



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

USAID Advancing Nutrition India

Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy



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About USAID Advancing Nutrition

USAID Advancing Nutrition is the Agency's flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project, led by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI), and a diverse group of experienced partners. Launched in September 2018, USAID Advancing Nutrition implements nutrition interventions across sectors and disciplines for USAID and its partners. The project's multi-sectoral approach draws together global nutrition experience to design, implement, and evaluate programs that address the root causes of malnutrition. Committed to using a systems approach, USAID Advancing Nutrition strives to sustain positive outcomes by building local capacity, supporting behavior change, and strengthening the enabling environment to save lives, improve health, build resilience, increase economic productivity, and advance development. This project contributes to the goals of the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative by striving to sustainably reduce hunger and improve nutrition and resilience.

Disclaimer

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USAID Advancing Nutrition

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.

2733 Crystal Drive

4th Floor

Arlington, VA 22202

Phone: 703-528-7474

Email: info@advancingnutrition.org

Web: advancingnutrition.org

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASRLM	Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission
CABI	Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International
CMIE	Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HCD	Human-Centered Design
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
JSI	John Snow, Inc
NDTV	New Delhi Television
PRI	Policy Research Institute
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
SBC	Social and Behavior Change
SMC	school management committees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WSHG	Women self-help group

Introduction

USAID Advancing Nutrition India

USAID Advancing Nutrition India provides technical assistance to government and public sector partners in Assam to demonstrate the potential for community-led nutrition-sensitive agriculture to achieve our goal of improving diets while engaging with potential private sector partners to identify pathways for sustainable, scalable actions. We implement activities under three specific objectives:

- Strengthen women-led nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices and business opportunities
- Strengthen partnerships among multi-sectoral and multi-interest nutrition stakeholders to implement nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities
- Document lessons learned and best practices and disseminate through a learning platform.

Objective of the SBC Strategy

The Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy for the USAID Advancing Nutrition India project is an articulation of our approach to foster social and behavior change in the focus communities for two prioritized behaviors over the course of our project. The USAID Advancing Nutrition India team developed the SBC Strategy to further reflect on the SBC formative research conducted in July/August 2022 and to identify and plan for activities that are responsive to the factors identified in the SBC formative research.

The SBC strategy is a guiding document for our SBC activities and shares the strategy with our partners and other relevant stakeholders to use in their programming (e.g., Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM)).

Components of the SBC Strategy

The following sections of the SBC Strategy document provide an overview of the nutrition situation in the program implementation area, followed by a brief overview of the SBC formative research and findings, and lastly, the articulation of the prioritized activities aimed at addressing the factors for behavior change. We also present our monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach to assess changes in the determinants of behavior change and/or uptake of the behaviors.

Background

Nutrition Situation in India and Assam State

Despite considerable economic progress in recent decades, 224.3 million people in India are undernourished (FAO 2022). *The 2022 Global Hunger Index* ranks the country as 107 among 121 countries, placing it at the level of “serious’ hunger” (von Grebmer et al. 2022). In 2020, findings from the *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)* showed an increase in stunting among children under five years old in 13 of 22 states and union territories reported through December, as well as an increase in wasting in 12 of 22 states and union territories (Chatterjee 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic worsened food security and nutrition globally, even in countries such as India that have made considerable economic progress (FAO, 2022). The Indian Women and Child Development Ministry estimated 927,606 children from six months to six years were “severely acute malnourished” across the country, up to November 2020 (NDTV 2021). Plausible reasons for the declines in progress include worsening economic and socioeconomic conditions, which likely impact livelihoods (Chatterjee 2021).

Among Indian states, Assam is one of the poorest. It is home to 34 million people, one-third living in poverty (NITI Aayog 2021). While poverty levels in Assam declined between 1994 and 2015–2016, the incidence of poverty remains higher than the national average. At the state level, undernutrition persists with 36 percent of children under five years stunted (NFHS-5). It is relatively unchanged from the fourth NFHS. Among children in the same age group, wasting increased between the fourth and fifth NFHS (17 to 22 percent). Only 8 percent of children 6–23 months are fed a minimally acceptable diet, ranking next to last for this indicator of recommended dietary intake among all states (CFNS 2020). Anemia is prevalent among children and non-pregnant women, with more than 60 percent anemia reported in both groups (CFNS 2020).

Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture for Improving Diets, Nutrition, and Economic Opportunities

Early evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated malnutrition and worsened socioeconomic conditions, particularly among women. Some reports suggest declining food diversity, decreased food intake, and periodic episodes of missed meals. According to a recently published report, 90 percent of households surveyed reported reduced food intake during the national lockdown last year, and even six months later, about 20 percent still reported a similar trend (Azim Premji University 2021). Data also suggests that COVID-19 is having a prolonged impact on rural communities through lost livelihoods and economic opportunities. A sharp increase in unemployment in rural areas through May 2021 is thought to signal a further loss of employment (Vyas 2021).

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture offers dual pathways to improve diet quality and nutrition through activities that increase diverse, nutritious foods for consumption and economic opportunities that increase income for purchasing diverse, nutritious foods. Evidence suggests that nutrition-sensitive agriculture, particularly in the Indian context, can provide a pathway to improve diets and nutrition through a convergence of activities to strengthen production approaches and behaviors that guide intra-household distribution and consumption of foods, especially among women and children (Pingali

Table 4. Support Community Influencers to Sensitize Community Members	
Target participants	Approximately 300 persons from PRIs/other village leaders are to be sensitized.
Actors involved	PRI members and other village leaders

Table 5. Sensitization Programmes of School Management Committees	
Targeted behavior(s)	<p>Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets related to agriculture and agricultural activities.</p> <p>Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.</p>
Activity description	The project will be organize sensitization programs for SMCs. SMCs comprise of parents and teachers. The project will sensitize the SMCs on the positive consequences of joint household decision making for improved household nutrition and economic growth. Specifically, the project will organize sensitization sessions with the SMCs. The aim of the activity is to influence potential program participants who are part of the SMCs, as well as increase general community awareness for the target behaviors.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address the social and gender factors, specifically factor #1 and #3, to increase the importance of joint household decision making and women’s involvement in livelihood development activities.
Content and materials needed	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role of women in Nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities ● Factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research <p>Materials: Presentations, posters, banners, leaflets.</p>
Target participants	Approximately 300 persons from SMCs.
Actors involved	SMCs.

Table 6. Producer Groups Sensitization	
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity description	The implementing partner will organize sensitization sessions for producer groups to understand how they can promote the adoption of agricultural practices amongst their members, as well as better reach WSHG members. Specifically, the implementing partner will visit producer groups, during the meeting times, to sensitize the members on key messages from the behavior change research and discuss opportunities to increase link

Table 6. Producer Groups Sensitization	
	them to WSHG producers. Specifically, how the producer groups can facilitate increased access to inputs, markets, and financial resources/bargaining power for the WSHG producer.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address access and knowledge factors for the prioritized behavior.
Content and materials needed	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Factors of behavior change, per the SBC formative research ● concepts of nutrition-sensitive agriculture; ● Opportunities to link with WSHGs <p>Materials: Presentation, posters, banners, leaflets.</p>
Target participants	Approximately 29 producer groups.
Actors involved	Producer group leadership and members.

Table 7. Nutrition sensitive Agriculture Exposure Visits	
Targeted behavior(s)	Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.
Activity description	The implementing partner will organize exposure visits for approximately 90 women (25-30 women from each district) to other model female farmers either within their home district or in nearby districts. This activity will provide a cross-learning opportunity for the female members, and allow them to see the promoted agricultural practices in-person, which aims to build their confidence on the technical skills that they have gained through horticulture and aquaculture trainings. Additionally, the exposure visits will be an opportunity for the women to gain knowledge about market prices and bargaining during the procurement of inputs as well as during marketing activities.
Factors addressed	This activity aims to address self-efficacy and skill factors associated with the prioritized behavior.
Content and materials needed	None.
Target participants	Approximately 90 female members.
Actors involved	Program participants, identified producers, and local nongovernmental organizations in other parts of Assam.

Monitoring Behavior Change

Monitoring progression along the behavior change pathway is critical to understand whether the project is addressing the factors appropriately with the selected activities. The following metrics and indicators will be collected and evaluated to understand progress towards behavior change and inform program adaptation.

