

LANSA RESEARCH UPTAKE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE STORY

India Reflective Practice Story

Media engagement with LANSA scientists has a cascading effect

The Concept

Right from the initial landscape analysis in 2012-13 media was recognised as an important LANSA stakeholder with a key role in disseminating MSSRF research to a wider audience. With Maharashtra blessed with vibrant State and District journalists, the Research Uptake Manager felt that print media would bring desired attention for LANSA work in Wardha and surrounding districts of Maharashtra.



Wardha farmers talk to the press during the media interaction and field visit to their villages. (Photo taken at Farmer Knowledge Centre, Sabeli village, Maharashtra)

Very little was known outside the Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) intervention villages in Wardha district about the benefits these grassroots initiatives bring for farmers and village communities. The idea was thus to have the LANSA Agriculture Scientist and the Nutrition Scientist based at MSSRF, Wardha, directly interact with the journalists, brief them and then take them on a field trip to the FSN villages where the interventions were demonstrated.

This way, the scientists and the journalists built a rapport for further interaction. Also, journalists felt free to pick up any story with any angle they saw fit to report on from the FSN interventions shown as examples of MSSRF work under the LANSA programme in India.

The Challenge

Challenges were more than anticipated. Apart from the logistics, this effort required a lot of coordination between research and research uptake having to see eye-to-eye in terms of what intervention is worthy of a media visit. MSSRF researchers had begun two good interventions – the Community Nutrition Garden and the Farmer Knowledge Centre in the FSN villages in Wardha district, and research uptake was keen to showcase these.

The next challenge was to get the village community to participate and converse freely with the journalists. And finally, it was vital for journalists to get the right picture of work done, underway and further plans under the FSN study.

The Approach

After much preparation and coordination between researchers and research uptake, an agenda for the media interaction was drawn up comprising of briefings and field visits to select FSN intervention villages in Wardha district. Background information was prepared for the journalists to arouse curiosity and a press note was drawn up highlighting MSSRF efforts under LANSA to advance the nutrition agenda in the country. All background information was translated in the local language (Marathi) for regional language press.

Email invitations went out to journalists and key media reporters were contacted over telephone to check their availability and interest to participate in the media event. Press photographers were also invited.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Media reports like these have many benefits and act as tools while communicating with policy-makers

After a briefing on LANSAs research priorities and on the Farming System for Nutrition study underway in Wardha, journalists were taken on a field trip to witness first-hand how agricultural interventions on the ground could impact the nutrition status of the community. National and regional press persons were shown the Farmers Knowledge Centre in Saheli



Women of Borgaon village, Wardha, Maharashtra India, working in their Community Nutrition Garden

village, and the Community Nutrition Garden in Borgaon village.

MSSRF researchers and research uptake personnel responded to questions from the journalists; they were given complete freedom to choose their protagonists and the kind of story they would like to write about.

The Results

Around 15 district and Maharashtra State correspondents registered and participated. This exercise built a lot of trust and respect between

scientists and journalists with research uptake bringing both sectors together by facilitating the interaction. There were several reports and articles published in English and regional language newspapers as a result.

The one major success was that LANSAs scientists now interact with the media freely without reserve and are able to talk down scientific jargon for the media persons to understand. This became evident from the media report published on the occasion of World Food Day in an English language daily newspaper linking the UN Day of Significance to MSSRF LANSAs research efforts to bring nutrition security in the region.

Media reports like these have many benefits. They highlight the problem of undernutrition plaguing the country, bring public attention to efforts made in India to address the problem, give scientific research recognition and act as tools while communicating with policy-makers.

Key Contacts: For further information

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Web Links:

<http://lansasouthasia.org/content/media-important-stakeholder>

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

<http://lansasouthasia.org/content/lansas-online-campaign-u-n-world-food-day-2015>