

Delivering for nutrition in South Asia: Conference summary

Presentation Subtitle

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Conference overview

- 5th edition, 2nd regional conference, 3rd virtual
- Based on submitted abstracts
- Abstracts received: 158 (116 research, 42 implementation experiences)
 - >100 organizations submitted
 - 50% abstracts focus on evidence on dietary practices
- Selected abstracts
 - **33** oral presentations
 - **82** poster presentations
 - **6** countries represented: *Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka*
- 750+ registrations

2 preconference workshops organized on Nov 8, 2022

TIME: 12:30-14:00 IST

WORKSHOP 1: LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCY IN SOUTH ASIA- OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND WAY FORWARD: ADOPTING LARGE SCALE FORTIFICATION AS ONE OF THE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS MND

Host: World Food Programme - Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific

Level: Intermediate

No. of participants: Open to all registered participants

Expected attendees: Government Policy Makers, Civil Society and Private Sector



TIME: 16:30-18:00 IST

WORKSHOP 2: SCANR: RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURE, FOOD SYSTEM NUTRITION, AND HEALTH

Host: Tufts University & Agriculture Nutrition and Health (ANH) Academy

Level: Basic/intermediate

No. of participants: Open to all registered participants

Expected attendees: Early career researchers and students



Select Language ▾

Welcome to SCANR

Support Centre for Agriculture and Nutrition Research

The Support Centre for Agriculture and Nutrition Research (SCANR) connects researchers with resources and guidance for carrying out interdisciplinary research related to agriculture, food systems, nutrition, and health. The SCANR web tool provides expert critical perspectives for each stage of the research process; curated resources for educators; and a forum for connecting with fellow researchers, educators, and practitioners.

Not sure where to start? Read our blog [six SCANR resources to enhance your research.](#)

About SCANR >

<https://www.anh-academy.org/scanr>

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Agenda overview

DAY 1: November 9

Opening Plenary

Thematic Session 1

Maternal diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Break & Poster Viewing

Thematic Session 2

Adolescent diets and determinants in South Asia

Keynote Plenary

Making food choices for healthy diets: The push and pull factors

DAY 2: November 10

Thematic Session 3

Diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Break & Poster Viewing

Thematic Session 4

Children's diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Break & Poster Viewing

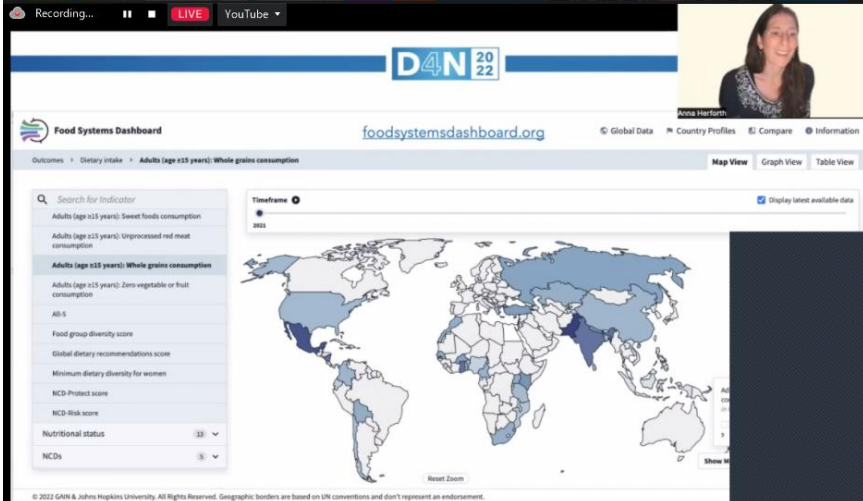
Thematic Session 5

Policies, programs, and solutions for improving diets in South Asia

Closing Session

Looking forward: Actions to inform policies, programs and research to transform diets in South Asia

Opening session



What do we know about what people are eating?

- 1.3 billion people in South Asia cannot afford a healthy diet (FAO 2022)
...and 1.3 billion are not consuming All-5!

- A healthy diet costs >4x the minimum cost of meeting energy needs only

What is needed to move forward?

