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| AV / Program Director | Gerrit Qualitz |
| Name of Team Members | Nadine Bader, Neha Khara and Archana Sarkar |
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Digital tools to empower women on nutrition security

1. Brief introduction

The GIZ Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience Project (FaNS) in India is part of the global special initiative 'One world – No Hunger' by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). FaNS aims to improve the food and nutrition situation for women of child-bearing age, pregnant and lactating women, and small children from vulnerable communities in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. According to a recent conducted National Nutrition Survey, 39.5 % of children under five years of age in Madhya Pradesh are chronically undernourished, 19.6 % acute undernourished. Mostly, women and adolescent girls are more vulnerable to malnutrition than men due to social norms e.g. that they eat last and what is left over or lacking decision-making power regarding food choices. There is a strong correlation between gender inequality and food and nutrition security. Anganwadi Workers (AWW), female frontline health and nutrition workers, play a key role in the approach of FaNS project as multipliers to empower women in villages through transferring nutrition knowledge and triggering behaviour change to follow good nutrition and hygiene practices. They work under the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of Madhya Pradesh. However, AWW have knowledge gaps on nutrition topics, structured and standardised training possibilities and access to further training in remote locations are lacking. Further there is a variation in their education levels.

For the capacity building of AWW, GIZ FaNS India project in collaboration with DWCD has developed an innovative and interactive e-learning platform called "*Anganwadi Shiksha*". It reaches out to one of the largest women work-force in the country: 97,135 in Madhya Pradesh, 1.4 million across India. The e-learning aims to improve the counselling skills and knowledge of AWW and their Supervisors in nutrition-relevant topics. The digital platform consists of structured self-paced learning content covering 7 modules, consisting of 44 chapters. It uses vivid visuals, quiz and a simplified form of Hindi to ensure that messages get transferred in an interactive and engaging format. The platform has been integrated within the State Partner's DWCD management

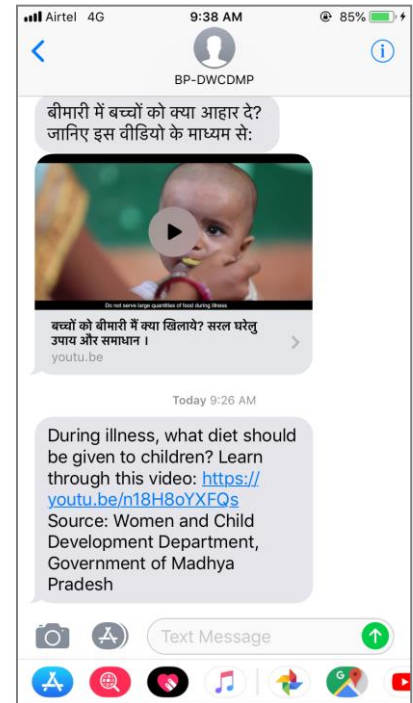


Anganwadi Shiksha



information system (MIS) to ensure a standardised form of high-quality training with ownership of DWCD. The MIS is regularly accessed by 97,135 AWW and 3,575 Supervisors. At the end of the training a verified certificate is provided to all successful learners. The roll-out started in February 2019: 25,000 learners have started the training and 7,000 learners already completed it. An effectiveness study to analyse the impact of this digital tool to improve the AWW's capacities is currently ongoing.

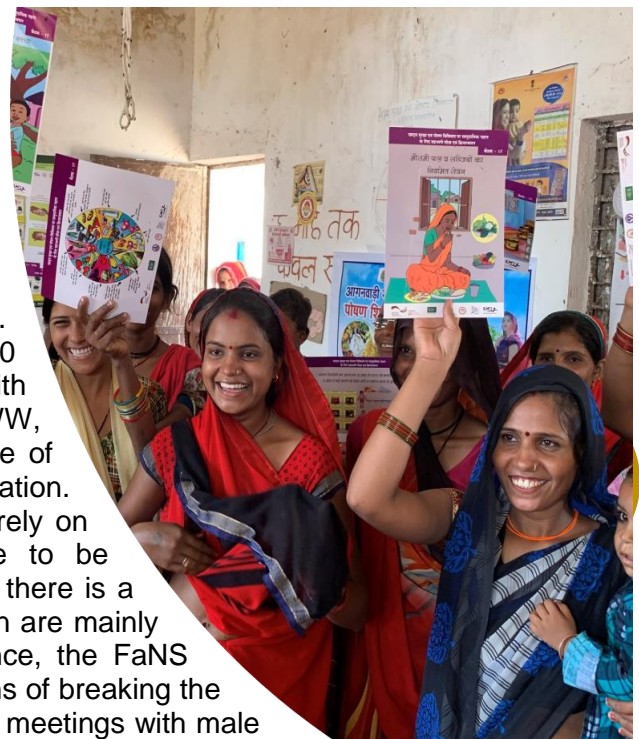
Furthermore, the project uses since September 2019 another online application for AWW empowerment. FaNS collaborated with GIZ ProSoil project to enhance awareness on agriculture and nutrition using the web-based open source advisory tool "Network for Information on Climate Ex (change)" (NICE). The objective of NICE is to provide a decentralised knowledge network and disseminate expertise on agriculture and nutrition-related topics. Advisories on these topics are validated and approved by a government institution for quality and relevance. In FaNS project, the advisories are disseminated to more than 100,000 employees of DWCD including AWW, their supervisors, Child Development Project Officer, District Programme Officers, and Joint Directors. 800,000 messages have already been sent out via SMS.



