



Speaker Summary Note

Session: Governance and Inclusion Levers

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Title: **The Case for 3G:
The green, the grain, and the gram**

Based on my years of field level work with rural households and small farmers, I want to share experiences and learnings that suggest for creation of frameworks that ensure suitable governance for convergence of agriculture and nutrition security thereby making it inclusive.

Isn't it an irony that despite having over 85% of India's agriculture represented by small and marginal farmers, they still have to depend on the PDS/fair price shops for their daily quota of food grains?

Most of these small and marginal farmers are dependent on rain-fed farming living in arid zones or in the hills. These populations have been the traditional torchbearers of the Indian agricultural system as they have been continuing the tradition of survival and livelihood based almost entirely on farming. Despite sweeping changes in the Indian economic landscape in the last few decades, the skill sets of these farmer families confined to agriculture, rendering them mono-skilled and non-adaptive to changing realities. Therefore these small and marginal farmers had to look for new ideas that the market had to offer. This meant abandoning their portfolio of nutrition and health—the green, the grain and the gram for culturally alien cash crops like cotton and soya bean. This changed the economics of small farmers' households. Input costs went up, outcomes became riskier and against predictions returns were often negative. All this meant the small farmer had to make one more adjustment—stand in long queues in front of PDS shops, which incidentally only dishes out nutrient deficient rice and wheat with no recourse to greens, coarse grains or grams/lentils. Given that rice became available at a ridiculously subsidized Rs.2/- per kg, farmers had no incentive to grow or consume the greens, grains and grams. They just adjusted to a nutrient deficient diet as part of the 'structural adjustments' they began to make in the modern economy. It is this paradigm shift from their traditional diversified cropping to mono cash cropping that has alienated small farmer from nutritional security.

Given this background, I will be sharing some experiences from Naandi Foundation's work which are valuable examples in governance and inclusion.

Naandi Foundation¹ works directly with communities in partnership with various state governments. We work with over 300 farmer co-operatives in the plains, mostly arid rain fed areas and with a very large tribal co-operative in the Eastern Ghats where we work with over 20,000 small farmers growing greens, grains, grams and coffee and black pepper. With these communities we also work on their nutritional security, ensuring the community's mothers and children are able to access the government service providers (0–5 age group in particular) and ensure every child is in a school and learning. Naandi also runs creches or the anganwadi centers in hundreds of numbers and does a number of activities across clusters of villagers to create a framework for integrated convergence between health, women and child development, rural development and agriculture ministries. One such large cluster was part of a longitudinal action research project with the state government of MP, the World Bank and Naandi which proved how convergence helps improved indices that affect nutritional security of children.

Currently, we are harvesting learnings from across 100 challenging districts of six backward states as far as child development indices are considered. This is through a Survey we are conducting called the *HUNGaMA* (Hindi word for a 'stir'), an acronym for Hunger and Malnutrition. This will be the first ever Citizen led initiative to collect district level household data of children's nutritional status in the 0–6 years. As part of the survey we are interviewing over 60,000 women who are mothers of children, most of them nutrient deficient in one form or the other. The jury is still out as the data is being tabulated, but having been in some of the villages talking to the mothers personally, I can vouch for the fact that the 3G's are missing from their crop portfolio and thereby their daily plates. To bring it back we need inclusive levers, subsidies and incentives directed at this goal—nutritional security for every farmer along with food security. Only then should national food grain security be addressed. At the moment we are obsessed with food grains production and that is meant to guarantee food and nutritional security.

¹ Naandi can be best described as a unique social enterprise that partners with various state governments to become their implementing arms for various social services across sectors and works directly with underserved communities with a large network of professionals and community development workers. Naandi also is the largest rural safe drinking water provider and the largest government partner in provision of mi-day meals for school going children. On last count, we provide over 1.3 million meals every day in AP, MP, Orissa, Rajasthan as of now and Bihar and Chattisgarh to be added shortly. Most of the hot cooked nutritious meals are also fortified with iron supplements. More on Naandi Foundation can be browsed from www.naandi.org.