

# Approaches for a Hunger-Free India

## Report of Stakeholders Meeting

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**Documented by:**

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## Background

In the context of achieving 'Zero Hunger', a goal that the world is striving towards, it is important that there is a co-ordinated approach discussing field realities and engaging with stakeholders at different levels. The National Nutrition Week, that the Government of India encourages in September each year, aims to build greater awareness of the importance of nutrition across different segments of the population with the 2016 Nutrition Week theme as 'Life Cycle Approach for Better Nutrition'.



Taking forward the momentum of Nutrition Week, to engage with stakeholders in Tamil Nadu, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation organized a programme in collaboration with the State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu and UNICEF, Chennai to bring civil society organizations, Government department representatives, scientists and scholars to discuss '*Approaches for a Hunger-Free India*'.



The programme held on September 21, 2016 in Chennai shared information with regard to status of food and nutrition security in India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular and facilitated sharing of experiences and suggestions from representatives of organizations working for food and nutrition security in Tamil Nadu. Prof M S Swaminathan chaired the programme and facilitated discussions.

The event aimed to suggest solutions to move ahead on the agenda of a Hunger-Free India and to frame practical solutions that can be implemented by policy makers and stakeholders in the field. Stakeholders were invited and presentations were requested from The Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission as well as from UNICEF. A number of departments and organizations sent in their confirmations and participated proactively in the meeting.

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**United Nations**

**December 10, 1948**

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (UN)

### **The Zero Hunger Challenge**

Launched by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2012, the Zero Hunger vision reflects **five elements from within the SDGs**, which taken together, can end hunger, eliminate all forms of malnutrition, and build inclusive and sustainable food systems. (UN.org)

## Proceedings of the Meeting held on September 21, 2016 - “Approaches for a Hunger-Free India”

The tone for the meeting “Approaches for a Hunger-Free India” was set by Executive Director, MSSRF, Dr V Selvam in his introductory remarks who spoke of the need to have a common forum to discuss and share various strategies related to nutrition across Tamil Nadu, an agenda, he suggested that could be taken up during or following this meeting. Ms B. Jayashree, Head ‘The Hindu Media Resource Centre’, MSSRF introduced the focus of the National Nutrition Week as set by Government of India as well as the speakers at the event.

Dr R Rukmani, Director Food Security, MSSRF gave an outline of various measures taken to ensure Food Security and Nutrition in India. The steps to eradicate hunger were initially detailed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have now continued on into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) beginning 2016. Nutrition is the 2<sup>nd</sup> goal of the SDGs.



She spoke about the World Health Assembly’s targets for 2025 on various health indicators including stunting, wasting and anemia in children. On stunting, the targets to progressively reduce rate of stunting among children were 48% in 2005-06, 38.7% in 2013-14 and the target for 2025 is 24%. Similarly, in the case of wasting, the WHA set the targets for reducing wasting in children from prevailing 20% in 2005-06 to 5% in 2025. Dr Rukmani also spoke of how MSSRF adopted the multidimensional definition of food security of the FAO, looking at availability, access and absorption of food, while it takes into account the life cycle approach for nutrition.

Ms R V Bhavani, Project Manager, LANSA-MSSRF, gave an overview of the work undertaken through this initiative. The project began in 2013, when a baseline survey was conducted in Koraput, Odisha and Wardha, Maharashtra to determine gaps in linkages between agriculture and nutrition. LANSA is implementing the 'Farming System for Nutrition' approach a research effort that aimed to identify the linkages between agriculture and nutrition as well as to study the impact of a farming system approach to impact on nutrition. She spoke of how farmers have reaped benefits just by making small changes to methods of cultivation and of the need to focus on the nutritious crops such as millets and pulses as well as look at scaling up of these initiatives.



Dr Rama Narayanan, Independent Consultant, Nutrition, who had facilitated MSSRF's 'Community Hunger Fighters' initiative in Koraput district, Odisha spoke of how community empowerment played an important role in facilitating nutrition outcomes. The members who became empowered through a series of processes not only made an impact in knowledge of nutrition and behavior, but also were crucial

in bringing services into the community and serving as a bridge with government service providers. She shared examples such as when an AnganWadi worker was not paid her salary the people advocated with government officials for the worker.

Dr Farhat Saiyed, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF shared data related to nutrition for Tamil Nadu of specific interventions related to malnutrition, in the context of the Life Cycle Approach especially with regard to the status of children's nutrition. She highlighted how many project pilots show goods results but when scaled up become unsuccessful because they show the problems of scale, perhaps because pilots are conducted in a controlled environment. Dr Farhat recommended that hand holding support be given for projects even after they are scaled up until desired results are seen.



