

THE
HUNGER
PROJECT



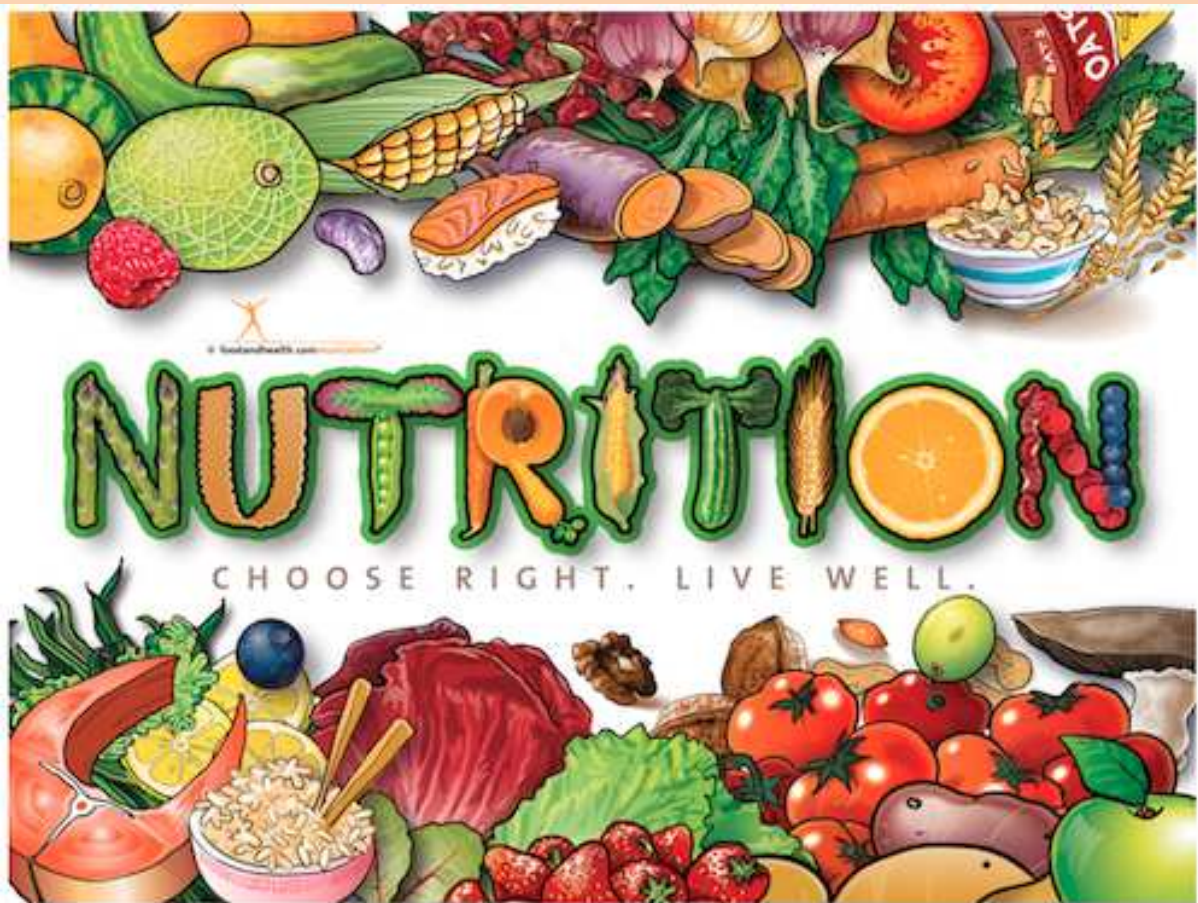
South Asia Conference on
Policies and Practices to
Improve Nutrition Security

Strengthen Collaborative Actions to Improve Nutrition
30-31 July, 2014, India Habitat Center, New Delhi

