



Information Channels Sector Brief

Why are we in this sector?

The Information Channels (IC) sector comprises both Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and media (TV, radio, and newspapers). The sector can play a significant role in addressing an underlying constraint that the farmers face in agriculture – lack of access to information on appropriate farming and cultivation techniques. Katalyst's interventions in the IC sector are providing the farmers with the timely and accurate agriculture information they need to become successful cultivators. Assigning a key role to ICT and the media in the country's development strategy, the Government of Bangladesh aims to utilise these information channels in order to boost productivity in the agriculture sector.

The availability of relevant, up-to-date agriculture information and services is one of the key elements to empower small farmers, allowing them to reduce production losses and increase productivity. Easy access and widespread usage of ICT and media make these information channels an ideal leverage tool to provide reliable agriculture information to rural farmers all over Bangladesh. According to a

recent study done by Katalyst, 90% of farmers watch television, and 84% of farming households own at least one mobile phone.

However, ICT-based agriculture solutions are often not designed with the needs of poor farmers in mind, and agriculture media programmes frequently lack in expertise and technical know-how. Therefore, Katalyst in Phase 3 (2014 - 2017) of the project is working with key public and private partners in the IC sector to ensure that farmers get reliable, timely agriculture information in easily accessible ways.

Vision

"Farmers and policy makers will have access to relevant information solutions delivered through various information channels."

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What constraints do we address?

Katalyst addresses a number of key constraints in the IC sector in order to utilise ICT and media for the effective dissemination of agriculture information: The private and public sectors alike need more expertise in designing appropriate ICT-based services for farmers. Similarly, most agriculture TV and radio programmes lack the know-how to produce quality agricultural content. Even where such programmes and services exist, most farmers are not aware of these, as accessing agriculture information through ICT- and media-based channels is a new concept for them. Furthermore, many service providers, from agriculture helpline agents to journalists producing agriculture-related content, do not have the necessary training and skills to convey agriculture information in farmer-friendly ways.

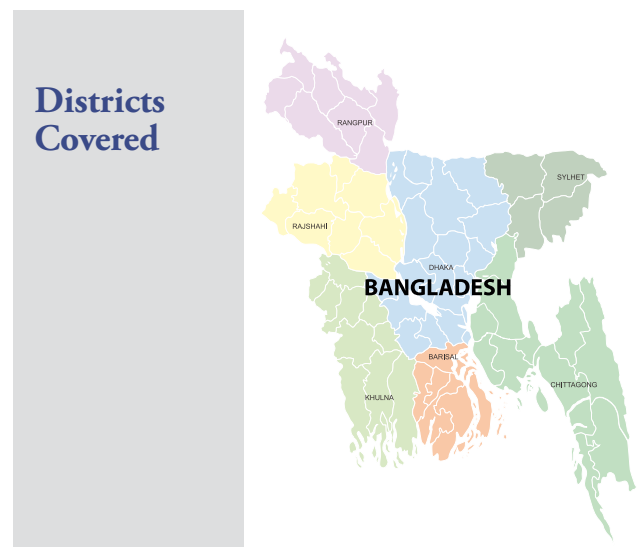
What changes do we want to see?

Katalyst envisions a thriving IC sector where actors such as agriculture input companies, telecom operators and media houses increasingly incorporate IC tools as an effective means to deliver reliable and timely agriculture information to a mass scale of farmers. Academia and training institutes will further build the capacity of journalists to increase coverage of agriculture topics and convey information in more farmer-friendly ways. Ultimately, an increasing number of small farmers will be able to access agriculture information that will protect them from potential losses, reduce costs and improve yields, resulting in increased income and improved livelihoods.

How do we realise these changes?

Katalyst works together with various television and radio stations in order to incorporate more farmer-

friendly content in their agriculture programmes. Journalists from print and electronic media are being linked with farmer associations to promote advocacy of agriculture issues. Katalyst is collaborating with agro input companies to launch ICT-based agro solutions and replicating the model with other actors in the industry to reach more farmers. Katalyst also partners with a major telecom operator, linking the company with the relevant government agency, which will enable farmers to connect to government extension officials by using a designated helpline. Moreover, the 'Access to Information' (A2i) programme is working together with Katalyst to establish the Union Digital Centers as reliable information sources for farmers. Awareness campaigns in collaboration with IC partners are further promoting the usage of media and ICT as an effective and trustworthy agriculture information source among rural farmers. Until December 2015, Katalyst's interventions in the IC sector have benefitted 344,858 small farmers*.



*Validated up to June 2015.

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