Sharing breastfeeding initiation data linked to institutional delivery, she spoke of need for training medical staff to increase this. Based on WHO standards, focus on diet diversity, food frequency (quality and quantity of the food given) and training for locally appropriate food consumption was needed. She added that data management training on supplies for nutrition would help effective delivery. Dr Farhat also emphasized the need for documentation of results and evaluation of work done.

Mr Job Zachariah, Chief UNICEF Office of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, said at the very outset that nutrition needed to be at the centre stage of the Government priority. He spoke about two different approaches - nutrition specific intervention and the nutrition sensitive interventions.



As per the LANCET journal, more importance needs to be given to the latter which is the more holistic to tackling malnutrition through safety nets, education, preventing child marriages, support for agriculture, focus on water and sanitation and access to safe drinking water. Mr Zachariah spoke of the correlation between the height of the people in society and economic development; a country with good nutrition levels will see people contribute productively to society as well. He also emphasized on the importance of intervening in the first 1000 days of a child's life for the destiny of the child.



Dr K R Jahan Mohan from the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission spoke about of how due to changing lifestyles people have moved away from traditional crops like millets that are nutritious crops to cash crops. He shared data to indicate how in the case of millets, while the area under cultivation has reduced over the past few decades by over 50%, there was a positive increase in productivity. He shared how in many villages, the farmers were selling their best produce away and keep the



left over for themselves, this practice is not allowing to them to access the benefits of the millets. The Tamil Nadu Government's document on "Malnutrition-Free Tamil Nadu" aimed to chart out the pathway towards long-term multi-sectoral strategy in to eliminate malnutrition. Dr Jahan Mohan also showcased a short film on nutrition that was being promoted by the Planning Commission. Sharing a four-point programme towards enhanced nutrition levels, focus on millets, pulses, on horticulture as well as equitable distribution of food would help he suggested.

Prof M S Swaminathan, Founder MSSRF, spoke of a 4 M approach needed for a Malnutrition-free India; the Methods to eradicate malnutrition, the Materials needed towards achieving this, Measurement to assess the nutrition levels and Monitoring of interventions undertaken. On the aspect of materials, Prof Swaminathan spoke about fortification of food in terms of naturally occurring, careful selection or growing of biofortified plants or like fortified salts or foods. He also spoke of the different types of hunger and how the Food Security Act gives a person the Right to Food.



Within this, he spoke about how importance needed to given to aspects of Food Safety (for eg. high moisture content can spoil grains and the presence of micro toxins). Then there was the aspect of monitoring and measurement. Prof Swaminathan spoke of the need to have genetic garden of biofortified plants as also about bio-fortified crops like the sweet potato for which the World Food Prize was given this year, which had substantial impact in improving malnutrition levels.



After the formal presentations, the floor was thrown open for comments.

Dr. Thirunarayanan of Siddha Medicine and Natural Foods spoke of the need to move back to traditional options for curing malnutrition. Mr Jagannath, of Nallakeerai, spoke of how his venture where he grows 40 varieties of greens (keerai) using organic farming techniques, which is successful not only in terms supplying nutritious greens but also in economic terms. This was also echoed by Dr Jahan Mohan who mentioned how he kept five different keerai (spinach) in five different pots and everyday would alternate and consume one type of keerai. He said he was trying to promote this 'software' or this technology to others who may be interested in cultivating and he can provide them with training.



Dr Hemamalini, lecturer at the Ramachandra Medical College spoke about the need to create awareness about nutrition through mass media, through advertisements just like the one that was showcased during the meeting. She stressed the importance of spreading awareness on nutrition at the school level. Also, she said creating more job opportunities for nutrition students (making it more

lucrative) will also help mainstream the topic of nutrition. Dr. Shareefa Talha, former HoD of JBAS College spoke of the need to increase the pulses allotment to the PDS.



The SHG member from Kannivadi Mrs Ponnammal, spoke of how changes in lifestyles, moving from traditional practices, were creating less healthy children. In her time she said children were always running around or climbing trees, but the present generation did not have that kind of energy. She said the practice of having a vegetable garden in her small plot and having children help in the gardening work helped them to understand how their foods came and also helped to create a better awareness of nutrition. Also, she was able to eat fresh vegetables for every meal sourced from her garden, could save on buying from the market and could cook healthy meals for her family using less oil. Since she owned a few cows, she was also able to get fresh milk. She said that cooking greens (spinach) in mud pot would not only retain all its nutritional value but also helps in easy digestion. These kinds of simple traditional practices with their values relating to nutrition need to be documented and put back in to practice.



