

Connecting School Feeding Programs with Local Agricultural Development: Indian Examples and Challenges

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Indian Context:

- ¼ below poverty line
- 21% undernourished (FAO SOFI)
- GOI / WB 36% women undernourished
- 46% of children under three chronically undernourished, 16% acutely undernourished.
- For > 30% of poor households, family income insufficient to meet food needs, even if 70% goes for food (before recent price rise).
- Large cereal surpluses, large regional variation in poverty numbers

Food Distribution Programs in India

- Public Distribution System (PDS)
- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) 0-6 years old
- Mid-day Meals (MDM)
- Between \$5 and \$10 billion/year
- From 1990 – 2000 expenditures increased by 40% in real terms, even as poverty declined
- At least 10% of central spending, 1.7% of GDP
- > than public spending on health, ½ of public spending on education

Mid Day Meal -- MDM

- Run by Ministry of Education, through state agencies
- Originally introduced to boost school attendance
- Now recognised as means to improve nutrition and boost local production
- Food Corporation of India (FCI) provides the cereals, free of cost, 100 gr/day (450 cal.)
- 2.6 million tons distributed annually, 120 million children

+ Cash contribution

- State governments provide cash, Rs 1/child (US 5 cents) for vegetables, pulses, edible oils, fuel wages for preparing food (New Delhi provides Rs 3/child)
- Local village primary school, 50 - 100 pupils = USD 25 – 50/month -- very small, but could support a garden/production options

Basic MDM is in place: how can it link to local production, with what objective?

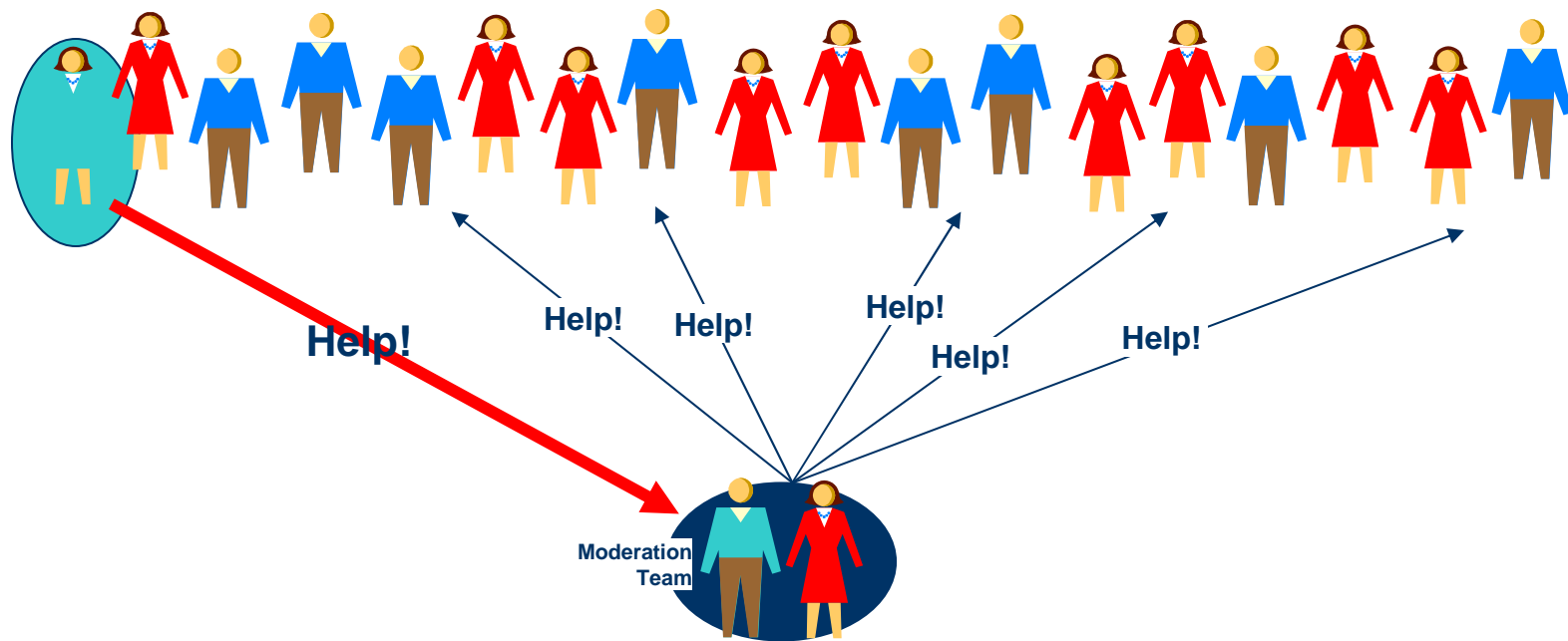
Experiences from “Solution Exchange”