- Rethinking assumptions
- Taking a systems approach
- Embracing complexity

Interlinking challenges confronting South Asia's Agrifood systems



Thematic Session 1: Maternal diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Akhouri et al (India)

- Diverse diet: economic status, non-marginalized caste, higher education, decision-making power
- Less diverse diet: exposure to domestic violence, mental health issues, older age

Fivian et al (India)

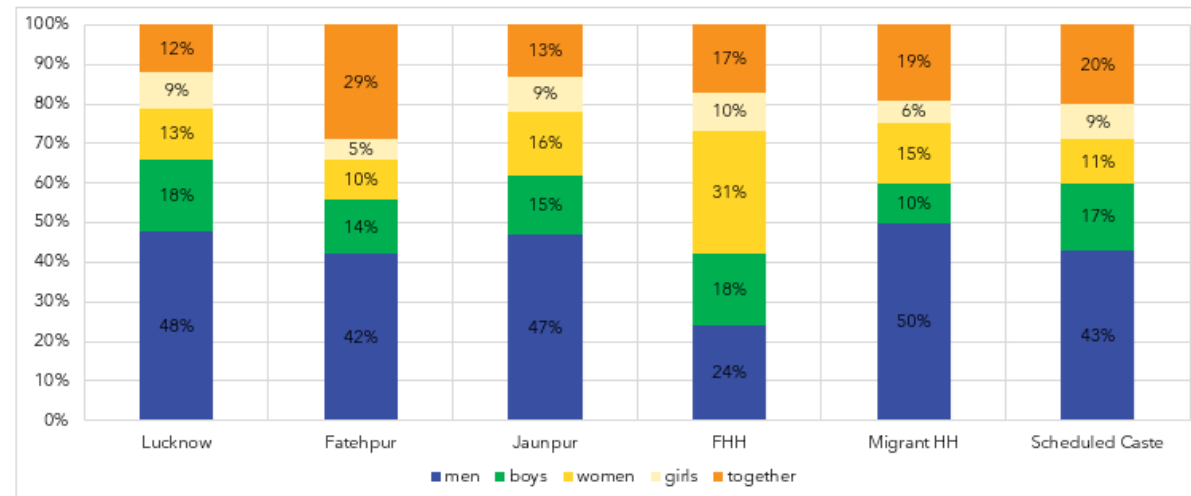
- Complexities of intersecting hierarchical social stratifications has implications for participation in interventions and for subsequent changes in intended outcomes such as women's dietary diversity

Bhanot et al (India)

- Intervention involving couples to improve their nutrition decisions facilitated spousal communication and improved knowledge about nutrition

Srivastava, A et al (India)

Who eats first in your household?



Bekunda et al (Bangladesh)

- A multi-year, multi-component program (cash transfers, health and nutrition services, behavior change campaigns) improved diet diversity of children and women

Srivastava, S et al (India)

- A multi-year, multi-component program improved food security and diet diversity among children and tribal women

Thematic Session 2: Adolescent diets and determinants in South Asia

Deki & Shulman (Bhutan)

- Classes 1-12
- Multi-methods: Free-listing, pile-sorting, observations, photo journals, FGDs
- Children like fruits and find them tastier than unhealthy foods
- “Junk” is creeping into meals
- Availability, convenience, changing family eating habits (solitary eating social bonding over snacks)

Rajan et al (India)

- Telephonic survey with 11–14-year-olds in urban informal settlements
- 24-hour recall (FANTA tool)
- Only 31% of the adolescents had adequate dietary diversity

Gupta et al (India)

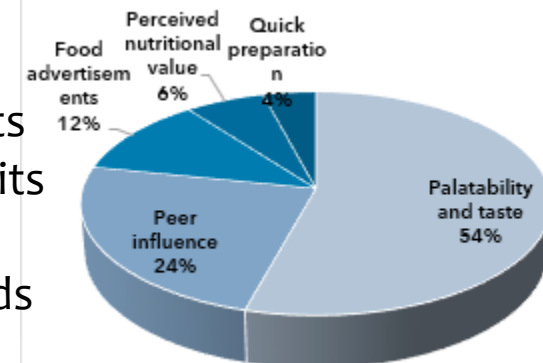
- Only half of the respondents had the breakfast and one-third had lunch the previous day yesterday.
- <33% reported consuming vegetables in the preceding week.