Mr Thachinamurthy, Principal Scientist at MSSRF, said that it was not just millets that were nutritious. He said there was a mistaken belief that rice is only carbohydrates and should be avoided. In fact, rice is full of vitamins and minerals but it all depends on the extent to which it has been processed. In fact, even millets once they are polished, lose all their nutrients. He spoke about how only one or two millet crops were being commercially farmed at present and there was a need to promote all millets. Also, in the PDS, the subsidy is being given only to rice and wheat, but this has to be applicable to all cereals, including millets, which he said should also be supplied at the PDS. He also spoke on the need for a MSP for other products like milk and pulses, which are price sensitive and can also affect the nutritional status of the population. He also spoke on the putting efforts to ensure that the nutritious food reaches the market.



Mr Devaraj from Speed Trust spoke of another issue plaguing the food industry, which was food wastage. He spoke of how the nutrition level of children in the village was low. He also highlighted the need to ban the sale of 'junk' snacks from school premises as they were devoid of nutrients. He also highlighted how there was a decline in agriculture as the workers shifted out to do MGNREGA works. He said if there was a way by which MGNREGA could be streamlined to take on certain agriculture related activities like digging wells, then it would be beneficial to all.

Dr Sujatha, Independent Consultant, spoke about how the first 1000 days in a child's life was crucial and there should be emphasis of exclusive breastfeeding. At the village level, she said there was a need for a community hunger fighters who can

take the message to the people. She emphasized the need for providing knowledge to mothers who are moving from breastfeeding to complementary feeding. She highlighted the need for community lactation groups, to support exclusive breast feeding for children and also ante natal support groups. She also highlighted the need for more storage facilities for the raw materials- this could be taken up by producer cooperatives, similar to functions taken up the MNCs.



Dr S Nirmala, Independent Consultant, Breast Feeding Promotional Network also spoke of exclusive breast feeding practices and also laid emphasis of beginning breastfeeding within an hour of birth of the child. She also spoke on the need for urban farming practices for eg. terrace gardens. She also said kitchen gardens could be promoted at the schools. Dr K Ambasankar, CIBA-ICAR spoke of the importance of fisheries sector in enhancing nutrition levels of the population.

Ms S Jothi from Innuyir Grama Sangam, the Federation from Pondicherry, spoke about initiatives such as kitchen gardens that not only enhanced nutrition levels but also provided some additional income for the community. This in addition to inland fisheries and mushroom cultivation, besides poultry were small initiatives but of great significance for community nutrition.

Dr Jahan Mohan clarified many of the points raised including on procurement price of pulses, labour for agriculture from NREGA, millet promotion, breastfeeding promotion, awareness of nutritious foods and policies related to agriculture and nutrition and shared information on many of the policies formulated by the State Planning Commission for Tamil Nadu.



Speaking at the end of the session, Dr. V. Selvam said MSSRF would be happy to serve as a knowledge partner in partnership with UNICEF and State Planning Commission to facilitate a process of creating a nutrition network for Tamil Nadu to take forward the state's nutrition agenda through the State Planning Commission. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks proposed by Ms Jayashree who thanked participants and the speakers for their valuable inputs and pointed out that there would be a follow up meeting to continue to discuss many of the important points raised on this date.



## Way Forward

During the discussions at the meeting, the following action points were suggested to move ahead for enhancing nutrition status of Tamil Nadu.

1. A Knowledge-sharing Network on Nutrition in Tamil Nadu can be created with State Planning Commission, UNICEF and MSSRF as lead agencies.
2. Consultative meetings among various stakeholders in Tamil Nadu can be facilitated. Engagement for these consultative meetings will be thematic and focused on three important aspects
  - a. Formalization of the above mentioned network (Facilitated by Planning Commission)
  - b. Policy inputs for Tamil Nadu towards achieving a Malnutrition Free State (Facilitated by UNICEF)
  - c. Awareness on Nutrition along with review of existing resources and way ahead (Facilitated by MSSRF)
3. The Tamil Nadu Government has a plan document for Malnutrition Free Tamil Nadu that was prepared by a committee chaired by Prof M S Swaminathan. In the light of recent developments in eradicating malnutrition, this plan document may be reviewed through a committee and shared with Tamil Nadu Government for updating. Prof Swaminathan is willing to provide leadership towards this process.
4. Field level interventions facilitated by MSSRF may be engaged in partnership with other organizations for one block in Tamil Nadu, to research and demonstrate suggestions for a malnutrition-free Tamil Nadu