Report on

South Asia Conference on Policies and Practices to Improve Nutrition Security

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Introduction: Malnutrition undermines economic growth and its human costs are substantial. South Asia has the largest number of malnourished children in the world. Malnutrition is a complex and multidimensional issue, affected by poverty, inadequate food consumption, inequitable food distribution, improper infant and child caring practices, equity and gender imbalances, poor sanitary and limited access to quality health, education and social services. Unless policies and priorities are changed, malnutrition will continue to remain a threat. There have been significant policy and program efforts to diminish this problem, but the results have been variable and have not led to significant improvements, posing a



critical challenge to the development and growth of nations. Many good policy and program practices have been successful in lowering malnutrition rates across South Asian countries. The Conference highlights aspects of these strategies. The Conference aimed to better understand critical drivers, strategies and solutions to improve nutrition in these countries.

Objectives of the Conference:

The objectives of the Conference was to 1) Provide a framework for convergent action to improve nutrition security based on country experiences and knowledge to better address current and future challenges of nutrition security such as working more effectively across agriculture, health, education, employment, social protection, water and sanitation and other key sectors to ensure nutrition security; 2) Identify critical drivers of nutrition security that may be beneficial to the key players and stakeholders working towards better nutrition outcomes; 3) Strengthen collective actions towards nutrition security; 4) Work on a roadmap to contribute to Zero Hunger Challenge initiatives of UN for removing hunger and poverty.

Participants of the Conference:

Over 340 participants from South Asian countries, mainly India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and few delegates from USA, Canada, Africa and Europe attended the conference.



Opening of the Conference:



Prof. M S Swaminathan was present in the opening session of the conference as a special guest. The others panelists in the opening session were Ms Lise Grande, UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Thomas Chandy, CEO, Save the Children, India, Mr. Joachim Schwarz, Regional Director, Welthungerhilfe, South Asia.

Themes of the Conference:

The Conference deliberations were on the following Themes:

Theme 01: Nutrition through Life Course Theme 02: Nutrition Education and Innovations Theme 03: Community Nutrition Programs Theme 04: Nutrition from Nature Theme 05: Gender and Equity in Nutrition Theme 06: Nutrition Monitoring Theme 07: Nutrition Policies and Programs Theme 08: Humanitarian crisis and nutrition Theme 09: Role of Corporate social responsibility in Nutrition Theme 10: Media engagement to promote nutrition

The sessions were which I have attended are as follows-

Theme 02-Nutrition Education and Innovations

Theme 03-Community Nutrition Programs

Theme 04-Nutrition from Nature

Theme 05-Gender and Equity in Nutrition

Theme 10-Media Engagement to Promote Nutrition

Short introduction on some of the thematic sessions which I have attended are as follows:

Theme 02-Nutrition Education and Innovations

Successful nutrition education often entails the active participation of the people, their awareness of their nutrition problems and their willingness to change. To be effective, a comprehensive nutrition education program also requires inter sectoral collaboration among different professionals (in agriculture, education, health and communication) and should be based on a well-planned communication strategy, often using a multimedia approach. It has been shown that in addition to



technical assistance, contributing factors to the success of a program include strong political and government support, external funding and the strengthening of local managerial and community capacities. The session have shared information about current and innovative programs regarding nutrition education spanning a wide array of sources that touch on different topics such as evidence based curricula to success in experimental learning.



The session was chaired by Prof. MK Bhan. The panelists were Dr. M E Khan, Population Council, Katheen E. Stack, Freedom from Hunger, Ms. Alka Malhotra, UNICEF.

The five following papers were presented in the session:

1. Presentation on **Looking Across Sectors-Innovative and Effective Nutrition Education Using Group-Based Financial Service Provider** presented by Mercia Metcalfe and Bobbi Gray, Freedom from Hunger, California, USA , Saraswathi Rao, Freedom from Hunger India Trust, New Delhi, India.