NICE

2. Promoting gender equality within the program / sector

"Anganwadi Shiksha" is an online application to train AWW that they can share the gained knowledge effectively with the target group and trigger behaviour change. And the recently introduced "NICE" application is an additional digital knowledge hub for DWCD employees. Both the tools are key contributors to gender empowerment for semi-literate, rural female frontline workers, which would not only improve their counselling skills but also digital literacy. Furthermore, the project reaches out to 144,000 women in two districts of Madhya Pradesh with participatory nutrition trainings, conducted by AWW, as women play the key role to interrupt the cycle of malnutrition especially during pregnancy and lactation. But of course, the responsibility does not solely rely on them – family members, including men, have to be involved in family nutrition as well. Unfortunately, there is a strong perception in rural communities that women are mainly responsible to ensure good family nutrition. Hence, the FaNS training approach took into consideration the means of breaking the age long stereotype and conducts e.g. community meetings with male participation. However, there is still the need to work further on the inclusion of men responsibilities in nutrition activities and to promote shared decision making e.g. over family income for inputs for better nutrition.



Participatory nutrition training



In September 2019, FaNS conducted a social behaviour change study to identify barriers and enablers in the target group to follow good nutrition practices. One of the identified key barriers was limited time. A male member shared in a focus group discussion: “*Anganwadi Workers say that food for the child should be made separately... but there is no time... women go in the morning with us to cut the grass... after coming back she cooks in a hurry whatever she wants.*” Other identified key barriers were the limited engagement of men in family nutrition and unsupportive social norms such as women should work hard during pregnancy, women should eat only after other household members eat or the masculinity perspective that discourages men from expressing their emotions or doing household chores. The fear of loss of respect seems to drive the stereotypical manner of masculinity which further discourages gender equality. But on the other hand, the qualitative study also identified enablers during data collection. There were examples where mostly the male members who were married and mothers-in-law were supportive and hence family nutrition in a better state. FaNS project takes these findings up and conducted already an action-oriented stakeholder workshop to sensitise on the importance of gender sensitivity in any nutrition intervention. Concrete activities were discussed and planned for implementation. DWCD has already well acknowledged FaNS activities and integrated them in their structure.

3. Gender as a quality feature of our work

GIZ FaNS project took into account the factor that working with community members, especially male members of the community could encourage a level of understanding and equal rights for both men and women and progress towards an equal society. The project specifically works with the communities in the form of community meetings on nutrition with participation of male community members and also provides for interactive awareness activities like street theatres which attracted men and serve as a medium to also sensitise men for responsibility in a good family nutrition.



Street Theatre

4. Cooperation

As mentioned above, the project mainly collaborated with the State Government’s DWCD for the capacity building of AWW and nutrition trainings of women. For the implementation of the project’s activities, the (local) NGO partners are playing an important role. They train AWW in conducting participatory nutrition trainings for women and community meetings including men using different tools to promote women’s engagement such as pictorial games, cooking demonstrations, power walks, storytelling, discussions etc. Furthermore, NABARD, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, also commended this approach and showed



interest to integrate the e-learning platform and participatory nutrition training approach under its Tribal Development Programme in Maharashtra. The GIZ India FaNS project facilitated an exposure visit for NGOs under this programme in Madhya Pradesh with DWCD officials. An action planning workshop for the next steps of replication is planned for beginning of December 2019.

Furthermore, two other country packages from Sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia under the GIZ Global Programme “Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience” showed interest to adapt and replicate the e-learning platform and participatory nutrition trainings into their respective contexts. Also, e-learning training platform, as an innovative digital tool, was exclusively presented in the SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) Global Gathering in Nepal, attended by 64 countries. Interest from various countries like Lao, Zimbabwe and Uganda was discussed post session to adapt the e-platform into their local context.

5. Learning

One of the most positive and impactful results of the project are the changes in the ways how AWW share their knowledge and skills with women. According to the AWW, prior to being trained on using participatory methods, the nutrition sessions were conducted in a rather top-down manner where the workers told women what they should (not) be doing. The effectiveness of these sessions was quite limited, as women sometimes could not understand or did not agree with what was being said. At the same time, due to the top-down manner, they were less motivated to attend the sessions. Using the GIZ India’s FaNS participatory training approach brought a major change, as it involved significantly more participatory methods that resulted in women being more motivated and able to learn what was being shared. The improvements in AWW’ knowledge and skills will be bringing positive changes far beyond the project’s duration. Another significant learning for nutrition security interventions is that along with the focus on women as key to interrupt the cycle of malnutrition, AWW and family members, especially men, are playing a crucial role to ensure good family nutrition. Also, to “use” role models (positive deviants) has a great potential. However, FaNS project has, based on study findings, scope to improve e.g. to review the design and material of participatory nutrition trainings to include men to a higher extent.

6. Competition related information

“Nutrition Security in a Digital World” gains more and more importance and plays an important role in building capacities of female frontline workers through digital tools like the “*Anganwadi Shiksha*” online training platform. With this e-learning platform FaNS project developed an innovative tool to empower 100,000 AWW and their Supervisors as multipliers to promote good nutrition practices among women and their families in Madhya Pradesh, India. We would like to explore the opportunity to organise an exposure visit of interested countries to Madhya Pradesh, India, to learn about the features and implementation of the e-learning training platform.

