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**Focused Group Discussion in Farming System for  
Nutrition study villages in Koraput**

**A REPORT**

*by*

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## 1. Introduction

Following four years of [the Farming System for Nutrition \(FSN\) study](#) in seven villages of Koraput district from 2014-17, an endline survey was conducted in late 2017 to see the impact. In order to supplement the quantitative information with qualitative understanding, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the study villages in early 2018. The following is a report of the same.

The objectives of the FGD were to:

- i. Understand the changes that the community experienced due to their choice of the interventions as also the changes in production, consumption, and nutrition due to the intervention
- ii. Understand the market side; whether they sell the produce or use it for self-consumption
- iii. Shed light on some questions which were not covered by the quantitative survey and find out any other aspects of relevance.

## 2. Methods

Study participants in groups of 12-20 were selected from each of the 7 core study villages in Koraput in February 2018. The villages are Rauliguda, Atarguda, Maliguda, Bhejaguda, Banuaguda, Chikima and Kurukuti. These members were contacted by the field office and selected randomly. Separate FGDs for men and women participants were conducted. However, one village, Atalguda, could not be covered as an important village leader passed away during the time planned for the FGD. In all, 8 FGDs were conducted, details of which are given in Table 1 below. FGDs for participants from Chikma and Kurukuti were held together while FGDs in Banauguda and Bhejaguda were conducted together. The FGDs were conducted by the project staff in Odiya. Translations that needed to be made were done by the project staff in Koraput.

Table 1: FGD Schedule and Participants

No.	Village	No. of participants	Date of FGD
1	Rauliguda	18 women	15 February 2018
2	Rauliguda	16 men	15 February 2018
3	Banuaguda and Bhejaguda	13 men	16 February 2018
4	Banuaguda and Bhejaguda	10 women	16 February 2018
5	Maliguda	12 women	17 February 2018
6	Maliguda	17 men	17 February 2018
7	Chikima and Kurukuti	15 women	19 February 2018
8	Chikima and Kurukuti	14 men	19 February 2018

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Changes in Production

The discussants said that they keep the home grown produce for eating and sell only the surplus; this indicates that the income effect is not that strong. Usually they sell rice and finger millet in the local market or the weekly market/haat. Production has increased over the last 4 years especially for rice and finger millet. Production of pulses such as black gram, green gram, horse gram and pigeon pea as well as fruits and vegetables has also increased compared to before. They grow more drumstick, papaya, onion, brinjal and cauliflower in the home gardens. In the months of summer, they sometimes have to buy vegetables from the market as well. Market dependence has reduced now. Approximately if earlier they were 80% market dependent, now market dependence is about 50%. From whatever money they get after selling produce, they buy vegetables, oil, turmeric, potato. There have been changes in agricultural practices as well. For instance, earlier they used to broadcast the seeds and now they did line cropping especially for finger millet. Line cropping has helped increase productivity.

They sell surplus produce in Doraguda, Boriguda or Boipariguda which are between 2-15



*An overview of large scale vegetable cultivation at Maliguda*

kms from the various villages in the study. They either walk or cycle or take an auto. The men are aware about Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and they even know the rate is Rs 1550 per quintal for rice. They usually eat what they grow and sell only excess. A few groups were unaware about the MSP. This is because they comprised entirely of participants who grew for self consumption as they did not possess much land. Additional income that they earn by selling is spent on food only as first priority and then on clothes, gifts for guests, other household expenditure and other necessary items.

Sometimes income is insufficient and they have to borrow to meet their needs. They buy grocery items such as sugar, oil, clothes and potatoes from whatever additional income they get.

#### 3.2 Changes in Consumption

The discussants say that they are consuming meals more often. They now eat meals 3-4 times a day. Earlier, they used to eat only twice a day. They are also consuming a more diversified diet with 2-3 food items included in their meals. Previously, they used to consume pulses only once a week; now they consume at least some pulses twice or thrice in a week. Some even eat pulses six times a week. Only lentil was eaten earlier, now they eat different kinds of pulses such as horse gram, black gram, green gram and pigeon pea. They now source more pulses and other foods from their own production. Now even if they have egg, they also make

some dal (pulses) and eat it together. They eat pulses in both whole and ground form (as flour).

