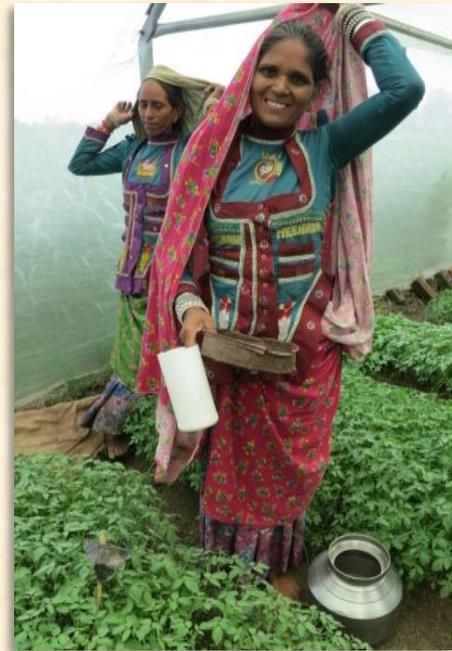


'RAJASTHAN NUTRITION PROJECT'

A model for sustainable nutrition security

The Rajasthan Nutrition Project (RNP), one of Freedom from Hunger India Trust's (FFHIT) flagship projects, applied a multi-sectoral, integrated approach—linking nutrition, health, agriculture and financial services—to bring about sustainable nutrition and household food security. FFHIT implemented the RNP through two partner NGOs: Vaagdhara in Banswara district and Pradan in Sirohi district of Rajasthan State in India.

The two-year project covered three blocks in two districts, covering 68 Panchayats with 316 villages. The benefits of the intervention impacted more than 8000 women members of 670 self-help groups (SHGs) through 'Community Nutrition Advocates' (CNAs).



Achievements at a Glance

Increased/Improved

- Food security improved from 23% to 53%
- Intake of green leafy vegetables increased from 13% to 58%
- Intake of other vegetables increased from 33% to 84.6%
- ORS used to treat diarrhoea rose from 34% to 84%
- Families taking meals together at least once a day improved to 53%
- Source of nutrition information from CNAs grew to 95%

Decreased/Reduced

- Delayed medical treatment for children in past year due to cost fell from 55% to 16%
- Delayed medical treatment for herself (respondent) in past year due to cost fell from 62% to 28.4%
- Skip entire day without eating reduced from 22% to 12%

Anatomy of the RNP

The **key strategies followed** in the RNP relied upon the evidence-based conviction that improving the economic status of or enhancing consumption by poor families (through micro-finance or livelihood linkages) is insufficient to bring food security to vulnerable people—particularly women, girls and children. For sustainable nutrition security, a multi-sectoral approach linking nutrition-sensitive agriculture, access to food, health care (including Government entitlements) and gender equity take prime importance.

Based on this firm understanding, the RNP employed a multi-faceted strategy for implementation.

- Apply a multi-sectoral approach, with a focus on household food security, to link agriculture, nutrition, health and financial services.
- Leverage SHG groups and their “multiplier effect” as a platform for program delivery to reach women with nutrition and health messages.
- Build on partners’ existing programming and capacities.
- Train select SHG members to build their capacity as volunteer CNAs who can spread newly learnt messages to their community.
- Incorporate ‘gender’ as a cross-cutting issue into all key messages and interventions to confront gender equity in intra-household food distribution.
- Build linkages with Government facilities for improved coverage and sustainability.

Community Nutrition Advocates as Change Agents

‘Community Nutrition Advocates’ (CNAs), along with the local partner organisations, were the key change agents in the community. As most of the CNAs were illiterate, a pictorial learning communication method with simple, easy-to-understand messages was developed to achieve behavioural changes. Handholding support was

provided throughout the project period to ensure the RNP moved in the desired direction and to make mid-course corrections. FFHIT provided technical expertise in designing relevant training materials and messages, as well as in the capacity building of the implementing partners.

