.**
  - **Structured peer and instructor feedback.**
- **Module 6: Communicating Technical Information Effectively (Approx. 2 hours)**
  - **Translating complex technical information into simple, clear, and actionable messages for farmers.**
  - **The power of storytelling, analogies, and local proverbs in communication.**
  - **Developing and using effective low-cost visual aids (flip charts, posters, real-life examples).**
  - **Workshop: "Jargon Busting" – Participants take a technical paragraph and rewrite it into a simple, farmer-friendly script.**
  - **End of Day 2 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 3: Deep Dive into Modern Extension Methods

- **Module 7: Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Practice (Approx. 3 hours)**
  - **The principles of FFS: "The plant is the teacher," discovery-based learning, farmer experimentation.**
  - **Key elements: Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA), group dynamics, and special topics.**

    - **Steps for planning, launching, and facilitating a successful FFS.**
    - **The long-term goal: Farmer empowerment and local expertise.**
    - **Workshop: Participants design a session plan for one FFS meeting, including the AESA and a special topic.**
- **Module 8: Designing & Using Effective Demonstration Plots (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - **Moving beyond "showcase" plots to "learning" plots.**
    - **Key principles: Clear objectives, valid comparisons (e.g., farmer practice vs. improved practice), proper labeling, and management.**
    - **Facilitating farmer-led evaluation of demonstration plots.**
    - **Planning and conducting impactful field days.**
- **Module 9: Participatory Technology & Innovation Development (PTD/PID) (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - **The concept of co-creating solutions with farmers, not for them.**
    - **Facilitating farmer-led on-farm trials and experiments.**
    - **Simple methods for collecting and analyzing data from farmer experiments.**
    - **Validating and promoting local innovations.**
    - **End of Day 3 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 4: Integrating GESI, ICTs & Market Linkages

- **Module 10: Gender Equity & Social Inclusion (GESI) in Extension (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - **Understanding the different needs, constraints, and priorities of men, women, youth, and marginalized groups.**
    - **Practical strategies for ensuring extension activities are inclusive and accessible to all.**
    - **Facilitating discussions on gender roles and decision-making in the household and community.**
    - **Case Study Analysis: Critiquing an extension program for its GESI responsiveness and suggesting improvements.**
- **Module 11: Leveraging ICTs for Extension & Advisory Services (Approx. 3 hours)**
    - **An overview of appropriate ICT tools for extension:**
        - **Mobile: SMS, voice messaging, WhatsApp groups, specialized apps.**
        - **Radio & Video: Creating and disseminating farmer-friendly content.**
        - **Digital Platforms: Accessing market prices and weather information.**
    - **Integrating ICTs into a blended extension approach (combining digital with face-to-face).**
    - **Challenges of the "digital divide" and strategies to mitigate it.**
    - **Workshop: Designing a simple ICT-based advisory message campaign for a specific agronomic issue.**
- **Module 12: The Extension Role in Value Chains & Market Linkages (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - **Shifting focus to a market-oriented extension approach.**
    - **Helping farmers understand market requirements (quality, standards, volume).**
    - **Facilitating the formation of farmer groups for collective marketing.**
    - **Providing information that links farmers to buyers and service providers.**
    - **End of Day 4 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 5: Farmer Networks, M&E & Your Action Plan

- **Module 13: Fostering Farmer-to-Farmer Learning & Networks (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - **The power of social learning: Why farmers trust other farmers.**
    - **Identifying, training, and supporting lead farmers or community knowledge workers.**
    - **Facilitating farmer exchange visits and knowledge-sharing events.**
    - **Strengthening the role of farmer organizations as hubs for learning.**
- **Module 14: Monitoring & Evaluating Your Extension Work (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - **Simple, practical M&E for extension professionals.**
    - **Developing indicators to measure reach, adoption, and farmer satisfaction.**
    - **Using participatory M&E tools to get feedback from farmers (e.g., feedback sessions, simple scoring).**
    - **Using M&E data to learn from your work and improve your extension strategies.**
    - **Workshop: Developing a simple M&E plan for a specific extension activity.**
- **Module 15: Your Personal Extension Practice Action Plan (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - **Action Planning Workshop: Participants reflect on their key learnings.**
    - **They create a personal action plan to:**
        1. **Integrate a new extension method into their work.**
        2. **Improve a specific facilitation or communication skill.**
        3. **Take one step to make their work more inclusive.**
- **Module 16: Course Review & Commitment to Farmer-Centric Extension (Approx. 1 hour)**
    - **Review of key modern extension principles and skills.**
    - **Open forum for final questions and sharing key insights.**

- **Participants share one key commitment from their action plan.**
- **Course evaluation and closing.**

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