They grind black gram on traditional chakki (grinder) at home and eat. A few people get it grinded at the mill which costs them about INR 10-15 for 10 kgs. Green gram is eaten in whole form as vegetable, dried and eaten as dal and as flour after grinding as well. A few pulses such as cow pea are consumed whole only. They are fond of pigeon pea due to its taste. The women also said that green gram is in shortage for 2-3 months and they sometimes buy it from the market. The pulses last for a duration of 6-8 months in the year and they have to depend on the market after that. Since it is very expensive, they refrain from buying it and try and store it at home to eat in the months pulses are expensive. According to them storage of pulses is difficult due to vulnerability to pest attack. A few participants reported keeping/preserving pigeon pea and black gram with dried turmeric leaves, neem leaves, bits of red soil and ash to prevent pest attack. This is traditional knowledge. They save seeds in gunny bags and polythene covers or in bamboo baskets in the case of paddy and finger millet/ragi. They store finger millet and black gram together in a '*mitti ka bartan*' (vessel made of mud) which protects it from pest attack. They also use gunny bags to store millets and pulses. Some people also reported using the triple layered bag promoted under the programme for safe storage.

The quality of fruits and vegetables is also better now. They consume more fruits and vegetables such as red amaranthus, lemon, custard apple, and pomegranate. They have also incorporated fruits and vegetables which they didn't consume earlier in their diet, such as guava, papaya, carrot, coriander, curry leaves, Indian spinach and Orange Flesh Sweet Potato (OFSP). Papaya is eaten as fruit as well as vegetable. Drumstick leaves are sometimes fried and eaten as a chutney<sup>3</sup> and mixed with pulses at other times. They now grow finger millet at home, so they eat more. Earlier they had to buy it from the market and women used to eat less if there was less availability. Now, since it is home grown they can eat as much as they like.

They access the ration shop and get rice and kerosene from there. From a few villages, they have to travel 5 kms to the ration shop and spend Rs10 (one way) on auto for getting the rice or kerosene. A few discussants were of the opinion that it will be better if wheat, pulses and finger millet are provided in the public distribution system (PDS) as they are necessary items. Five kg of rice and half a litre of kerosene per person per month is not enough according to quite a few participants.<sup>4</sup>



*FGD with Women, Banauguda*

<sup>3</sup> Chutney is a sauce or a dry base for a sauce in Indian cuisine

<sup>4</sup> Before 2017 March they were getting 1 litre of kerosene per person/month. Since April 2017 it has been reduced to 640ml/person/month on record, but practically they are getting half litre /person/month.

The discussants also told how they dry and keep radish, radish leaves, potato, cauliflower, bamboo shoot, pumpkin, brinjal and cabbage for consumption in the summer to the start of the monsoon months (March-June/July). First they keep for eating, and then they dry and keep for months where they have scarcity in food. They use them in summer and eat in curry form. Black gram and pumpkin is also grinded together and dried and consumed as wadi<sup>5</sup>. Radish and radish leaves and bamboo shoots are cut and dried as well. During the season, they get mango and jackfruit which they incorporate in their daily diet. Earlier they purchased snacks like puffed rice for their kids. Now they can afford to buy fruits for them.

### 3.3 Interventions

The crop interventions are very popular. The discussants feel interventions in finger millet/ragi and paddy are the best. This is staple food and with increased yield, it is directly leading to increase in consumption. They said that earlier the finger millet was consumed in a more liquid form. Now, as production is more due to line sowing, they have sufficient quantity to last through the year. There is less weed and harvesting is therefore easier. Seeds can also be saved. Taste of the ragi variety is good. Since it is home grown, the ragi gruel that they make and eat is now thicker and of better quality. It is something they consume almost daily. They also make ragi cakes. Maize-green gram and maize-pigeon pea intercropping is also useful as they get two crops. Horse gram is also good.

