

## LANSA work receives recognition

*Odisha Environment Congress 2015 awards MSSRF for work done to advance nutrition*



## How LANSA addresses the problem

Objectives of LANSA research under Pillar 3 is to test feasibility of community interventions in order that we address challenges and disconnects between agriculture and nutrition. LANSA intends to develop and promote agricultural interventions and evaluate their nutritional impact. One such community-based intervention is the FSN model that is underway in two Indian states. This is a feasibility study to evaluate its effectiveness in India so as to enable promoting it as a sustainable and scalable intervention package intended to tackle the large scale problem of undernutrition in the South Asian region.

A tailor-made intervention package was designed by agriculture experts in consultation with the village communities, and at periodic intervals agriculture-nutrition stakeholders at several levels were presented with FSN model along with the data collected to ensure both feedback and active community participation. This process was enabled by data about the state of agriculture, nutrition and health in these communities provided by the baseline surveys conducted in 2013– 2014, and from the stakeholder engagement activities which helped strengthen the study design.

Although one-sixth of the FSN village population in Odisha is landless, agriculture remains the primary occupation and agricultural labour is therefore the main source of income. The region is a rain-fed farming area characterised by subsistence agriculture, with paddy being the main crop along with some millets, pulses and vegetables that are also grown.

From the baseline data, it became clear that anaemia prevalence is more than 50% in the FSN village population and that 42 percent of children (> 5 years) are underweight. The prevalence of adult Chronic Energy Deficiency (CED; Body Mass Index <18.5) in general is relatively high (about 47%) among adult women; and also in men (about 43%).

Using the FSN tailor-made intervention purposefully designed for farmers and landless labourers in Koraput district, Odisha State, LANSA is attempting to use agricultural remedies to address the nutritional problems of these rural communities.

## Introduction

LANSA MSSRF research work under Farming System for Nutrition feasibility study being recognized and acknowledged in Odisha State is a proud moment no doubt, but the more important impact to record is the fact that periodic stakeholder engagement activity made it possible for 'nutrition' to be on the mainstream public discourse agenda.

A commendable outcome from the Odisha Environment Congress is the recommendation for Odisha State Government to set aside 5% of GDP towards "nutrition focused and nutrition-sensitive interventions" to tackle micronutrient deficiency.

## Research to Action

The Odisha Environment Congress (OEC) celebrated its sixth congress in December 2015 at Bhubaneswar, Odisha. During the Congress on December 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, LANSA was recognised for its outstanding work in the field of advancement of nutrition. The award was received from Aurobindo Behera, Former Secretary, Ministry of Forest and Environment, Odisha State and the present Member, Board of Revenue, Government of Odisha in the presence of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of Higher Education, many high-ranking Odisha state government

officials, with about 250 guests and delegates attending the OEC, comprising scientists, researchers, activists, media and students.

Ajay Parida, Chair, Consortium Steering Group of LANSA and Executive Director of MSSRF was the Keynote Speaker at the Congress and delivered an address on how MSSRF and LANSA work to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security in India. A public forum on the 2015 theme was organised and A LANSA presentation was made by Akshaya Kumar Panda, Scientist who leads the field team in Koraput for LANSA.

Since 2013, MSSRF has conducted periodic agriculture and nutrition stakeholder engagement and capacity strengthening activities, under the LANSA programme. Through, the knowledge and technology platforms established locally followed by exchanges and meetings in Odisha State, there was further strengthening of community, research scientist and public sector engagement and discourse. These stakeholder consultations have contributed to improving and refining the FSN study to suit the local environment and also provided a forum for exchange, interaction and dissemination locally through face-to-face meetings, informal discussions during conferences, workshops, etc. As a research uptake initiative, in February 2015, the LANSA India E-newsletter

was launched as a quarterly to keep the stakeholders abreast of all advances and information on the findings in MSSRF research under the LANSAs programme.



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**» Ashok Kumar Sahoo,  
NAIP – World Bank**

## Outcomes and Impacts

MSSRF receiving the recognition in December 2015 at the Odisha Environment Congress for the LANSAs programme is a direct impact of successful and widespread stakeholder engagement. Ashok Kumar Sahoo a Nodal Officer, NAIP – World Bank Project Monitoring Cell, Directorate of Research at OUAT (Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, and has been one of the foremost stakeholders actively contributing from the outset to LANSAs activities in Odisha State. He has been engaged with LANSAs evidence on a periodic basis, and was an energetic participant at the LANSAs stakeholder capacity strengthening workshop held in April 2014 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

In November 2015, A K Sahoo contributed immensely to drawing up advocacy and strategic plans to prioritize nutrition in the agriculture-policy landscape at the Agri-nutrition knowledge sharing dialogue organised by LANSAs in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Sahoo is also on the Board of the Odisha Environment Congress and to quote him: "I sincerely understand that MSSRF has nicely initiated LANSAs and I put all my energy to convey to the Board of Odisha Environment Congress to recognise and felicitate in the current event."

The 2015 theme - 'Environment, Health and Nutrition' is also a result of MSSRF LANSAs's periodic engagement with the agriculture-nutrition stakeholders and the level of rapport and trust built over the last two years. VP Singh, LANSAs's Co-Research Director was Keynote Speaker at the OEC December 2014 Conference, and the informal discussions with him and the relevant government officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Odisha, on the fringes of the event led to the organising committee deciding on including 'nutrition' as its central theme for the 2015 Congress.

## Wider environment

Micronutrient deficiency is common in India and this is largely the result of poorly diversified habitual diets based predominantly on staple cereal grains. With the Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) intervention as an action-research

feasibility study MSSRF is attempting to address this problem in India, focusing on Odisha and Maharashtra states.

In Odisha State, the study is being piloted in Koraput district in seven villages with 658 households largely populated by Scheduled Castes and Tribes. LANSAs is attempting to use agricultural remedies to address nutritional maladies, particularly those considered as hidden hunger deficiencies.

Agriculture-nutrition stakeholders are paramount to the process of getting the research out, and periodic meetings with these stakeholders and technology experts have enabled a strong bridge between scientific research and societal and community uptake by means of practical grassroot-level adaptation of practices laid out in the FSN model.

## Next Steps

LANSAs research in India led by MSSRF has received recognition for work done to advance the nutrition agenda in India. It is also recognition of the different research uptake efforts to bring LANSAs work to the relevant and important stakeholders and has led to strong positive interactions and discourses between the agriculture and nutrition communities. This is a good example of how the purposeful and regular engagement with relevant stakeholders can have a favourable impact for LANSAs work in the country and also strengthen bonds and promote dialogue between researchers and practitioners, be it in agriculture or in nutrition and health.

On a broader front this award signals the recognition for the need for breaking down the silos among the research community be it agriculture, nutrition or health and between those engaged in research and those working on the ground.

This award is thus a measure of the impact LANSAs programme at MSSRF has had on one of the relatively poorer states of India, which has a large tribal population. The Odisha Environment Congress, for the first time in five years has recognised that 'nutrition' must be a topic for discussion in public discourse. And, by its recommendation to urge the Odisha state government to allot 5% of the State's GDP for nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes with a nutrition focus, it has acknowledged the impact that the LANSAs programme led by MSSRF has had in the State of Odisha in India.

## References

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

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**Web Links:**

<http://lansasouthasia.org/article/lansa-felicitated-work-done-advance-nutrition-0>

<http://lansasouthasia.org/content/farming-system-nutrition>

<http://lansasouthasia.org/content/introduction-fsn-koraput>

<http://lansasouthasia.org/content/stakeholders-engaged-lansa-outset>