

## Pakistan Narrative

### Country Context

Devastating floods in 2010 and 2011 exacerbated and highlighted the poor nutritional status of affected populations. Four in ten children under five are stunted, 15% are wasted, and 32% percent are underweight (National Nutrition Survey 2011). Nutrition is recognised as a multi-faceted issue and so to try and address the growing burden of undernutrition, international actors have facilitated the move towards multi-sectoral provincial nutrition strategies. These strategies have begun to look outside conventional nutrition sectors (such as health) into sectors such as agriculture and social protection as contributors to nutrition improvement. It is yet to be seen whether and to what extent the proposed strategies translate into effective policy and programme implementation. What is clear, however, is that there is now greater scope than before for evidence-based ideas on leveraging agriculture for nutrition.



There has been an opening in Pakistan, in the recent years, for policy action on nutrition. Constitutional reforms which transferred many powers from the centre to the provincial level of government opened up the opportunity for policy-making on nutrition at the level of government which controls the provision of public goods and services most pertinent to nutrition (for example access to food, water, sanitation and health services). Currently each of the provinces has

passed or is working to pass an inter-sectoral nutrition strategy which proposes that the health, water sanitation and hygiene, agriculture, education, women's development and social protection departments and sectors implement interventions and programmes which work to reduce undernutrition in the province.

Traditionally, government policy in agriculture has focused on increasing crop yields, maintaining food price stability and improving the distribution network of food crops, but with the provincial intersectoral nutrition strategies, agriculture has for the first time a formalized role to play in helping reduce undernutrition. This provides an opportunity to reframe agriculture policy with respect to linkages and disconnects between agriculture-nutrition.

### What is LANSA?

Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (LANSA) is a programme of research which aims to generate evidence that, with practical application, can improve nutrition outcomes in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The research under LANSA will explore the fundamental, underlying and immediate determinants of nutrition.

### LANSA Research in Pakistan

The majority of the research in Pakistan is led by the [Collective for Social Science Research \(CSSR\)](#). Through LANSA agriculture and nutrition landscaping activities, six priority areas were identified with

respect to strengthening agriculture's linkages to nutrition in Pakistan. Women's work in agriculture; access to land; institutional/organisational effectiveness; social protection; fortification and opportunities for input at the provincial level. These priority areas then informed the following LANSAs research studies in Pakistan:

### **Women's Work in Agriculture and its implications for Nutrition**

[Preliminary research](#)<sup>1</sup> indicated that the link between women's work in agriculture and child care is not well-understood and there is limited empirical evidence on women's agricultural work and its



impact on nutrition. To understand the work-care-nutrition link in detail, CSSR designed an [exploratory study](#)<sup>2</sup> that analyses the linkages between women's work in agriculture and nutrition outcomes. There is scope for agricultural policies to acknowledge nutritional impacts of women's work and to see them as stakeholders and also potential for generated evidence to help focus health and nutrition policies on the needs of women agricultural workers.

### **Impact of land grants to poor landless women on nutrition**

CSSR has designed a study that assesses the feasibility of a land grants programme as a nutrition-sensitive agricultural intervention or policy. The land grant feasibility study has the potential to inform the future design of land grants programmes and other similar interventions in Pakistan and elsewhere in South Asia whose objectives are to combine women's empowerment and agency with access to land. Results of both these research studies could begin to question the apparent gender-neutrality of agricultural-land policy on grounds of nutrition outcomes.

### **Convergence on nutrition in agricultural innovation systems**

The innovation systems study identifies and characterises agricultural innovations operating in Pakistan that are converging on key nutritional concerns, or that have a potential to do so. Specifically this [research](#)<sup>3</sup> focuses on livestock and kitchen gardening, both of which relate to women's work in agriculture and land. This research could highlight areas where agricultural interventions either funded by the government, donors or NGOs could focus to improve nutrition, emphasizing where in these networks innovation is occurring and how it is being dispersed and adapted, shedding light on how these interventions actually operate in practice. In addition, this study's focus on innovating within existing resources should have impact on land policy and programme design.

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<sup>1</sup> Agriculture and Nutrition in Pakistan: Pathways and Disconnects, M Balagamwala & H Gazdar, 2013. <http://www.lansasouthasia.org/content/agriculture-and-nutrition-pakistan-pathways-and-disconnects>

<sup>2</sup> Women's Agricultural Work and Nutrition in Pakistan: Findings from Qualitative Research, M Balagamwala, H Gazdar & H Mallah, 2015. <http://www.lansasouthasia.org/content/women%E2%80%99s-agricultural-work-and-nutrition-pakistan-findings-qualitative-research>

<sup>3</sup> Convergence on Nutrition in Agricultural Systems of Innovation: Concepts and Methods with examples from Pakistan, M Loevinsohn & R Mehmood, 2014. <http://www.lansasouthasia.org/content/convergence-nutrition-agricultural-systems-innovation-concepts-and-methods-examples-pakistan>

### **Complementary foods in agri-food value chains**

The specific focus on complementary feeding lends the research a unique focus on that portion of the 1000-day population that consumes agri-food products, an age cohort where potentially large nutritional improvements can be made. Understanding household decision-making around infant feeding choices could inform future interventions. This [study](#)<sup>4</sup> aims to provide guidance to a broad range of stakeholders, including the private, public and donor sectors, in promoting market-based approaches to bringing sustainable nutritional improvements to poor populations. Research in this area has the potential to highlight areas for regulatory reform with a focus on improving nutrition, as well as provide insight into how best to work with the private sector to address undernutrition. This research also has direct implications for agriculture policy.



### **How will this research make a difference?**

LANSA research has the potential to influence diverse policy and intervention areas not only limited to agriculture, but also including social, labour, and market based. These areas are all captured within the Inter-sectoral Nutrition Strategy and so it is in this policy space that LANSAs will work to ensure impact through its research. Through ongoing engagement with stakeholders, using a variety of channels, including consultations, interviews, conferences, policy briefs and blogs, LANSAs aims to use the generated evidence to inform policy and programme decisions to enhance nutrition through agriculture. The multifaceted nature of undernutrition means that it may be effectively addressed only when several sectors and strategic efforts are combined together. The research aims to contribute to policy changes that will strongly establish the agriculture-nutrition linkages and enhance nutrition outcomes in Pakistan.

### **For more information**

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<sup>4</sup> Markets for Nutrition Policy Brief, J Humphrey & S Zuberi, 2015. <http://www.lansasouthasia.org/content/markets-nutrition>