Digra et al (India)

- 16–17-year-old respondents
- 86% consumed packaged biscuits, cookies, cream puffs daily
- 66% consumed packaged chips, nachos daily
- Nutrition education and nutri gardens implemented

Kaur et al (India)

- 15–19-year-old rural adolescents
- 37% consumed packaged biscuits daily
- 24% consumed packaged breads and buns



Keynote Plenary: Countering commercial influences on diets - the experience of Mexico

- Experience of Mexico in countering commercial influence on diets and dealing with obesity and NCDs
- Obesity and NCDs won't be solved with individual interventions- multisectoral and complex interventions needed to solve issue
 - Not enough evidence, political will or resources to develop complex systems or interventions
- Market regulation, labelling, regulation on purchase and retail- interventions have evidence all around the world
- Importance of creating a common view among the scientific community



Thematic Session 3: Diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Masum Ali (Bangladesh)

- Diet data from Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS)
- Insufficient energy, protein and fat intake was higher among the poor
- Inequity gaps changed between 2011 and 2018 variably for different nutrients and age groups

Jayatissa et al (Sri Lanka)

- Energy and micronutrient intake among a wide range of adult population (18-60 years) was low compared to the recommendations

Parvin et al (Bangladesh)

- Low household dietary diversity in rural areas; varied by geography
- Diet quality high in female-headed households
- Higher income and high education status also was associated with good diet quality

Nowar et al (Bangladesh)

- 41% households unable to afford diets
- 38% of household expenditure is spent on starchy staples; 3% on dairy and 4% on fruits

Pant et al (India)

- Dietary diversity among women and children was already poor in several states of India
- Diet patterns worsened by COVID-19

Gupta et al (India)

- children- dominated households had a higher dietary diversity during the pandemic
- Female headed households had higher dietary diversity in urban areas, but not in rural areas

Food environments



Choo et al (Nepal)

Developing measures for assessing food environment

Thematic Session 4: Children's diets, determinants, and interventions in South Asia

Kshetri et al (Nepal)

- 48% met minimum acceptable diet
- 50% mothers met minimum dietary diversity
- Listening to a radio program was associated with good dietary practices

Soomro et al (Bangladesh)

- Only 3 different types of foods were consumed among children <12 months (wheat-based snacks, wheat bread, rice, and potatoes).

Verma et al (India)

- Low maternal and child dietary diversity
- Only 37% of families initiated timely complementary feeding

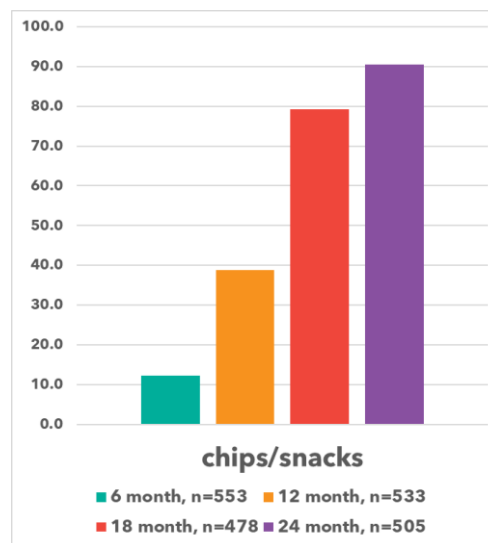
Jith et al (India)

- Extremely low diet diversity among children
- Similar trend in overall household diet pattern with roots and tubers consumed in large quantities followed by foods high in salt and sugar such as packaged food such as biscuits and chips

Saha et al (Bangladesh)

Reasons for feeding packaged food

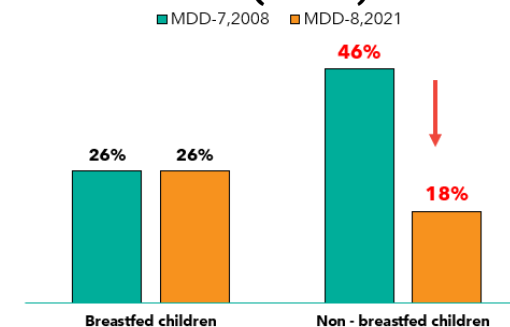
- Time
- Distance
- Pacify child
- Acceptable gift



