Research, Situational Analysis, and Learning Agenda for NARES in India and Bangladesh

The central objective of the learning agenda was to understand the capacities of the National Agriculture and Research Education Systems (NARES) to contribute to Inclusive Agricultural Transformation (IAT) in Bangladesh and India. The goal was to gain insights and craft a framework that outlines the NARES's vision, mission, and strategic direction to address critical and emergent challenges in IAT more effectively.

The learning agenda was to map the operating ecosystem of National Agriculture Research Organizations (NAROs) within the NARES structure. A landscape review and research for NARES were undertaken to achieve this learning agenda across both countries. The study adopted a mix of tested conceptual frameworks. These frameworks included:

The burke-Litwin model for NARES organizational assessment: The model was used to understand an organization's components, how they interact with each other, and the external environment. In the context of NARES, the model helped identify key constructs, such as:

- external factors and influencers,
- strategic factors, such as leadership, mission, and vision,
- operating factors, including organizational structure, practices, and processes
- individual factors such as skills, competencies, and motivation, and
- outputs including achievement of organizational targets.

Primary qualitative interviews with community platform operators and farmers (men and women): Under this component, the team conducted interviews with farmers and local community platforms that provide extension services. Tentative vital areas of inquiry included:

- type of services provided,
- quality of services by farmers,
- existing bottlenecks and challenges,
- new and innovative implementation practices, and
- role played by private players/farmer cooperatives.

Sambodhi provided the following activities within this assignment:

TASK 1: Mapping the ecosystem, with a specific focus on engagement with the private sector

- Networks (interface and relationships) connecting NARES with ecosystem players, including government, private sector, civil society, academic, and community realms was mapped to understand communication, information and decision flow; and how this affects NARES functioning
- The role of the private sector (whether multinational companies, large national companies working at the State or regional level, or small national companies) has increased over time – in investment R&D, provision of inputs and machinery,

technology innovations, and supporting agri- business incubators, as well as in the provision of agricultural advisory services

TASK 2: Mapping system functions and capacities at the individual, organization, and systems levels

- Capacity mapping was undertaken at all three levels.
- The selection of institutions/organizations at the state and the central level was undertaken in close consultation with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and experts proposed for the mandate.
- At the organization and system levels, foundational/transformational factors (i.e., leadership, mission/vision, strategic direction, culture, and values) were explored.
- At the individual level, scientific/technical capacity, and drivers of capacity, such as motivation, matching of jobs with expertise, working environment, needs and values, and incentives, were understood.
- Design and deployment of mechanisms for any capacity-building exercise must consider experiences and outcomes of past capacity-building exercises, the extent of their outcomes, and impacts on capacity and performance.

TASK 3: Mapping agility and responsiveness to emerging needs, use of technology, and innovation capacity

- This involved understanding the ability of constituent NAROs and the system to utilize opportunities in a dynamic agricultural sector.
- The spotlight was on mapping nimbleness in addressing climate risks through developing, using, and scaling up the technology and developing effective and integrated disaster management production systems, institutional mechanisms, and practices.
- Concerning innovation, the focus was on capturing the human capacity to innovate, the organizational capacity to support innovation, and the process by which individuals and organizations create, diffuse, and apply knowledge of products and services.

TASK 4: Engendering research and extension systems

- Focus was on understanding the extent to which NARES meets the needs of women (specifically) – understanding the extent to which NARES integrates women into priority setting, conducting of research and development, the design and deployment of services/products/schemes, and the evaluation of new technologies.
- Additionally, the nexus between the representation of women in NAROs and NARES will be investigated.

TASK 5: Mapping interface with extension systems

- Reviewing the functioning of service quality delivered by NARES through community-based platforms and perceived satisfaction with the services by target participants (i.e., men and women farmers)