The objective of the presentation was to share examples from FSPs (Financial Service Provider) in India and Bangladesh that provide health and nutrition education, and examine impact, challenges and opportunities for FSPs to improve of nutrition of mothers and children.

2. Presentation on **Youth LIFE-An Attempt to Provide Nutrition Education through New Technology** presented by Aparajita Gogoi and Swati Parmar, CEDPA India, New Delhi, India.

The aim of the paper was to share the design, implementation experiences, and results of the program.

3. Presentation on **Equipped with Information Adolescent Girls Access Nutrition Services from the Government Program** presented by Pallavi Patel and Neeta Shah, CHETNA, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, India.

The objective of the presentation was to share CHETNA joined hands with GOG to demonstrate different approaches to successfully make services accessible to adolescent girls.

4. Presentation on **Feasibility and Effectiveness of Using Mobile Phone Application as a Learning and Counseling Tool for Community Health Workers** presented by Girdhari Bora; Laboni Jana and Dharmendra Panwar Singh, Intra Health, New Delhi, India.

The aim of the paper was to measure the feasibility and effectiveness of a mhealth (maternal health) application called mShakhi (maternal shakhi in English shakhi means friend) in improving the knowledge and counseling ability of ASHAs on critical maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition issues.

5. Presentation on **The Use of Participatory, Community – Led Videos in India: Pushing New Buttons for Nutrition** presented by Sascha A. Lamstein; Kristina Beall; Shruthi Cyriac; Lakshmi Iyer; Suneetha Kadiyala; Peggy Koniz-Booher; Amy Margolies; Terry Roopnaraine and Avinash Upadhyay, SPRING/JSI, Boston, USA.

The aim of the paper was tested the feasibility of developing community–led videos on priority nutrition practices and disseminating those videos within the context of farmers’ self-help groups, attended predominantly by women.

Theme 03-Community Nutrition Programs

Under nutrition in India remains persistent. Evidence-based interventions that have proven to be effective in improving maternal and child nutrition are known. There is, however limited knowledge on implementing these interventions at scale. This session brought regional and national (India) programmatic experiences that were implemented to improve the reach and quality of services to improve under nutrition.

This session features a variety of intervention approaches that include strategies to improve child care practices (e. g., home-based child care and positive deviance models), strengthen existing service delivery systems to improve quality and equitable reach of the interventions (e. g., through capacity building of front line workers, improving supervisory mechanisms, improving functioning of Village Health and Nutrition Days), and innovative interventions to improve micro nutrient interventions at scale (e.g., fortification models). Several of these interventions were implemented in partnership with the government and non-government organization utilizing the existing service delivery platforms of government programs.

The theme was led by UNICEF, IFPRI and World Vision India. The panelists were Dr. Arti Ahuja, WCD, Odisha, Dr. Sheila Vir, Public Health Consultant, Dr. Satish Agnihotri, Joint Secretary, Coordination, Cabinet Secretariat.

The three following papers were presented in this session:

1. Presentation on **Fortification at Community Level-Experiences of WFP’s Iron Fortification Program among the “ Sahariya” Tribal Community in Madhya Pradesh** presented by Shariqua Yunus; Pradnya Paithankar and Divya Tiwari, World Food Program, New Delhi, India.

The objectives were (1) to reduce prevalence of anemia; (2) increase knowledge on anemia; (3) to develop capacity of millers to fortify flour.

2. Presentation on **Strengthening Village Health and Nutrition Days to Provide Marginalized Populations in India** presented by Dharmendra Panwar Singhand; Madhuri Narayanan, Intra Health, New Delhi, India.

The objective was to improve the coverage and quality of village Health and Nutrition Days in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

3. Presentation on **Effectiveness of Special Products in Supplementary Feeding Programs in Management of MAM (Moderate Acute Malnutrition) – Experience from West Bengal India and Northern Bangladesh** presented by Charulatha Banerjee; Moumita Sarkar and Md. Monsurul Hoq, Terre des homes Foundation India Delegation Office, Kolkata, India.

