

Harvesting Change: Boosting Diet Diversity through Agricultural Practices in Tribal Communities of Chhattisgarh

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The problem

What do you do?

- when people do not eat more than three food groups in a day?
- when people do not utilize food is available in abundance in nature/forest or even outside their home?

How do you

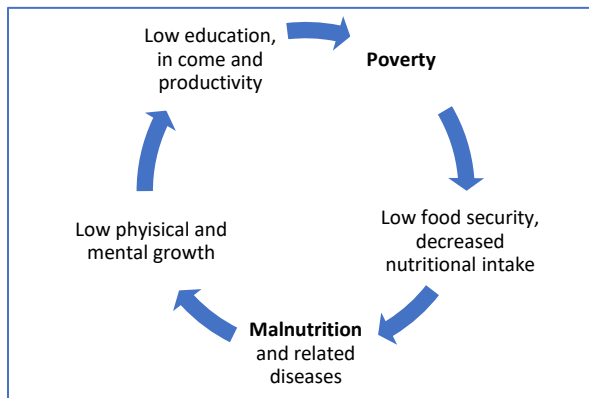
- nudge people to utilize their land lying vacant to cultivate variety of food items?
- get women to realize that they are entitled for better nutrition?

and

- get families to talk about nutrition and finally eating together?

The impact of poor diet

Missing out on a balanced intake of essential nutrients leads to various forms of malnutrition, affecting not just physical health but also cognitive functions, emotional well-being, and economic productivity. This deficiency severely impacts individuals' ability to survive and thrive, learn, and earn. Consequently, it can perpetuate poverty and limit opportunities for both individuals and communities [1]. Ensuring access to diverse and nutritious foods is key to breaking this cycle and promoting a healthier, more productive society.



Addressing nutritional deficiencies leads to:

- A stronger and healthier body and mind
- Enhanced immunity
- Greater resilience
- Improved educational outcomes
- Increased economic potential

Nutritional status is greatly impacted by various factors, particularly those related to agricultural production, food availability, accessibility, and an informed community that consumes a diverse diet, highlighting the need for integrated approaches to address these interconnected elements. This is where the CHIRAAG project comes into play, employing multiple strategies to enhance the income and dietary diversity of tribal communities in Chhattisgarh. By focusing on sustainable agricultural practices and community empowerment, the project aims to cultivate a resilient community that generates income, values nutrition and actively participates in their own well-being.

The solution

We harnessed the power of the Agri-Nutri Impact Pathway. Recognizing the influence of agricultural interventions on nutrition and health outcomes, we designed social behaviour change interventions rooted in a food systems-based approach as the best course of action. This will get people

- to recognize the importance of consuming diverse diet
- to realize that affordable and culturally acceptable diverse diet is easily available and accessible to them
- to obtain local food items from their own farms, Poshan Badi, small animals they raise at home, forests, and other uncultivated sources

The Agri-nutri Impact Pathway [2,3] was initially conceptualized by Harvey E. A. in 1970 and has since been refined by various researchers and organizations. It emphasizes the interconnected relationship between food availability, accessibility, consumption, production, and nutrition outcomes. It outlines three key pathways:

- **Production Pathway:** Improved agricultural practices result in increased food production and greater availability of diverse foods at affordable prices.
- **Income Pathway:** Higher incomes from agricultural activities allow households to purchase a wider variety of quality foods.
- **Women's Empowerment Pathway:** Greater access to resources and decision-making power for women in agriculture leads to improved household nutrition.

We adopted the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA) framework (St Elmo Lewis, 1898) [4]: In the realms of nutrition and agriculture, encouraging behaviour change begins with a deep understanding of the local cultural context, the factors that drive and hinder those behaviours, and the emotional triggers involved. This establishes a strong foundation for effective communication, leading us to capture people's **Attention** on the benefits of diverse diets. Our focus is on demystifying the agri-nutri linkages and promoting the cultivation of a variety of food items. Next, we aim to reinforce ease of access through the "Grow at Home" initiative, which even offers the potential to earn money from selling produce, igniting **Interest** among community members. Our subsequent step is to inspire them by demonstrating simple practices for preparing, processing, and storing food, fostering a genuine **Desire** to consume a diverse diet year-round. Ultimately, this will cultivate a community that embraces these new behaviours and norms, taking **Action** to adopt a nutritious diet for a healthier, happier life.

