

Bringing women's work into focus

Multi-level efforts to increase recognition of women's work in agriculture



Summary

Agriculture, the backbone of Pakistan's economy, [can help improve nutrition](#). The role of the women workers who drive the sector has been a blind spot amongst policy makers who fail to recognize how women in agriculture often work for cheap rates or even for free. The negative effect of this on their health and the nutritional wellbeing of their children is [missing](#) from policy discourse. In 2017, **LANSA Pakistan tried to bring focus to this issue by giving inputs into provincial-level programming and by obtaining public pledges of support from policymakers and civil society organisations at the national and provincial levels for the legal recognition of women agricultural workers.** These successes built upon research uptake efforts since the inception of LANSA such as publishing high profile research, influencing discourse in the media,¹ investing in relationships with likeminded individuals in multi-laterals agencies and government departments, and providing input to government projects.²

Providing input at the provincial level

In February 2017, Haris Gazdar (lead researcher, LANSA Pakistan) used preliminary LANSA findings to **provide input to the planning and implementation of the Sindh government's "Accelerated Action Plan for Nutrition (AAP)"** as a member of its taskforce of experts. AAP aims to streamline and scale up ongoing interventions for nutrition in Sindh, addressing policy gaps where needed. LANSA Pakistan also engaged with the Chair of the

taskforce who is also a Member of the National Assembly and provided inputs for potential debate within the Assembly.

Affecting national discourse

LANSA Pakistan **deepened its ongoing relationship with the National Commission for the Status of Women (NCSW) this year, raising the need for recognition of women's agricultural labour in multiple fora.** Mr. Gazdar was invited to give inputs first as guest speaker and later as member of the NCSW Advisory Committee for their annual publication, the "Status of Women Report" (SWR). For the 2016 SWR on [economic empowerment of women](#), Mr. Gazdar shared insights from the recently completed baseline survey for "Women's Work and Nutrition" and requested the inclusion of women agricultural workers as a key stakeholder group. For the SWR 2017 on gender equality and empowerment, Mr. Gazdar made a keynote presentation on rural women's health at the Advisory Committee roundtable in July, and raised the issue at a consultation in November. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from academia, donor agencies and the government and is led by the Director of Center of Gender and Policy Studies.



Member National Assembly Dr. Nafisa Shah (center) speaking at the ANH policy dialogue, July 2017

Building support at grassroots

In October 2017, NCSW and LANSA Pakistan co-sponsored a [policy dialogue](#) on nutrition and health to **build broader support for legislative action that can help recognize, protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of women workers in agriculture**. The session was convened at the [10th Annual Conference on the International Day of Rural Women](#) in Islamabad, organized by the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA). The panel featured a respected activist, a legislator, a public health expert and a legal expert³ to explore the nature and implications of women's agricultural work on nutrition and discuss how legislative action can be taken to recognize them as farmers and labourers. The event was attended by representatives from various community organizations, government bodies, donor agencies and INGOs.

Panelists agreed on the need for recognition of women agricultural workers' work burden and the time trade-off they face in either working or caring for their children. **Legislator Sabiha Nazeer highlighted women's lack of agency over income from their work and invited workers from her constituency to join the [Kissan Board](#)**, an NGO dedicated to "protecting interests of farming community", as a first step towards recognition of their rights. The session was chaired by the **Chair of the NCSW who called on all political parties to**

Recognizing the need to take urgent steps regarding Nutrition and Health of Rural Women (SDG 3) the conference demands that:

1. All women who do any work in farming, livestock and fisheries, whether the work is paid or unpaid, whether it is as labourers or as family helpers, to be given legal recognition as 'farmers and agricultural workers' and entitled all rights of farmers and labourers [Conference Resolution 12]
2. Policies and programs in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, health, nutrition and social protection must take into account and proactively mitigate any negative impacts of women's work in agriculture on their health and the health and nutrition of their children [Conference Resolution 13]

Box 1: Excerpt from PODA Pakistan's Conference Resolution

come together to create a manifesto for rural women and make concerted efforts for recognizing the role of women agricultural workers at all policy levels. The discussion and demands from the dialogue were also **adopted as part of the Conference Resolution demands** (Box 1).