The objective was to assess the operational effectiveness of a Supplementary feeding program for MAM (Moderate Acute Malnutrition) in Bangladesh and India

Theme 04-Nutrition from Nature

When people talk about 'Nutrition from Nature', it is very important to understand the theory of five basic elements of our body. Our body is physically made up of exactly the same elements that form all of the other entities that live on Earth. When we die, our bodies return to the earth, water, fire, air and space. These "five elements" theory explains the similarity between humans and the natural world surrounding them. In our body, space is present wherever there is a cavity like in the nostrils, mouth,



ears, throat, lungs, and stomach; air in movement of the lungs, heart, stomach, intestines, and joints; fire in all metabolic activity, the eyes, intelligence and body temperature; water in all plasma, blood, mucus, and saliva; and earth in any solid structure like fat, muscles, skin, nails, and hair. We remain healthy and sustain our lives through breathing air and consuming food and liquids – taking in those elements found in the surrounding natural world. Therefore, any imbalance in nature has direct effect on the nutrition and health of human beings.

Recently there are some rapid environmental changes occurring worldwide results in poor nutrition and increasing evidences of non-communicable diseases like cancers, heart diseases etc. Unfortunately in present time, food and water has become a commodity which limits its accessibility both in terms of quantity and quality. While enough food is produced globally to feed the entire human race, yet food and nutrition security has come under stress. It is fact that approximately 780 million people in developing countries lack access to enough food to meet their basic daily need for nutritional wellbeing.

The purpose of this thematic session was to discuss and sharing experiences and research evidence depicting the link between nature and nutrition, innovations in combating under-nutrition through locally produced food, programmatic sustainable local approaches to ensure food and nutrition security primarily from South Asian countries.

The theme was led by CHETNA, Welthungerhilfe. The panelists were Dr. Suneetha Kadiyala, Faculty, Department of Population Health, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Ute Latze, Senior Advisor, Food Security & Nutrition, Welthungerhilfe, Bonn, Germany, Prof. G. G. Gangadharan, Medical Director, I-AIM Healthcare Centre.

The five following papers were presented in the session:

1. Presentation on **Agricultural Policy-Nutrition Disconnect: An Exploratory Study** presented by Nayan Chakravarty, PHFI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

The aim of the study was to look for evidences and barriers that discuss the disconnect between agricultural policy and nutrition in India.

2. Presentation on **Farming System for Nutrition: Lessons from On-Farm Demonstrations** presented by Mahesh Maske and S Nagarajan; Bhavani R V, MSSRF, Chennai, India.

The objective was to examine the means of leveraging agriculture for nutrition through cropping system interventions.

3. Presentation on **Empowering Communities and Transforming Agriculture and Forest Management Practices to Address Undernutrition** presented by Debjcet Sarangiand and Salome Yesudas, Living Farms, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

The objective was to contribute towards scaling up of evidence-based interventions on reduction of under nutrition through community mobilization, re-orienting agriculture and forest management practices to be nutrition sensitive.

4. Presentation on **Addressing Under Nutrition in Pakistan: An Integrated Nutrition-Sensitive Interventions Approach** presented by Mahesh Maske and S Nagarajan; Bhavani R V, MSSRF, Chennai, India.

The approach aim to tackling widespread "Hidden Hunger" in women and children by 1) improving households' capacity to locally produce nutrient-rich food, 2) promoting preparation of adequate nutrient-rich diets, and 3) Promoting adoption of adequate feeding practices.

5. Presentation on **Role of Bio-Fertilizers in Providing Nutritional Security** presented by Tulsi Bhardwaj and J.P. Sharma, Division of Agricultural Extension, IARI, New Delhi, India. Anjuly Sharma, Division Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab, India.

The presented paper discusses the role of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides in improving nutritional security by enhancing the micronutrient level and a strategy of their adoption is also suggested.