Their knowledge in agriculture and agricultural practices has increased. They now practice mixed cropping, line plantation and other practices which they did not know about earlier. There is an attitude of competition as well. If one does line production, others also try and follow suit. Even though there is a lot of work for transplanting, there is less work in weeding. Other family members help, however if they have school or other work, no one can blame them.

Home gardens are not exactly new for tribal subsistence communities as they grow and eat their own food. However, a few did mention that they liked nutrition garden as it gives fresh fruits and vegetables. Since not all households have ponds to practice fishery, it would be better if they could get some help in maintaining poultry.

The discussants said work has not increased. Owing to fewer weeds due to improved agricultural practices, women's work has actually reduced from before. Earlier they used to spend at least 8 days in weeding; now they do it for just 2 days due to line plantation. Earlier there was less production and more work, now there is more production and less work at least in terms of weeding. They used to do grinding of pulses and ragi at home earlier but now they get it done in the mill. Also, earlier they used to make leaf plates to be used for eating food; now they have steel plates to eat it. If there is work, more members of the household help out.

For the men, work in terms of transplanting has increased. They have to work at least ten hours in a day. They have to take regular walks in the field, to ward off animal attacks. There is a water problem in summer as well.

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<sup>5</sup> Mildly spiced sun dried dumplings made from pulses

They either buy seeds or cultivate their own saved seeds. For black gram, ragi, green gram, paddy, they use their own seeds and sometimes get from the block office as well. The yield is higher from seeds that they buy from the market. So for vegetables and crops, they plan to grow to sell, they buy seeds from the market. Fruits and vegetables such as onion, brinjal, chilly, tomato, bean, tomato, amaranthus and cereals – maize and finger millet - they use their own seeds. Cabbage and cauliflower seeds are bought from Doraguda. A few participants buy paddy seeds while a majority reported using their own seeds. Seeds given by the programme have helped them in increasing production. Last year they sold surplus production of green gram and black gram at 35-55 Rs per kg. After production, they keep for own consumption and sell the surplus or keep it for next year.

Crop residue is used as feed for livestock and for fencing or thatching. Maize and paddy residue is used for feeding and pigeon pea residue is used for fencing and for firewood. Crop residue is also burnt sometimes to clear the field.

Major challenge for seeds is pest attack. They have to use more pesticides than before as there are more variants of pests especially for cauliflower and cabbage. They have to spray 2-3 times. Now, they use more pesticides than before because earlier they did not have the knowledge.



*FGD with male members, Maliguda*

In a month, around 40-60% of the household expenditure is on food such as vegetables, pulses, oil depending on family size. They also get eggs and chicken at least once a week. Earlier they used to eat animal foods, only once a month. Both income and expenditure has increased. They eat out often. Overall, expenditure on fresh fruits and vegetables has come down but they buy more chicken, sugar, oil, amulya (milk powder). They said that they work extremely hard and eat whatever they grow. However there is water problem; if water

were available, they can grow crops in summer months. They will continue growing and eating nutritious crops even after the programme is over.

### **3.4 Other enabling factors**

The programme has strengths as it has helped increase production almost two fold especially for finger millet and pigeon pea. They said that in fact now they have more knowledge, more training on growing and eating nutritious food and awareness about food. They have not just told other people and relatives in other villages about the programme, they have also shared their better seeds with them. They are telling other people about the training and knowledge that they have got from the programme. They will continue growing and eating nutritious crops in the future.



In terms of weakness, there is inconvenience due to droughts. In the summer months, water availability is a major challenge and it'll be useful if this can be addressed. Food scarcity in summers can then be dealt with. The timing of seed planting and other practices is extremely important.



*With women farmers of Banauguda and Bhejaguda*

Sanitation facilities have improved. . There are toilets but 80% go for open defecation. Government has built toilets but the hole is just 3 feet deep and that does not help. Using toilets would mean getting more water to the toilets thereby increasing women's work. Yet, things are better as they now maintain more hygiene. They wear clean clothes, take care of cleanliness, wear slippers and cut their nails and clean children properly as well. Small kids

are sent to toilets but most grownups go out in the open. However, the village drain is not clean in Maliguda. Only 25% of the population in the

villages use LPG; most are dependent on firewood only. Gas is expensive and hence many people do not use it.