Table 8. Behavior(s)/Activities and Metrics/Indicators

Behavior(s)/Activities	Metric/Indicator
Behavior #1: Men and women (or households) make joint decisions about household assets.	Percent men and women who understand the benefits of joint decision-making about household assets associated with agricultural activities.
Behavior #2: Women grow nutrient dense vegetables, fruits, or fish for household consumption and sales, employing improved practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percent of women who grow nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, or fish using at least one promoted agricultural practice ● Percent of women who participate in agricultural marketing activities
Factor 1: Women’s confidence	Percent of women who report feeling confident to make agriculture-related decisions.
Factor 2: Women’s skills	Percent of women who have demonstrated nutrition-sensitive agriculture skills.
Factor 3: Trust in women’s decision making skills	Percent of men who trust their wife to make sole or joint decisions about household assets.

Key Materials and Messages for Communication

Key Materials

USAID Advancing Nutrition India will develop the following materials to support successful implementation of the prioritized activities. Project activities will use these materials to sensitize program participants and/or support actors and social influencers on the target behaviors.

- **Posters and leaflets** will be used in sensitization activities aimed at empowering social influencers and supporting actors to support behavior change. Specifically, the leaflets will be distributed in the sensitization programs of PRIs and SMCs. The messages in the materials will reinforce the benefits of women producing fruits, vegetables, and fish for household consumption and sale.
- **Videos on horticulture and aquaculture practices** will be developed to show in the nutrition-sensitive agriculture trainings to demonstrate how specific agriculture practices should be implemented for instances when in-person demonstration may not be feasible. In addition to agriculture components, the videos will promote the consumption of safe, nutritious foods.

Promoted Messages and Depictions for Key Materials

USAID Advancing Nutrition has developed the following messages for the various communication materials aimed at promoting behavior change. These messages target the prioritized factors for the two priority behaviors.

Table 9. Materials, Messages, and Factors They Address

Target behavior	Materials and Messages	Factors addressed
Behavior #1	<p>Decision-making and women’s participation in agriculture poster with an assortment of pictures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● women sitting in a market selling vegetables ● family members sitting for mealtime, wherein mother-in-law feeds ripe papaya to a child under two years of age on her lap ● father-in-law manages is managing the channels within the lay-out ● husband helps irrigate the agricultural plot ● women with a small basket of fresh vegetables from the agricultural plot ● men and women in a papaya orchard, working jointly together ● men and women sprinkle fish feed in a pond. <p>Messages against the pictures:</p>	Social and gender factors

Target behavior	Materials and Messages	Factors addressed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Men: Together we decided to have an agricultural plot on our household land. ● Women: I am capable of discussing with my husband how to grow nutrient-rich foods. ● Father-in-law: I help and support my daughter-in-law in making the agricultural plot more productive with fresh vegetables. ● Mother-in-law: I feed my grandchild with nutrient-rich food so that my daughter-in-law can go to the market to sell the vegetables. <p>Image to share in WSHG/community cadres WhatsApp group: image depicting women’s involvement in joint decision making about household assets.</p>	
<p>Behavior #1</p> <p>Behavior #2</p>	<p>Horticulture and aquaculture videos shown to WSHG members: videos depict households discussing household assets, as well as the importance of nutrition for the household. The videos aim to reinforce messages related to joint decision making about household assets, participate in agriculture and other livelihood development activities, and increase dietary diversity for improve household nutrition.</p> <p>Colored flipcharts on Package of Practices: Flipcharts will depict pictures demonstrating target horticulture and aquaculture practices. The project will provide flipcharts to community cadres to use during trainings, meetings, and demonstrations with WSHGs.</p> <p>Digital training platform: The project will develop a digital training platform, which community cadre master trainers can use for information on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, dietary diversity, and the prioritized behaviors. These training materials will help reinforce the project’s in-person training sessions.</p>	<p>Attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and self-efficacy</p>
<p>Behavior #2</p>	<p>Wall paintings in villages: Wall painting in communities will depict both men and women participating in market activities together. Specifically, men encouraging women’s participation in agriculture and economic opportunities for household income and nutrition.</p>	<p>Social and gender factors</p>

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USAID ADVANCING NUTRITION

Implemented by:
JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.
2733 Crystal Drive
4th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

Phone: 703-528-7474
Email: info@advancingnutrition.org
Web: advancingnutrition.org

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