Theme 05-Gender and Equity in Nutrition

While nearly two thirds of the worlds' poor live in South Asia, more than one third of the regions' poor are women. Food and Nutrition insecurity and ill health are associated with poverty and gender inequality, severely affecting the women and girls. Women and girls, especially from the disadvantaged communities,

are victims of differential and discriminatory practices and are affected by unequal access to food and health care. In addition, climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity also increase the drudgery and work load of disadvantaged communities, severely impacting the nutrition security of women and girls. For many women, the gender



discrimination starts before birth, with an overwhelming preference for male offspring. This prejudice often continues throughout their lives, resulting in less education, limited mobility and poor access to food and health care.

The purpose of this thematic session was to discuss and sharing experiences and research results, nutrition policies, practices and programs primarily from South Asian countries that have been successful in lowering malnutrition rates and understand the nutritional determinants affecting women's health and well-being.

The session was chaired by Dr. Sara Ahmed; IDRC, New Delhi. The panelists were Dr. R Sankar, Country Manager, India, Special Advisor South Asia Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Ashok Bharti, Chairman, National Confederation of Dalit Organizations.

The four following papers were presented in the session:

1. Presentation on **Gender Issues in Urban Nutrition** presented by Aparajita Gogoi and Madhu Joshi, CEDPA India, New Delhi, India.

The objective of the paper was to analyze the determinants and suggestions on overcoming gender barriers in nutrition among the urban poor.

2. Presentation on **Focus on Mothers to Reduce Low Birth Weight: Example from Noon Meal and Pregnancy Growth Monitoring and Promotion in Andhra Pradesh** presented by Laxmi Bhawani Majji, UNICEF, Hyderabad, India.

The objective was in view the situation; the Government of Andhra Pradesh launched in January 2013 the One Full Meal, in 102 high risk blocks of the state.

3. Presentation on **Mapping the Field: Right to Food and Women in Panchayati Raj in India** presented by Bijayalaxmi Nanda, Department of Political Science, Miranda House, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.

The objective; raising the issue of women in Panchayati Raj, it will analyze the elements of the Act and its potential for involving women for bringing about an overall improvement in the status of women in India. The need to theorize, politicize and strategize the Act in ways that shall take into account the role of women in Panchyati Raj and the relevance to have a gender dimension to the Right to Food and nutrition in India will be a principle concern here.

4. Presentation on **Determinants of Women's BMI (Body Mass Index) across Rural Indian Farm Households** presented by Brinda Viswanathan, Madras School of Economics, Chennai, India. Getsie David; Swarna Vepa and R.V. Bhavani, MSSRF, Chennai, India.

The study was an attempt to understand the determinants of women's Body Mass Index (BMI) among farm households in rural India based on the secondary data source, India Human Development Survey for 2004-05.

Poster Presentation:

There was a segment of theme-based poster presentation in the conference. Representatives from different organizations given presentation based on their abstract which they have submitted before to the conference secretariat.

I delivered a poster presentation under the theme of '**Nutrition Education and Innovations**'. The poster's titled "**Grassroots Women Leaders as Change Agents for 1000 Days Nutrition**". Here I am mentioning the poster content in detail:



INTRODUCTION:

Poor maternal and child nutrition in the critical 1,000 Day Window from the onset of a woman's pregnancy to her child's second birth causes stunting which results in irreversible loss of development potential, resulting in less cognitive skills, increased vulnerability to disease and -ultimately to dramatically lower lifetime income and thus impaired economic development for the nation. A major root cause of this poor nutrition is the deeply entrenched gender discrimination that impairs women's nutrition-seeking behaviors. Since 2006, THPB has developed the capacities of thousands of grassroots women leaders and supported them in building their capacity with leadership. THPB has made improving 1,000 days nutrition a priority. It has pioneered community-driven approaches to address the range of causes of poor maternal and child nutrition, including unsafe water and sanitation, food security, maternal immunization and child marriage. With its women leaders program, it aims to educate families to the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) required to reduce stunting.

