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WORKSHOP REPORT

Digital platforms to scale Gender-Sensitive Nutrition: Social and Behavioral

Launch of Jharkhand State Nutrition Mission & Digital Green Partnership

*Ranchi, Jharkhand
June 27, 2016*



Executive Summary

On 27th June 2016, Jharkhand State Nutrition Mission (JSNM) in collaboration with Digital Green launched its partnership for improved nutrition in the state leveraging innovative digital platforms. The project launch brought together participants from various government, non-government and technology agencies to bring about convergence in effectively promoting nutrition in Jharkhand. The workshop was chaired by Ms. Mridula Sinha, IAS, Director General, JSNM. Other eminent speakers included representatives from Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotions Society (JSLPS), USAID, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), SPRING, UNICEF, Alive & Thrive. The technology partners in attendance were BBC media action, Awaaz De, Dimagi and Gram Vaani.

The key objectives of the workshop were: i) to launch the JSNM and DG partnership for improved nutrition through effective use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) platforms; ii) to explore how to bring about convergence in the activities of various stakeholders engaged in promoting nutrition in Jharkhand; and iii) to explore how different digital platforms complement Digital Green approach to scale nutrition behaviors.

The speakers in the inaugural session emphasized the need for different partners and agencies to work in a concerted, aligned manner cross-sectorally, to bring about holistic change in nutrition outcomes. They acknowledged the potential of digital platforms, which can be instrumental in bringing technology closer to people at scale, in form of simple, local and contextualized messaging. The speakers also highlighted the need to bring together social determinants (food security, agriculture outcomes, etc.) while planning for health and nutrition programs for a more holistic impact. Role of JSNM in providing a common platform for different stakeholders to work together was strongly highlighted.

The inaugural session was followed by two panel discussions.

The first panel discussed convergence opportunities and challenges in promoting social and behavior change for nutrition. The key take-aways from the discussion are:

- Need for planned convergence at the very outset of the project, to ensure policies translate into desired outcomes.
- Nutrition cannot be looked into in isolation. It is important to address underlying causes (e.g. WASH practices) affecting nutritional outcomes.
- Creating enabling environment for effective convergence
- ICT platforms critical for convergence, by generating data, tracking progress holistically

The second panel explored the role of technology as an amplifier for promoting nutrition behaviors in communities. The key take-aways from the discussion are:

- Mixed method solutions (combining video, audio, IPC) most successful in facilitating behavior uptake.
- Combining different interventions can bridge gaps and lend complementarity.
- Technology when used in health and nutrition programming, should have human touch since it involves behavior change

- Training of frontline functionaries should be a built-in component in the technology driven programs.

Going forward, JSNM and Digital Green will review the learnings and key discussions from the workshop with a view to forge meaningful partnerships, across sectors, to address the issue of malnutrition in Jharkhand. Other key action points include-

1. Digital Green will develop comprehensive communication strategy for the Nutrition Mission by incorporating learnings () from the 9-month pilot under the USAID RMNCH+A project.
2. Advocacy with JSNM to form a core group that can look into convergence for improved nutrition programming. Some of the key responsibilities of this group may be to-
 - a. Undertake landscaping of existing programs and partners and explore feasibility of collaboration;
 - b. Facilitate discussions with relevant government departments for improved ways of convergence and
 - c. Bring together relevant technology partners to enrich nutrition messaging.

The Workshop was covered by the leading English and Hindi Dailies; the media articles can be accessed at:

- [Jharkhand to be malnutrition-free in ten years](#) – Jagran
- [Digital Push for Rural Health - Jharkhand joins hands with NGO to fight malnutrition](#) – The Telegraph
- [JSNM Launches Digital Platform for Better Nutrition in State](#) – The Pioneer
- [Malnourished Mothers give birth to Malnourished Children](#) – Dainik Bhaskar
- [Number of Malnourished Children may be more than estimated currently](#) – Prabhat Khabar

Background:

Government of Jharkhand recently launched Jharkhand State Nutrition Mission (JSNM), an autonomous body, for improving the prevalence rates of malnutrition among women & children. The JSNM is mandated to provide technical leadership to guide and assist the multi-sectoral plans for nutrition specific and sensitive interventions.

In its endeavor to improve malnutrition rates in next ten years, the mission aims to collaborate with other partners and agencies catering to health, nutrition and WASH needs of communities. In this context, JSNM recently signed an MOU with Digital Green (DG), an international development organization that uses simple tools of technology to promote good practices on nutrition and health through peer to peer learning process at the community level, with a belief that digital platforms, if blended well with social organization, can play a critical role in addressing malnutrition among the community.

In this context, JSNM in convergence with Digital Green convened a workshop along with formal launch of Digital Green communication plan for Jharkhand on Monday, 27th June 2016 in Ranchi, Jharkhand. The workshop proved to be a forum for diverse group of experts to reflect, discuss and brainstorm on the need for, and ways to ensure convergence among different stakeholders and use of digital platforms to promote nutrition behaviors.