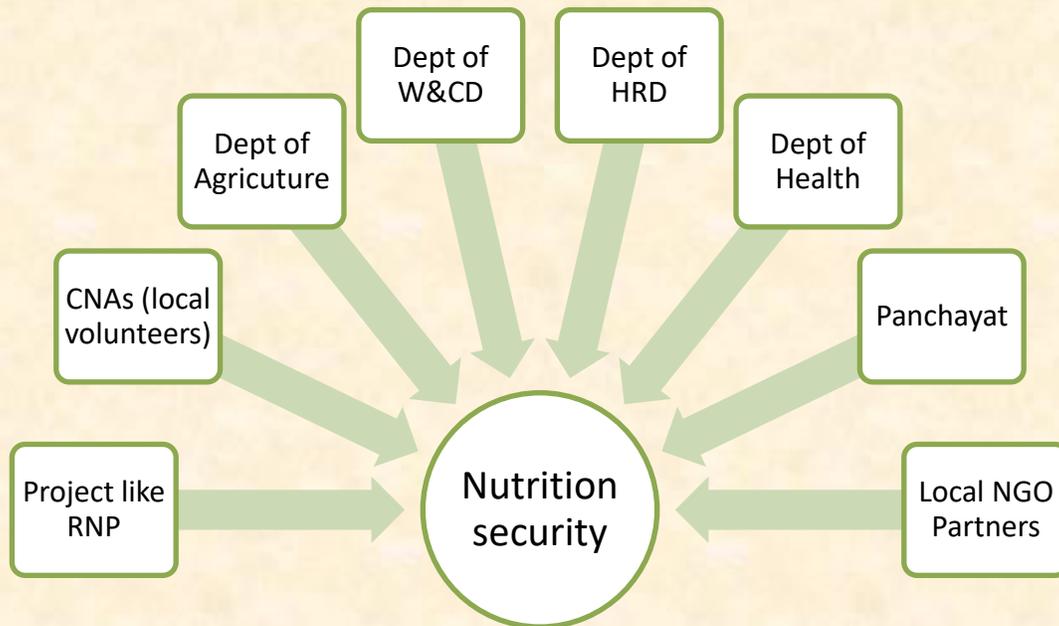


Recommendations for Policy Approaches

Scaling up to other SHG federations

RNP has demonstrated that, using the SHG platform for education delivery and establishing linkages, it is possible to increase the nutrition security of families living in poverty—with CNAs to sustain the processes. There are SHG federations in Rajasthan that can be further strengthened with technical and handholding support to focus on the multi-sectoral approach engaging Panchayat, local NGOs and frontline providers of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), health and agriculture.

Several small pilots relevant to the needs of ICDS programming can be undertaken to provide enough evidence-based impact to ultimately replicate and scale up across Rajasthan. This can be achieved through partnerships or collaborations with various departments of Government such as ICDS, (HRD)/Education, Health, Women & Child Development (DWCD), Agriculture and Panchayat Raj.



Recommendations from thought leaders and key influencers

FFHIT hosted wider consultations at national and state levels, respectively on: 31st May 2017 in Delhi and, with the partnership of the Community of Practice for Health and Microfinance facilitated by Dr. D.S.K. Rao, 28th June 2017 in Jaipur. With these consultations, FFHIT disseminated key lessons learned to and sought input from major stakeholders on how to leverage the experience of the RNP.

Two publications introducing the multi-sectoral approach of the RNP (*a Policy brief* and *a Technical guide*) were released in the Delhi programme by the **guest of honour Dr. Arun Panda**, addl. secretary and mission director of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) for the government of India. Dr. Panda said that it

is necessary to strengthen the involvement of the Panchayats at all levels as well as the elected representatives of the Panchayats in this Project. He also indicated the need to showcase best practices that are cost-effective and scalable and to share it with NRHM for replication. He advised FFHIT to prepare a set of recommendations (“Dos and Don’ts” in simple language, including Hindi) to share with the Ministry for adoption and replication in other states.

In the Jaipur consultation, **chair and guest of honour Ms. Roli Singh**, secretary DWCD for the government of Rajasthan, suggested using SHG federations (piloting) for manufacturing, packaging and supplying nutritious food to ICDS centres. This accords with ICDS norms for reaching out to vulnerable communities and involving more NGOs to work through SHG platform for increasing the knowledge among community regarding importance of nutrition, maternal and child health.

The Role of Freedom from Hunger India Trust

Having developed a model to address nutrition security needs based on the RNP experiences with community participation, FFHIT looks forward to introducing it on a wider scale, as recommended by the experts in the national and state consultations.

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