Bari et al (Bangladesh)

- Elements of intervention that sustained after 7 years included knowledge on balanced-diet, dietary diversity, child health care service, health and hygiene, IYCF-practices, home food safety and food preparation

Navalkar et al (India)



Upadhyay et al (Nepal)

- A private sector partnership to produce complementary fortified foods (Baliyo Nepal)
- Affordability and convenience were cited by buyers

Thematic Session 5: Policies, programs, and solutions for improving diets in South Asia

Cooper et al (India)

- Review of market-based interventions and policies for nutrient dense foods
- Major interventions included
- Digitilization of value chains and markets
- Creation of new markets (e.g., farmers' markets)
- Investment in market infrastructure (e.g., transport)
- Clean energy cold storage

Radhakrishnan et al (India)

- Survey on dietary imbalances through food-based approach
- Small and marginal farmers had very minimal crop diversification
- No ongoing post - harvest or value addition activities
- Vegetable production not translated to consumption
- Malnourishment highly prevalent among women with rising obesity

Krupnik et al (Bangladesh)

- Marketing and consumption dataset from >3,000 households
- Farmers are increasingly producing nutrients in the form of foods, selling them, but later repurchasing them from markets
- Diversification related to wealth, food security, dietary diversity

Hussain et al (Pakistan)

- Scaling biofortified zinc wheat seeds, grains and foods
- 3.5 million metric tons of wheat grain harvested 2021-2022
- More than 1.4 million farmers growing zinc wheat
- Nearly 7 million people consuming biofortified zinc wheat
- Possible with support from the Government in early generation seed production and a high-quality product

Bearden et al (India)

- Qualitative analysis
- Partnership between government, fishermen, consumers
- Increased availability and consumption of dried fish

Sareen et al (India)

- Wheat flour fortification in Himachal Pradesh
- Wheat flour with iron, folic acid and vitamin B12
- Provided quality fortified wheat flour to 1,800,000 families
- Emphasis on partnerships, capacitation, and advocacy constitutes a holistic approach

Many thanks to our co-hosts and the conference secretariat!



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Transforming
Agrifood Systems
in South Asia



#D4N2022

Core team

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- Nur-A-Mahajabin Khan
- Nitesh Ranjan
- Esha Sarswat

Program committee

- Filippo Dibari, WFP
- Gopinath Radhakrishnan, MSSRF
- G.N. Hariharan, MSSRF
- Rasmi Avula, IFPRI

Supporting team

Thank you to the *many* individuals from across the co-hosts who have undertaken a *multitude of* roles to contribute to this conference over the last several months!



(VIRTUAL) AWARDS!

Top-ranked research abstracts

- **Indra Dhoj Kshetri, Helen Keller International (HKI),** *“Association between listening to a radio program with tailored content and maternal and child feeding practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal”*
- **Timothy J. Krupnik, CIMMYT,** *“Do diverse farming system types influence potential nutrient availability and deficiencies the diets of smallholder households? Evidence from Bangladesh”*

Top-ranked implementation abstracts

- **Munawar Hussain, HarvestPlus,** *“Scaling biofortified zinc wheat seeds, grains and foods to meet 1.4 million farmers and 7 million consumers in Pakistan”*
- **Anurudra Bhanot, Project Concern International,** *“Engaging Men for Better Nutritional and Family Health Outcomes”*

Organizations with highest # of abstracts

University of Dhaka
(Bangladesh)

International Institute
of Population Studies
(IIPS) (India)

Next steps

- **Publish conference proceedings and amplify outreach**
- **National dialogues**
 - Deepen engagement around insights from conference
 - Identify follow-up policy/program actions at the country-level
 - Identify research and data needs at the country-level
- **Regional engagement**
 - Deepen engagement around insights from conference
 - Identify follow-up policy/program actions for regional actors
 - Identify research and data needs that are common across the region
 - Create opportunity for deeper dialogue and cross-country engagement on research and policy