The key objectives of the workshop were to-

- (i) Launch the Jharkhand Nutrition Mission and Digital Green partnership for improved nutrition through effective use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) platforms;
- (ii) Explore how to bring about convergence in the activities of various stakeholders engaged in promoting nutrition in Jharkhand;
- (iii) Explore how different digital platforms complement Digital Green approach to scale nutrition behaviors.

Inaugural session

Mrs. Mridula Sinha, IAS, Director-General, JSNM welcomed the delegates and set the context of the workshop by explaining the role of JSNM in bringing together various public, private and civil society organizations tackling malnutrition under a common umbrella. She highlighted the work planned under the mission, the existing capacity and resources, and stressed upon the need for 'catalytic push' through meaningful partnerships. Mrs. Sinha reiterated the need for concerted and aligned efforts by various organizations so that the outcome can be holistic



and not isolated. She expressed excitement over the collaboration with Digital Green, which has been instrumental in bringing technology closer to people in form of simple, local and contextualized messaging. Ms. Sinha expressed hope that this partnership will bring about desired change in nutrition issues in the State by reaching maximum beneficiaries through effective use of technology.

Mr. Paritosh Upadhyay, IFS, CEO – Jharkhand State Livelihoods Promotion Society (JSLPS), highlighted the role played by livelihoods mission in empowering women in the community through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and addressing food and nutrition security through livelihood-related activities. He expressed concern over malnutrition being a real threat to the growth and development of Jharkhand and stressed on the need for collective efforts of all departments and agencies to address the same. He acknowledged the great potential that digital media has, and shared that the partnership between JSLPS and DG was developed with an intention to improve livelihoods and agriculture through DG's community-focused interventions. He expressed happiness over the partnership and appreciated DG's efforts in improving trainings, providing extensive resource in form of locally produced videos' library and in tracking adoption rates related to agriculture.



Mr. Vinay Kumar, Regional Director- Asia and Global Initiatives, Digital Green, presented the organization's expansion from agriculture-focused interventions to promoting health and nutrition using its localized video-based messaging and data management platform. He also highlighted the key difference and the challenges in using the same approach across the two domains. While agricultural benefits are immediate and visible, outputs within health and nutrition are not immediate or often tangible. He also put forth a broad plan for promoting nutrition in three states, including Jharkhand, under the RMNCH+A project, funded by the USAID.



Dr. Suneetha Kadiyala, Senior Lecturer – London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), highlighted DG's collaboration with IFPRI and LSHTM to develop step-by-step approach to design interventions under its health and nutrition portfolio. This included a feasibility study to test the feasibility of leveraging the DG approach for agriculture to promote maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) related behaviors and care practices. This was followed by a pilot study by introducing participatory methods of engaging women for greater impact. Third step in this approach is the upcoming randomized control trial in Orissa which aims to estimate the impact and cost-

effectiveness of DG's agriculture interventions, vis-à-vis DG's approach combined with other approaches, such as participatory learning and action (PLA). Dr. Kadiyala reinforced the need to bring various sectors under one umbrella, in order to ensure different interventions are in same place, at the same time, for the same child and at a time when they need them. She also laid emphasis on bringing together social determinants under the health and nutrition planning.



Mr. Xerses Sidhwa, Director- Health, USAID India, outlined the challenges of malnutrition in India, particularly in Jharkhand. He stressed upon the need for cross-sectoral engagement and how JSNM is well placed in bringing everyone together to tackle an extremely complex issue. He expressed the need to explore effective engagement with private sector in this collaborative effort. He also congratulated Digital Green in leveraging technology while still ensuring 'human touch'.



The speakers in the inaugural session set the tone and provided excellent context for focused discussion by panelists under the two panel discussions.

Panel discussions

Panel discussion 1: Social and Behavioral Challenges in promoting nutrition in the state: exploring convergence.

Chair: Dr. Alok Ranjan, Senior Program Officer-Nutrition, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)

Panelists: Shri Paritosh Upadaya, IFS, CEO, JSLPS; Ms. Keya Chatterjee, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF; Ms. Peggy Koniz-Booher, SPRING; Mr. Nagendra Varada, Alive & Thrive, Bihar



In a build up to the panel discussion, Dr. Alok Ranjan reiterated the importance that convergence (among various stakeholders) holds in a multi-dimensional issue like Nutrition. He highlighted 10 key areas of nutrition programming in the context of which convergence becomes extremely crucial. He requested the panelists to contribute towards existing convergence opportunities vis-à-vis these 10 points and the challenges in promoting social and behavior change for nutrition. These 10 points are-

1. Nutrition in context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2. Prevention as well as treatment aspects of nutrition programming
3. Nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions
4. Exploring additional windows of opportunity beyond 1000 days (e.g. adding Adolescence)
5. Government departments contributing to nutrition
6. Service delivery taking perspective of beneficiary's holistic needs
7. Partnerships for addressing holistic nutrition needs
8. Platforms (e.g. VHND) for addressing nutrition across continuum of care
9. Technology partnerships for various aspects of nutrition and health
10. RMNCH+A- how much is nutrition a priority in this paradigm