Raising this issue at the global level

In October 2017, Mr. Gazdar was invited by UN-Women headquarters to **present emerging findings from LANSA research at a special event at the United Nations in New York**. The [session](#) was held to **have evidence inform the deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly on the sub-item "women in development"**. More specifically, the theme of the discussion was poverty and women's work in South Asia. It was convened by [UN Women](#), moderated by its Executive Director, and chaired by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations.⁴ It was attended by approximately 120 representatives from over 50 countries. **Mr. Gazdar highlighted the need for recognition of women agricultural workers' rights, particularly rural women, a theme that was reiterated by the Chair of the session in his closing remarks.** This engagement not only led to the issue of recognition of rural women's rights being discussed at the UN General Assembly, but was also a key input in LANSA Pakistan's ongoing engagement with UN-Women, a key stakeholder nationally and internationally on the issue.



Policy dialogue on nutrition and health sponsored by National Commission on Status of Women and LANSA Pakistan, October 2017

Public pledges of support

At the 2nd Agriculture, Nutrition, Health (ANH) Academy Week and Feed the Future Nutrition Innovation Lab Scientific Symposium in Kathmandu, LANSA Pakistan curated two events in partnership with [Dr. Nitya Rao](#) (LANSA Gender cross-cut lead). The informal networking evening and the [panel discussion](#)⁵ was attended by senior activists, legislators, policy makers and academics from across South Asia. LANSA Pakistan invited the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women and a Member of National Assembly nominated by Chair of the AAP taskforce to view the issue from an international perspective.

The discussions at both events were framed using emerging LANSA findings from [India](#) and [Pakistan](#) and showed clearly that in countries, such as India, where the government recognizes the contribution of women agricultural workers, there is greater entitlement at the community level, even if there are gaps in implementation. These discussions helped raise the visibility and credibility of the issue at the national level in Pakistan, resulting in **public pledges of support from the policy makers from Pakistan** (Box 2).

A number of public pledges of support were made at the LANSA events, including:

1. Hosting a session on the theme of women in agriculture at the “South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation” (SAARC),
2. Moving a private members’ bill in the National Assembly for national level policy debate,
3. Including the issue of recognition as part of the election manifesto of a national level political party for the general elections in 2018,
4. Exploring the link between women’s agricultural work and nutrition in Pakistan’s submission to the UN Commission on the Status of Women for the session in 2018, with the priority theme of gender equality and empowerment of rural women and girls.

Box 2: Public pledges of support at LANSA event, July 2017

Results

LANSA Pakistan’s research uptake and engagement efforts in 2017 have focused on stressing the link between women’s agricultural work and nutrition in the country. Through interconnected efforts at multiple levels, it has helped build a case for this recognition, given input to government programmes, and gotten public pledges of support. LANSA will continue to build on this momentum and ensure greater sustainability of these efforts in its final months.

For further information

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¹ Refer to LANSA Pakistan Impact Story 1 and LANSA Pakistan Impact Story 2

² Refer to LANSA Pakistan Impact Story 2

³ The dialogue was titled ‘Women Agricultural Workers: Recognize, Promote and Protect’ and featured Ms. Akeela Naz (Member, Anjuman Muzareen and Executive Committee Member, Peasant Women Society), Dr. Huma Qureshi (Public Health Specialist, NCSW), Ms. Benazir Jatoi, (Lawyer and activist) and Ms. Sabiha Nazeer (Member, National Assembly of Pakistan and associated with PML-N). The session was chaired by Ms. Khawar Mumtaz (Chairperson, National Commission on Status of Women), co-chaired by Ms. Kaukab Jehan (Executive Director, PODA) and moderated by Mr. Gazdar.

⁴ The session was moderated by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of UN Women). The panelists included Ms. Kinnon Scott (Senior Economist, Development Research Group, World Bank), Dr. Shahra Razavi (Chief, Research and Data Section, UN Women), Dr. Agnes Quizumbing (Senior Research Fellow, International Food and Policy Research Institute), Dr. Magdalena Sepulveda (Previous Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Mexico), and Mr. Gazdar.

⁵ The dialogue was moderated by Ms. Rachel Lambert (Senior Livelihoods Advisor, Department for International Development, United Kingdom) and included Dr. Nafisa Shah (Member, National Assembly of Pakistan, Pakistan), Dr. Jatinder Kishtwaria (Director, Central Institute for Women in Agriculture), Ms. Khushi Kabir, (Coordinator, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh) and Ms. Indira Dahal (Joint Secretary, Nepal Law Commission, Nepal), apart from Dr. Nitya Rao, as panelists.