**LANSA IMPACT STORY**

**School Children Take Baby Steps Toward Nutrition Awareness**

*Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) gains acceptance, thanks to community engagement efforts*

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**How LANSA addresses the problem**

Although India has seen unprecedented economic growth rates, it is home to one-third of the world’s undernourished children. Micronutrient deficiency is common in India and this could be the result of dependence of habitual diets predominantly on staple grains. The Indian agriculture sector is one of the least productive globally, yet remaining the largest employer in the country. MSSRF, through LANSA research sees the potential to exploit the agriculture space in tackling the problem of undernutrition plaguing India.

While the momentum and energy exists to tackle undernutrition through agriculture, the absence of data connecting the two frustrates these efforts. There is *little evidence* that connects the two sectors, and compounding this is the lack of a central repository of easily accessible information for decision-makers, policy influencers and programme implementers in the agriculture sector.

The *Farming System for Nutrition* (FSN) intervention integrates crop, livestock, and allied agricultural practices and nutrition literacy as a package providing a *holistic approach*.

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**Introduction**

*Farming System for Nutrition in India,* is the only action-research study under the LANSA programme, and is being piloted in two fragile rain-fed but similar agro-ecological locations (Wardha and Koraput districts) in India. MSSRF is able to couple nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions, along with nutrition and health education at various levels in these communities, including schools.

This impact story seeks to present that the village communities including farmers (men and women) have begun to accept the idea of FSN and are now engaging with LANSA researchers to adopt these changes in their communities.

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**Research to Action**

From the initial phase of the FSN feasibility study, MSSRF has been in discussion with the village communities. Their inputs were sought from the outset and incorporated into the agriculture invention design. Simultaneously, farmers were sensitisised on the nutritional gains through on-farm crop demonstrations.

Village women were also formed into groups and awareness workshops organised to sensitisise them to the benefits of growing plants rich in micronutrients. This led to MSSRF initiating *Community Nutrition Gardens* (CNG) in eight FSN villages of Wardha and Koraput districts during 2013. The women manage the garden and share the produce. Surplus vegetables are given to the village school for inclusion in the mid-day meal for the children.

Beginning in 2013, every six months, MSSRF organises *FSN stakeholder engagement* meetings and technology platform consultations with key agriculture-nutrition influencers including local government, researchers, academia, farmer-community representatives, civil society, media, and women groups.

These stakeholder engagement activities happen in both States – Maharashtra and Odisha to showcase FSN data and analysis, and to invite debate and discussion, as well as feedback and suggestions on how the feasibility study could be refined and taken up by consumers of such research. LANSA’s social media channels (Twitter & Facebook page) are used widely to propagate these meetings.

A *Farming System for Nutrition short-documentary film* was produced in 2014 by the Research Uptake Manager to communicate and disseminate the concept and the underlying research principles to agri-nutrition stakeholders in India.

Early in 2015, MSSRF reached out to the village schools as an extension to the Community and Household Nutrition Garden initiative with the aim to involve and sensitisise children on the importance of nutrition at an early age.

LANSA Nutritionists interacted with heads of the village government schools, teachers and the school cook, and the result – a government school in Susund village (Wardha district) decided to use school land for a nutrition garden. With student-teacher involvement, produce from the harvest went to the midday meal cooked at the school premises. Schools in other villages soon followed the Susund example.
FSN is a feasibility study undertaken in India by MSSRF to further this objective. A tailor-made intervention package was designed by agriculture experts in consultation with the village communities at both intervention sites that are economically, socially, and environmentally fragile. The baseline surveys conducted in 2013-14 support the study. Nutrition awareness programmes at different levels happen simultaneously.

The impact of the Farming System for Nutrition package will be assessed using a mixed method approach and all available data is gender disaggregated.

**Next Steps**

The objective of promoting backyard cultivation of fruits and vegetables is to have home produce ready to go into the diet. Hot cooked meals are provided to children in all government run schools, and vegetables are generally bought by the cook on a weekly basis on market day. Having a nutrition garden on the school premises can ensure a regular supply of fresh vegetables for inclusion in the noon meal.

School children in the FSN villages are now aware of the nutritious properties of different vegetables and the importance of consuming them. It is hoped that they will carry the knowledge to their homes and share the same with members of the household. The support of the teachers is another plus that can further the nutrition awareness drive in villages that suffer from undernutrition.

MSSRF’s engagement with communities in the FSN villages over the last two and a half years has contributed to the initiation of the Nutrition Garden in schools, and the involvement of teachers and students is an achievement of the way in which the LANSA programme at MSSRF is having an impact on rural, agricultural communities.

**References**

http://lansasouthasia.org/content/operationalizing-concept-farming-system-nutrition-through-promotion-nutrition-sensitive

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**Web Links:**

http://lansasouthasia.org/content/farming-system-nutrition
http://lansasouthasia.org/blog/sprouting-school-nutrition-gardens-fsn-study-villages
http://lansasouthasia.org/content/stakeholders-engaged-lansa-outset