METHODS:

THPB has developed a holistic community-driven development approach known as "MDG Unions" that mobilizes communities in partnership with local governments (union parishads) to address community priorities. One component of the MDG Union Strategy is to train 18 voluntary women leaders per union-two from each of 9 wards. Women Leaders begin with an intensive three-day foundation course in women's human rights. Upon this foundation, they are eager to learn and share information on key issues such as nutrition, education and halting gender-based violence. Because a Women Leaders have the trust of their communities, they are better able to reach women who are confined to their household, through small "courtyard meetings".

- The First step is for Women Leaders to take a Training of Trainers (TOT) to enhance their facilitation skills to conduct and leading the Essential Nutrition Action (ENA).
- After successful completion of the TOT, the women leaders arrange and facilitate courtyard meeting for two days (four hours each day) in their respective Ward. The primary participants of the courtyard meeting are pregnant mothers and lactating mothers with children up to age 2.
- The secondary participants of the courtyard meeting are husband, mother in law and other family members.
- The Hunger Project-Bangladesh has produced a set of featured IEC materials and manuals for the convenience of the program. The set includes a handheld Flipchart on ENA and a manual developed on the process of conducting Court Yard Meeting.



- The key messages of the Flipchart are; Importance of micro nutrients and nutrition during pregnancy, The cycle of malnutrition, Importance of regular check-up of a pregnant mother, Message of safe birth, Advantages of breastfeeding, Early initiation of breastfeeding, Exclusively breastfeeding 0 – 6 months, Complementary feeding, Nutrition management of the sick child, Importance of immunization, Available local food identification, Essential hygiene action etc.
- The women leaders also conduct monthly follow-up with the same participants to ensure the Essential Nutrition Actions are being properly implemented.

RESULTS ACHIEVED:

During 2012 and 2013, women leaders conducted 3,016 courtyard meetings on ENA:

- THPB reached 55,826 women and 18,095 men, Total of 73,921 people in 186 focus unions (village clusters).
- The program works for achieving MDG Goal 4 and MDG Goal 5. It reduces child mortality rate and improving maternal health.
- During this period, 34793 mothers gave safe birth,
- 41702 pregnant mothers received inoculation.
- Nutrition support was provided for 28051 pregnant mothers.
- 193497 children were received immunization,
- Nutrition support provided for 57413 children and
- Almost 100% women properly nursed their children as a result of the program.



CONCLUSIONS:

Supporting volunteer-based grassroots women leaders in campaigns for good 1,000 day nutrition is a promising approach to scaling up the behavioral and attitudinal changes necessary to achieve substantial change. The attitudinal and behavioral changes come from the family (husband, mother in law etc.) to community as well as the society (faith leaders, teachers etc.). Basically, this 1,000 days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's 2nd birthday is offering a unique window of opportunity to shape healthier and more prosperous future of Bangladesh. The right nutrition during this 1,000 day window had a profound impact on a child's ability to grow, learn, and rise out of poverty. It can also shape a society's long-term health, stability and prosperity.

I disseminated a brochure and it developed on the basis of my poster content.

There were others poster presentations under the same theme from different organizations like Save the Children, Rajasthan, India, CHETNA, Ahmedabad-Gujarat, India, SRAN, Parganas, West Bengal, India, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Gurgaon-Haryana, India, IARI, New Delhi, India, CKS, Gurgaon-Haryana New Delhi, India, CMAM Forum, Cambria, UK, Delhi University, New Delhi, India.