### 3.5 Nutrition and Nutrition Awareness

As health is better, they feel less tired. The women said they feel less tired than before, there is less occurrence of disease in the villages. In one FGD conducted with men, a male participant mentioned that they do get tired now as well. Fifty years ago, food would be more organic as opposed to now and diseases are more prevalent now. The health is however better in general. They said it was due to better quality of food. There have not been any big diseases or hospital admissions in the recent past.

Earlier, more people used to go for weeding. With line planting, pregnant women and women with young children need not go. Therefore health of pregnant women is also better owing to more time for rest. They also go for regular checkups. They also eat more fruits and vegetables. The men say that they rest only 2 hours in the day and hence they feel more tired. Their work has increased than before. However, there is some improvement in overall health over the past 4 years.

The participants are aware that good nutrition and good health is linked to good food. They understand that eating well makes them healthy. They don't feel too hungry now as they eat at regular intervals. Child care is now better. However, seasonality does have an effect on child care. In the harvesting time or planting season, they can't care for the child as there is a lot of work but in winters they give their full care to the child. Older women or grandmothers also take care of the children. If it is an only child, sometimes the child plays alone while the parents go to work. Sometimes, they take their children to work with them. The participants

are aware of nutrition calendar and entitlement passbook.<sup>6</sup> The entitlement passbook has helped them better their agriculture practices as they know which schemes can be availed by them. Very few men reported having seen calendar. They know about the importance of washing hands, good diet and nutrition. The children also tell messages of nutrition. They practice whatever was taught in the nutrition awareness workshops. There is definitely more nutrition awareness. Now they eat a more diversified diet. Initially, they didn't even have oil. Now oil consumption has increased. They know that green leafy vegetables (GLV), red amaranthus, Indian spinach, drumstick leaves, carrot, tomato and papaya are foods that help in tackling VAD and anaemia. A few participants also told about the diet chart which showed them what food to be given to children of different ages. They know yellow/orange fruit or vegetable like carrot, papaya are good for eye. Bones become strong by eating fruits and vegetables. Consuming non vegetarian food like fish and crab helps in reduction of joint pain and gives more strength. The Mali community in Maliguda did not eat chicken before the nutrition awareness. At least the men have started consuming chicken now. The discussants know about Community Hunger Fighters (CHF) in their villages; they have told them about the importance of a balanced diet, nutri-rich foods and incorporating fruits and GLV in the diet; Chikma village has good knowledge of CHF and things are shared. In Kurkuti, people are not much aware about CHF and his/her role. Participants from other villages feel more people should attend CHF meetings. They always ask the CHF about meetings and discussions. The discussants feel more field visits should be organized for the community as a whole so they can visit, learn and share their experience.



*FGD with Women, Chikma*

In Chikma and Kurkuti, the women mentioned that they attended meeting in the school on nutrition awareness and were taught to make oyster mushrooms; use red amaranthus, coriander and carrot in the foods they cook. There was also a demonstration on nail-cutting. They make different kinds of dal with pulses-dalma, dal mixed with moringa leaves etc. One male participant said “madam, mera weight 50 kg tha. Ab 56 kg hai. Toh swasth accha hee ho raha hoga na” (My weight has increased from 50 to 56 kg which means I am healthier, no?).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Overall, it seems the community benefited from the interventions by growing and eating healthier foods, conserving seeds and decreasing expenditure on food. They also learnt healthier and tastier recipes to cook and eat for a healthier lifestyle.

<sup>6</sup> The nutrition calendar was developed using drawings made by school children with relevant messages in Oriya on healthy habits and nutritious foods. These were distributed to all households in the study villages, schools and government institutions.

The entitlement passbook gives all government programmes and subsidies that exist in the region