

## India Reflective Practice Story

## Relation-building with agriculture-nutrition stakeholders

### The Context:

When Research Uptake began to introduce the idea of LANSAs to stakeholders in India, it was first at informal gatherings and one-to-one friendly conversations. Thanks to the 25 years of exemplary work and long-standing relationships established by M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in the country, a decent base was built and LANSAs programme was thus introduced formally to the policy influencers and researchers at a national-level meeting in New Delhi. A four-quadrant matrix was developed to map stakeholders, classifying them on the basis of interest and influence in policy or practice involving agriculture and nutrition. The exploration of knowledge systems and networks existing in India used by stakeholders, and also those used globally to gain and share information were identified. This process helped pick out prominent decision-makers/influencers in the agriculture and nutrition sectors.

In India, we used a two-step approach for stakeholder identification. We first zeroed in on 15-20 stakeholders that have high levels of influence in decisions relating to policies, programmes and interventions relevant to LANSAs at the National level for each sector, and did the same for the regional level. As a result, Research Uptake developed a master list of a cross-section of 100+ influential stakeholders, and this was tapered down to a 50+ list who were then contacted for interview appointments. A total of twenty three interviews were then conducted, transcribed and analysed, and findings were showcased at a national-level consultation while also presenting LANSAs research in India. The event was well-attended with high-level participation from all quarters. This brought about a sense of belonging / ownership towards LANSAs research plans for the country because stakeholders understood that their impression and expertise was valued. From the interviews and consultation, there came out the need to address capacity gaps and with stakeholder willingness evident,

### HIGHLIGHTS:

*The event was well-attended with high-level participation from all quarters bringing about a sense of belonging / ownership towards LANSAs research plans for India.*



The LANSAs-MSSRF Agriculture-nutrition Stakeholder Consultation in New Delhi in April 2014

Research Uptake initiated and organized two capacity strengthening training workshops on how to effectively use knowledge-based evidence at Bhubaneswar in Orissa, and at Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. This was delivered by the IDS Knowledge Services team – Siobhan and Jagdeep.

### The Challenge

India is a large country, and the first major challenge was to limit our stakeholder base for the purpose of effective interviews and analysis. Then, there was the need to have a good mix of stakeholders from the fields of agriculture, nutrition, gender and child, water and environment, as well as from the various stakeholder sectors – Government, Donor Agencies, Research Institutes, Industry and Media. Research Uptake prepared large lists for each sector, and then narrowed it down to key influencers. Getting the identified stakeholders to commit to an interview date and time was the next hurdle, particularly with Government stakeholders. This was overcome with sending repeated requests via email or fax, and then following up with telephone calls to the Secretaries to ensure that the identified stakeholders are aware of LANSAs. However, once the interviews began, Research Uptake enjoyed full attention and candid co-operation of the stakeholders.

## The Approach

### For LANSA Researchers:

Research Uptake process and activities were always well-planned and guided with inputs from Julia Powell, Research Uptake Manager and R V Bhavani, LANSA Project Manager at MSSRF. RU first seeks to internalise with LANSA researchers the purpose and the relevance of uptake, and with their understanding and co-operation, reach out to stakeholders. Advice was sort from the Project Manager and senior researchers while developing a stakeholder database for LANSA, and towards the stakeholder event. Periodical updates on Research Uptake efforts were shared with LANSA researchers at monthly meetings.



R V Bhavani presenting LANSA research at the stakeholder consultation

### For Stakeholders:

Rapport building on the part of Research Uptake played a vital role in securing continued engagement with the identified group of stakeholders. Communication in the form of emails and telephone calls from Research Uptake coupled with support from the Project Manager with some difficult government stakeholders and with inputs from MSSRF researchers, stakeholders were more than happy to oblige when needed. The capacity strengthening workshops created a perfect platform to not just cement existing stakeholder relationships but also build new ones, thanks to the MSSRF researchers coming forward to introduce LANSA research. Research Uptake made it a point to encourage stakeholders to visit LANSA's website and subscribe to the newsletter. LANSA's Twitter handle was also used extensively during the workshops to bring more visibility to LANSA's efforts to engage with and build capacity for stakeholders.

## The Results

- Awareness of LANSA's objectives and research priorities in India among stakeholders established.
- Engaging with stakeholders at the outset has created a sense of ownership for LANSA research.
- Strong bonds with stakeholders have encouraged partnerships with major institutions playing host to LANSA capacity strengthening workshops at short notice.
- Responsiveness and critical feedback from stakeholders as a result of transparent showcasing of LANSA's work at the national stakeholder event deficiency in the State.

### Lessons learned:

1. The need to have a good database to begin with.
2. Different stakeholders need different approaches.
3. To sustain stakeholder relationship, periodical engagement is required by using full potential of communication tools and social media.
4. To be flexible, and have Plan B ready.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

*The capacity strengthening workshops created a perfect platform to not just cement existing stakeholder relationships but also build new ones*

### Key Contacts: For further information

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### Web Links:

<http://lansasouthasia.org/blog/building-shared-ownership-improving-nutrition-through-agriculture>