

A report on Nutrition Assessment Training

A training programme on nutrition assessment was conducted at the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai for the staff working on the Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) project at Wardha and Koraput under the programme on Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (LANSA). The programme was held from Monday, December 2 to Thursday, December 12, 2013. Eight field investigators from each site along with the LANSA team members in Chennai participated in the training. Dr. G.N.V. Brahman Scientist (Retd) and Dr. Reddy from National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad trained the participants on the basics of nutrition, diet, nutritional deficiencies, assessment of clinical signs and symptoms and diet survey.

After the first two days of in-house theory session where the participants were appraised on aspects of nutrition, the survey methodology, tools used to collect data etc., on-field training was organised. Madras Social Service Society (MSSS) was contacted for assistance in facilitating the training in their field area in the neighbouring district of Thiruvallur. Ms. Bhagyavathy, cluster co-ordinator, MSSS at Pagalmedu village in the district, facilitated in identifying households and ensuring the smooth conduct of the training.

The teams accompanied by the resource persons were taken to Thiruvallur district for five days from 5th December to 10th December, for hands-on training on how to conduct 24-hour consumption recall intra-household diet survey, taking anthropometric measurements (height and weight), and identifying clinical symptoms of morbidity in children. Everyday the teams reached the village by 9 am for the on-field training and returned to the Foundation at around 4.30 pm. The teams interviewed and calculated the proportion of food consumed by each person in a household. The standard errors of anthropometric measures were also calculated and discussed.

Day 1 (5th Dec): On the first day the team was taken to Pagalmedu village where the 24-hour consumption recall was conducted for a household. After which the team went to a nearby Government school where 20 students were selected randomly for measurement of height and weight; and to check for clinical signs of disease like oral cavities, problem of vision and iodine deficiency. The participants were split into two groups. Each participant measured the

height and weight of every child in their group. This was later cross checked with the standards taken by the trainers.

The participants observed that most of the children had poor oral hygiene which was evident by dental caries in most of the children. Vitamin A deficiency in the children was identified: One child with bitots spot and two children with conjunctival xerosis were observed.

Day 2 (6th Dec) to Day 5 (10th Dec): The teams went to Punnappakkam village. Each day, the participants were divided into two groups to conduct the 24-hour consumption recall diet survey and food frequency with two poor rural households. After the household survey, the team went to the Punnappakkam Government School to conduct the anthropometry measurements and to assess the clinical signs. The AO (Education) at Periyapalayam was contacted for necessary permission in this regard. Each day the headmistress identified a group of ten children for the training exercise.

The trainees were split into two groups. Each participant measured the height and weight of every child in their group. This was later cross checked with the standards taken by the trainers.

In Punnappakkam Government school, the participants observed grade I goitre, vitamin A deficiency – conjunctival xerosis and weakness and phrynoderma .

Along with Ms. Bhagyavathy, two members from the Punnappakkam SHG helped in coordinating with the households and the school. They were of great help in conducting the on-field training.