<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in>

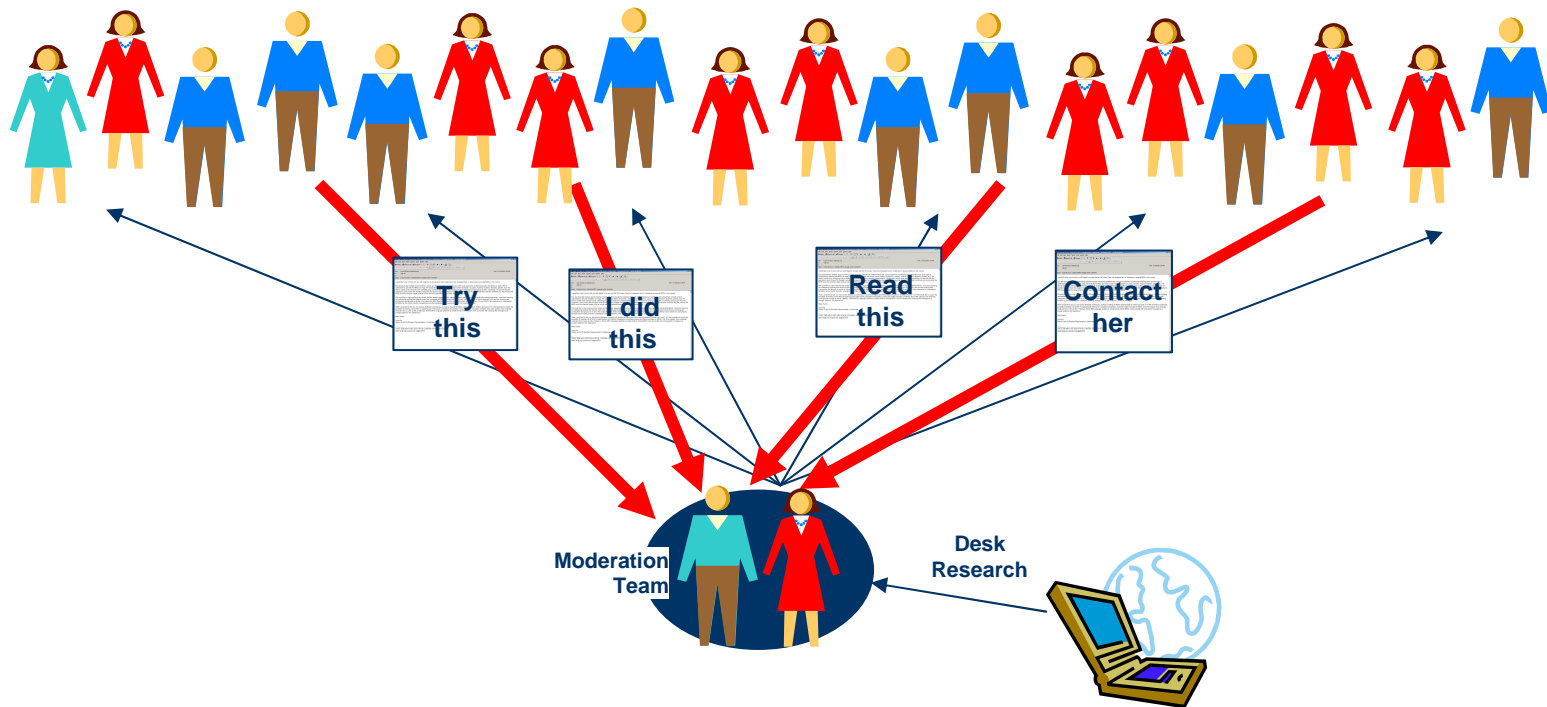
How it works:

1. Member sends the Community a query (day 1)



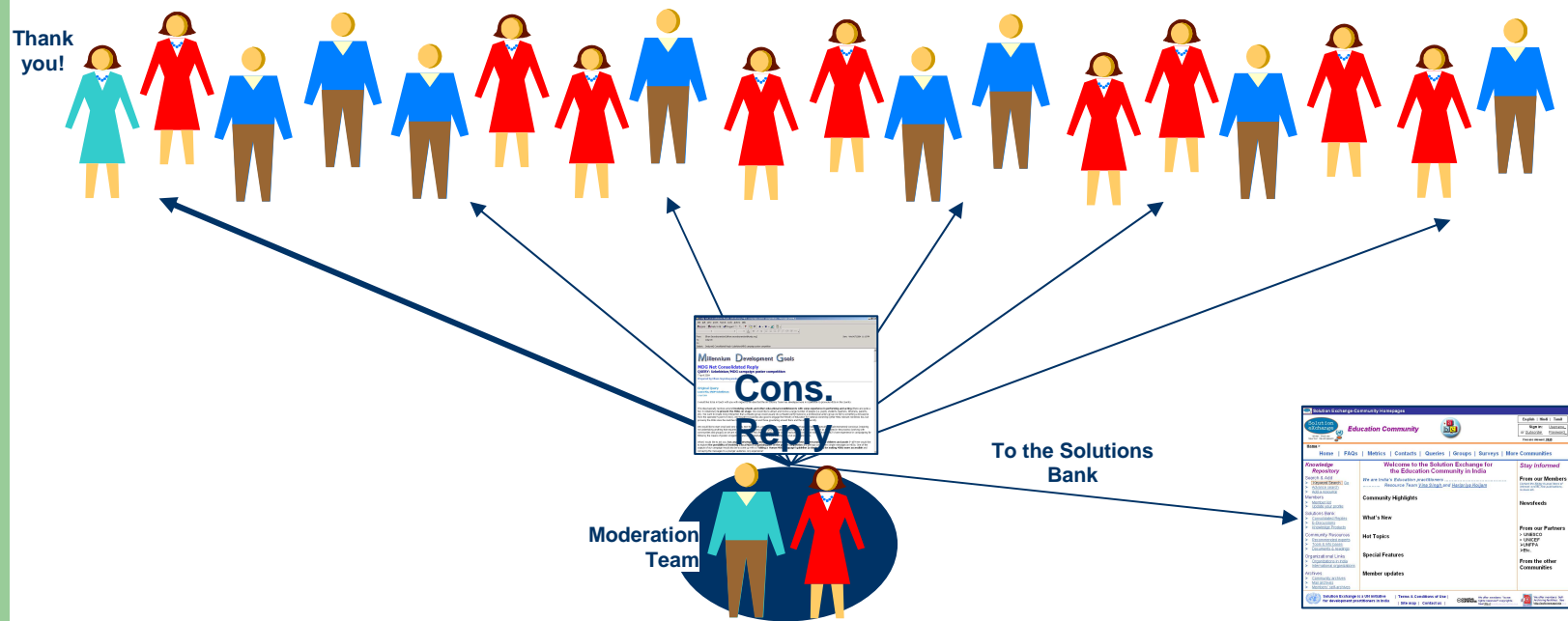
How it works:

2. Community offers Member solutions (days 2-7)



How it works:

3. Consolidated Reply is prepared, sent & archived (day 8)



What did they report? -- general

- MDM will not have an impact on local food grain production (due to Indian MDM program), but can have large impact on local vegetable and other ingredient production
- Multiple benefits from linking growing food to MDM (cost, awareness, interest, ag aptitude and prestige)
- Use of women's self help groups (SHGs) very beneficial – in both directions
- Potential for public – private – civil society interaction

What did they report? -- specifics

- 33 replies (copies distributed)
- 1. Implementation by local NGO of school gardens and local growers, in combination with nutrition education (see Mathab Bamji – “Promotion of Vegetables...”)
 - Awareness creation on importance of vegetables, to students, teachers, mothers, school cooks
 - Promotion of vegetables/nutrition at home
 - Children as change agents
 - Reduce costs/improve quality of MDM
 - Role of local NGOs in support of village-level schools and activities

Reports

2. Public – Private Partnership

Akshaya Patra (presentation)

- Scale and quality control
- Centralized kitchen operations in urban areas, decentralised in rural ones
- Leveraging other corporations and NGOs

Other recommendations:

- Better experience for using local produce when managed locally, involving local civil society (women's self help groups) and government – otherwise difficult to coordinate priorities of multiple gov. departments involved
- Some experience with “earn while you learn” working on food production for schools – with external funding
- Go for long-shelf life options that can also be sold locally
- Include local high schools – both for training and scale
- Include local edible plants (see publication)
- Pay close attention to hygiene and safety!

Conclusions

- MDM in place, local production of non food-grains can have multiple benefits
- NB: Part of education program
- Cost is a major limiting factor but there are others:
 - Local availability and cultural context
 - Government regulations limiting PPP or civil society participation

Continued...

- Need to see MDM/local production as part of larger efforts:
 - nutrition awareness,
 - use of local nutritious plants,
 - dignity and profitability of agriculture,
 - role of civil society and women's groups,
 - private sector partnerships for development objectives.