The key take-away points from the discussion include-

1. There is need for 'planned' convergence at the very outset of the project. While there is no dearth of resources, relevant programs and policies based on evidence in the country. However, in absence of convergence and effective implementation, these policies do not translate into desired outcome.
2. Integrated planning among all key departments can be carried out through a forum or core group. This core group can periodically review and deliberate upon overlapping activities and ways to impart complementarity. For e.g., community institutions like Village Organizations (VOs) in collaboration with Agriculture department can be mobilized for generating awareness, monitoring programs and promoting agriculture-nutrition synergy, such as by promoting kitchen gardens, etc.
3. ICT models are critical for convergence. They can help generate data for different programs, track the progress, services etc. in relation to one another and provide holistic view of the efforts in promoting nutrition.
4. Girls' education and delay in age of marriage are critical convergence point with the Education department. Low levels of education and early marriage go a long way in affecting health and nutritional status of adolescent girls and ultimately the outcome of pregnancy later in life.
5. Nutrition cannot be looked into in isolation. It is important to address underlying causes affecting nutritional outcomes. For e.g. addressing WASH related behaviors (preventing open defecation, promoting hand washing practices, etc.) is critical in improving nutrition outcomes.
6. It is important to prioritize the needs of marginalized populations and utilize innovative social and behavior change communication interventions for maximum benefits. For example, combining mass communication with inter-personal communication and ICT has shown to improve greater mobilization of communities.
7. Effective convergence between partners and government departments can thrive only when an enabling environment is created for all partners to come together, plan, execute and monitor the impact.

Panel discussion 2: Digital platforms for promoting nutritional behaviors and how they complement one another.

Chair: Mr. Aditya Sethi, Deputy Director-Technology, Digital Green

Panelists: Mr. Jai Mendiratta, BBC Media Action; Mr. Saket Kant, Dimagi; Mr. Neil Patel, CEO, Awaaz de; Ms. Paramita Panjal, Gram Vaani

The second panel discussed different Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) and explored complementarity amongst them to maximize impact. Leading organizations of ICT4D - Digital Green, Awaaz.de, Dimagi, BBC Media Action and Gram Vaani - presented their contextualized, locally-relevant technology solutions covering community-based videos, Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVRS), and mobile applications to tackle ground challenges in nutrition and health messaging.



The panel focused on the role of technology not for the sake of innovation but for impact.

A market place to showcase the digital platforms by participating ICT4D organizations, that can be used to promote nutrition, was also arranged.

The key take-away points from the discussion include-

1. Role of technology should be that of an 'amplifier' for promoting nutrition behaviors in communities. Understanding the needs of front-line workers and beneficiaries, and integration with existing programs is the key to technology uptake by rural communities.
2. Different technology channels can complement each other to help reinforce messaging, collect programmatic data and capture feedback. Such collaboration can also help achieve scale and accessibility, by overcoming the challenges of low literacy, and dependency on human resource.
3. Mixed-method solutions (for e.g., combination of video and audio, video and mobile application, or video, audio and human mediation), can be most successful in facilitating behavior uptake by beneficiaries. It can help in interaction with people on a regular basis through different mediums, breaking monotony and reducing the cost of actual personal visits.
4. It is extremely important to lend human touch to the technology solutions used in health and nutrition messaging, since it involves behavior change. The messages should be contextualized per the local needs, target the existing barriers and misconceptions in the community and should be in local language.

5. Combining different digital platforms together can also bridge gaps of one intervention over the other, and lend complementarity. For e.g., Dimagi mobile apps for frontline workers can host Digital Green videos, which can be useful for the workers in providing counseling. Video provides holistic learning at the time of screening and can be complimented by IVRS voice-messaging to provide 24x7 access to the information.
6. Technology can enable real-time surveillance of ground operations that can help target messaging to the deserving and take timely actions to course correct or amplify in order to ensure optimal use of resources. It is also essential to reduce duplicity in data collection of multiple data management systems and combine efforts to share data across the interventions.
7. Training should be a strong in-built component of these technology solutions and aim at building the capacity of frontline workers in use of gadgets, effective communication with the audience and self-motivation.

Way forward

Going forward, JSNM and Digital Green will review the learnings and key discussions from the workshop in order to forge meaningful partnerships that can help address the issue of malnutrition in Jharkhand in a concerted fashion. Some of the specific action points include-

1. Digital Green will prepare a comprehensive communication strategy for the Nutrition Mission by incorporating learnings (from point of view of technology uptake as well as program implementation) from the 9-month pilot under the USAID RMNCH+A project.
2. Key outcomes from the workshop, around need for convergence and use of technology for development, will be further taken up with JSNM for further action under the Mission's program implementation strategy.
3. Advocacy with JSNM to form a core group that can look into convergence for improved nutrition programming. The core group may be given the following responsibilities-
 - a. Undertake landscaping of existing programs and partners and explore feasibility of collaboration
 - b. Facilitate discussions with relevant government departments- ICDS, health, WASH, Education, etc. for improved ways of convergence
 - c. Bring together relevant technology partners to enrich nutrition messaging and ensure greater reach.