Other poster presentations delivered by different organizations under the theme of **‘Nutrition Education and Innovations’** are as follows:

- **“Innovative Models for Joyful Learning on Nutritional Care by Mothers and Adolescent Girls”** presented by SRAN, Parganas, West Bengal, India.
- **“Advocacy for Maternal Nutrition and Health Provisioning in Salt PAN Area of Gujarat by Salt PAN Workers network and CHETNA”** presented by CHETNA, Ahmadabad-Gujarat, India.
- **“Counseling Mothers on Feeding Children a Key to Improving their Nutritional Status”** presented by CHETNA, Ahmadabad-Gujarat, India.
- **“Innovative mhealth (Maternal Health) Technology – A Review”** presented by Delhi University, New Delhi, India.
- **“Perspectives of Different Stakeholders on Public Health Nutrition in India-A qualitative Study”** presented by Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Gurgaon-Haryana New Delhi, India.
- **“Grassroots Women Leaders as Change Agents for 1000 Days Nutrition”** presented by The Hunger project-Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **“Enhancing Nutrition Security through Nutrition Education”** presented by IARI, New Delhi, India.
- **“A Mother Centric System’s Design Approach to Nutrition Ecosystems”** presented by CKS, Gurgaon-Haryana, New Delhi, India.
- **“The CMAM (Community Management of Acute Malnutrition) Forum-a Global Information-Sharing Initiative to Improve Learning and Practice on the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition”** presented CMAM Forum, Cambria, UK.
- **“Health Improving Maternal and Child Health Service Delivery in Rural India”** presented by Save the Children, Rajasthan, India.

Major Learning:

- There was a sharing of ASHA organization. They are promoting health care through use of mobile phones which was so effective.
- Their programmatic features are complete counseling support from pregnancy to new born care, use of few keys in using the software makes training on the mobile very user friendly, low cost mobiles as operational cost per month is 1 US dollar.
- ASHA fills all important information in the mobile and sends it to cloud server through GPRS (internet). The

information is saved in mobile which can be used to track beneficiaries.

- Another learning is focus on kitchen gardening which is very effective for nutrition support.

Delhi Declaration:

One of the outcomes of the conference was **Delhi Declaration recommendations**, shows a road map to determine the necessary solutions, actions, policies and programs to overcome these problems and issues related.

Delhi Declaration recommendations are as follows:

- Building political consensus and commitment at the highest level for promoting good nutrition policies and practices.
- Expediting establishment of national nutrition mission.
- Agreeing on an integrated nutrition monitoring and evaluation framework with agreed indicators across ministries developed and effectively used.
- Regular generation of robust disaggregated data, both quantitative and qualitative, especially in vulnerable areas to improve nutrition security.
- Government, to arrive at nationally accepted key nutrition messages, for a national nutrition education campaign.
- Ensuring that the policies and programs should be adequately informed by evidence based outcomes from varied grassroots experiences.
- Strengthening implementation of multi-sectoral approach with focus on operational evidence to address under nutrition, cutting-across the life-cycle.
- Mainstreaming nutrition issues in programs related to agriculture, education, health, livelihoods, and water and sanitation and inform policies and program delivery at scale.
- Policy guidelines for partnerships developed with no conflict of interest.
- Regulatory mechanisms like Indian Milk Substitutes Act should be effectively enforced.
- Need for a nationally relevant policy with operational guidelines for addressing nutrition needs in disasters and emergencies.
- Use of evidence-based mix of communication strategies including use of technology to maximize equitable reach of social and behavior change communication.
- Improving access, availability, and utilization of locally available quality assured food.

- Ensuring nutrition sensitive farming practices with special focus on recognition of women as farmers, towards improving nutrition security.
- Breaking cycle of intergenerational under nutrition and preventing low birth weight.
- Promoting and utilizing state learning from successful models.
- Active partnership with media for mobilizing public opinion and demand generation for nutrition services.
- Enabling media accountability towards advertising food products.

The Delhi Declaration has been posted on the link-<http://www.nutritioncoalition.in/draft-delhi-declaration>

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The Hunger Project-Bangladesh

Annex:

South Asia Conference on Policies and Practices to improve Nutrition Security
30-31 July 2014, India Habitat Center, New Delhi
List of conference participants (As par Collecting Visiting Card)

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