

LANSA RESEARCH UPTAKE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE STORY

Pakistan Reflective Practice Story

Lesson learnt while engaging Government agriculture stakeholders

The Context

In a context where nutrition has not traditionally been seen as a concern of agriculture, engaging agriculture stakeholders in the government in a dialogue on how agriculture and agri-food systems can be better designed to advance nutrition has not proven to be a straightforward task.

As part of Pillar 1's landscaping and review activities stakeholder interviews were conducted by the country Research Uptake Officers. This activity combined research uptake with research, as part of this exercise in Pakistan the Collective for Social Science Research (CSSR) worked to create links with key actors in both agriculture and nutrition. If LANSA hopes to generate research that will be useful in a policy context engaging with government actors is a priority.



The workshop brought together diverse stakeholders from agriculture and nutrition in Pakistan

In Pakistan connecting with nutrition actors in the government was relatively easy as many are used to working with donors (i.e. Pakistan's Nutrition Development Partners Group) and speaking with individuals from the development sector. In addition, CSSR had made connections with some of these actors through prior research projects.

In contrast months were spent focusing on government agriculture stakeholders. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is still a relatively new concept in Pakistan, though across the country policy is being created in this area. Provincial Agriculture Departments typically view the main aim of their jobs to be to increase yield and productivity in a sustainable way, while nutrition is primarily viewed as a health concern.

The Challenge

Getting busy government officials to speak about a subject they are not familiar with and one that they do not perceive to be directly related to their work was not easy. In addition, since this was CSSR LANSA's first engagement with these stakeholders they were not familiar with LANSA, which made getting their attention even harder, however persistence paid off.

The Approach

Demonstrating commitment to including their voices in the research proved to be a successful strategy. Following up phone calls with personal visits to stakeholders' offices to schedule an appointment, even if this entailed travelling across the country, made them more willing to give their time. While engaging with stakeholders it helped not to assume that they were able to envision how their work fit within LANSA's programme objectives, but to work to show them how it might be possible. In addition what was notable was that even over a few month period bureaucrats were transferred across departments, therefore it became important to make and maintain contact with numerous individuals within a single department to help facilitate introductions with new individuals in relevant posts.

The Results

Hosting an event after the stakeholder interviews were completed, where these actors were asked to participate, helped them feel further engaged with LANSA and provided them a platform to showcase their work and voice their opinions. Hopefully these first steps will work to foster an ongoing relationship with stakeholders throughout the course of LANSA.

HIGHLIGHTS:

If LANSA hopes to generate research that will be useful in a policy context, engaging with government actors is priority.

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Web Links:

<http://lansasouthasia.org/blog/beginning-dialogue-responsive-agriculture-nutrition-research>