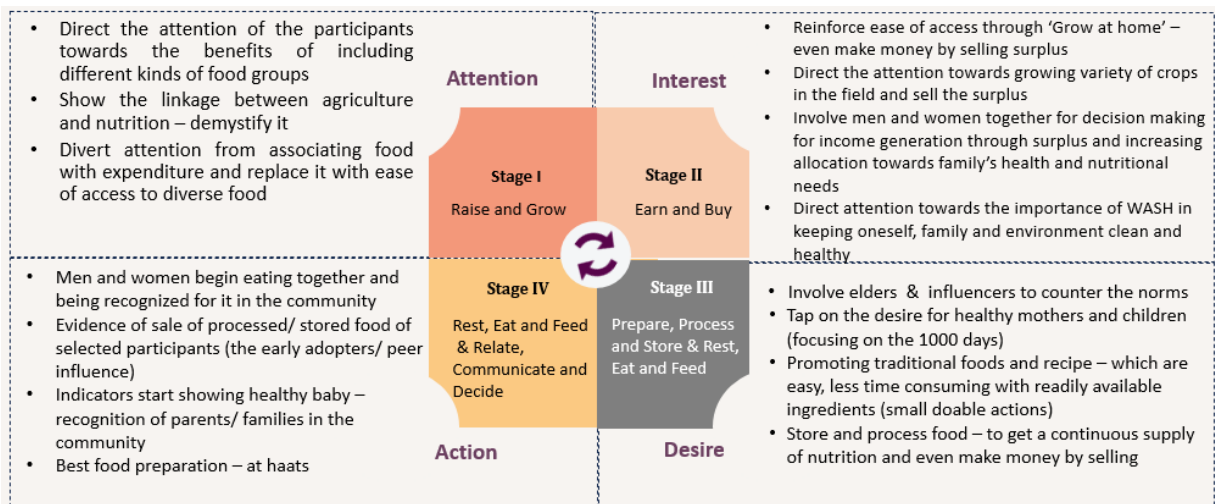


Figure: AIDA model-based SBCC strategy driving agriculture-nutrition impact

The integration of the agri-nutri impact pathway with the AIDA model forms the foundation of our Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategy, aimed at promoting healthier diets among tribal communities in Chhattisgarh as part of the CHIRAAG project. We have identified key focus areas, messages, platforms, activities, and tools to implement SBCC interventions that enhance nutrition outcomes. This model illustrates how agricultural practices can be leveraged by SBCC interventions to improve dietary diversity, ensure nutritional sufficiency, and ultimately promote health and well-being.

Background

Chhattisgarh Inclusive Rural Accelerated and Agriculture Growth (CHIRAAG) Project uses multiple arms to improve income and diet of rural farming communities. The project focuses on raising awareness about the consumption of diverse and nutrition-rich foods, equipping farmers with the knowledge and tools to grow nutrient-dense crops and establishing market linkages to ensure profitability and increase monthly income. Additionally, special attention is given to agricultural techniques that conserve natural resources, reinforcing the connection between sustainable practices and improved nutritional outcomes.

PCI India supports Department of Agriculture led CHIRAAG project to meet its overall goal of improving income opportunities and availability of nutritious foods in tribal households. The main objective of PCI India' SBCC TSA is to design and implement SBCC for nutrition interventions to achieve a diverse food plate in every household, for every family member, with special focus on pregnant and lactating women, children and adolescents. The project is operational in 14 districts and 25 blocks of Chhattisgarh for a duration of two years.

References

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