## Approaches for a Hunger-Free India: National Nutrition Week at MSSRF

### Agenda

September 21, 2016

Venue: MSSRF, Chennai

Time	Agenda	Speaker
11:00 am	National Nutrition Week and MSSRF	Dr V Selvam, Executive Director, MSSRF
11:10 am	National Family Health Survey 4 - An overview & MSSRF approach to Food and Nutrition Security	Dr R Rukmani, Director - Food Security, MSSRF
11:20 am	Farming System for Nutrition - The LANSAs approach	Ms R V Bhavani - Project Manager, LANSAs-MSSRF
11:30 am	The Community Hunger Fighters approach	Dr Rama Narayanan - Nutrition Consultant
11:40 am	The Life Cycle Approach and opportunities for IYCN	Dr Farhat Saiyed - Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF
12:00 noon	Nutrition on Centre Stage	Mr Job Zachariah, Chief of Office, UNICEF - Tamil Nadu and Kerala
12:20 pm	Policy Inputs for Nutrition Security	Dr K R Jahan Mohan, HoD APP, Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission
12:40 pm	Farmers and Farming for Hunger-Free India - Concluding Remarks	Prof M S Swaminathan, Founder MSSRF & Chair, Coalition for Food & Nutrition Security
01:00 pm	Discussion "Achieving Zero Hunger - Approaches and Experiences"	Participants - NGO, CBO, Govt representatives
02:00 pm	Vote of Thanks	Ms B Jayashree, Head, HMRC-MSSRF
Lunch		



## **List of Participants**

### **Speakers**

1. Prof M S Swaminathan, Chair of Proceedings and Mentor MSSRF
2. Dr Job Zachariah, Chief of Office, UNICEF, Tamil Nadu Kerala
3. Dr K R Jahan Mohan, HoD (APP) Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission
4. Dr V Selvam, Executive Director, MSSRF
5. Dr Farhat Saiyed, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF
6. Dr R Rukmani, Director, Food Security, MSSRF
7. Ms R V Bhavani, Project Manager, LANSA
8. Dr Rama Narayanan, Consultant, Community Nutrition
9. Ms B Jayashree, Head HMRC, MSSRF

### **Discussants at the Programme**

1. Dr K Amudha Devi, National Health Mission, Chennai
2. Dr V Kokila, Social Welfare Dept, ICDS
3. Dr M Devanathan, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University
4. Dr K Ambasankar, CIBA-ICAR
5. Dr Malavika Vinod Kumar, Sundar Salt & Trustee CRSARD
6. Mr K S Shanmugam, Fertiliser Association of India
7. Mrs Ponnammal, member of Sudaroli Women SHG, D. Kombai
8. Mrs S Manonmani, member of Annai Abirami Women SHG, Dharmathupatti
9. Ms Anandalakshmi SHG member
10. Ms Periyammal, SHG member
11. Ms S Jothi, SHG member
12. Dr Sujatha, Independent consultant
13. Dr Nirmala Selvam, Independent consultant, Breast Feeding Promotion Network
14. Mr Jagannathan, Nalla Keerai

15. Dr Thirunarayanan, Siddha medicine and natural foods
16. Dr S Devaraj, SPEED Trust, Ramanathapuram
17. Mr Ganesh, Centre for Environment & Agricultural Development (CEAD)
18. Dr Rajendran, Annai Organic
19. Dr Rasheed, IIT Madras
20. Dr Shareefa Talha, Nutrition Expert, former HOD JBAS College for women
21. Dr Simmi Jain, MOP Vaishnav College
22. Dr Hemamalini, Ramachandra Medical College
23. Dr Avanti Prabhakar, Dept of Home Science, JBAS
24. R M Sobana, JBAS college
25. Ms Kalaivani Ashok, Queen Mary's college
26. Ms. Deepa Ramakrishnan, The Hindu
27. Ms Lasya Reddy, Deccan Chronicle
28. Mr Gopikrishna Warriar, Independent Journalist
29. Mr Sashi Nair, Press Institute of India
30. Mr S John, Educationist

### **Participants from MSSRF**

1. Dr R Rengalakshmi, Gender and Grassroots Institutions
2. Mr P Lakshmanan, Gender and Grassroots Institutions
3. Dr R Gopinath, Food Security
4. Ms G. Anuradha, Food Security
5. Mr A Sakthivelan, Food Security
6. Ms Aparna Narayanan, HMRC
7. Ms Sangeetha Rajeesh, LANSAs
8. Ms Nitya, LANSAs
9. Mr Rohit Parasar, LANSAs
10. Ms Pritha Banerjee, LANSAs
11. Ms Priya Rampal, LANSAs
12. Mr Raju S, LANSAs

13. Ms S. Usha, LANSA
14. Mr Thachinamurthy Krishnan, Ecotechnology
15. Mr P Nandeesa, Ecotechnology
16. Dr S Rajalakshmi, Biotechnology
17. Ms K Siranjothi, IEC
18. Ms Reena Eappen, Administration
19. Ms B Raghini, Training

### **Technical Support and Photographs**

1. Mr R Guru Prakash, IEC
2. Mr B Tamilvanan, IEC
3. Mr S Kannappan, IEC

A press release was issued for this event and it was covered in the media.

*MSSRF has a vision of nutrition security with a pro-poor, poor-nature, pro-women approach through scientific research and working with communities on the field. The Foundation's work in research for development aims to facilitate scale-up of proven methodologies for a sustainable world.*

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