



PHFI IPHS Deemed University- RySS Partnership: Advancing Farmer Health, Nutrition and Sustainable Development

Background

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the PHFI Institute of Public Health Sciences, Hyderabad (Deemed to be University) and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) establishes a strategic partnership to integrate public health, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture. The collaboration is based on the recognition that sustainable farming systems, ecosystem health, nutrition, and human well-being are deeply interconnected. The partnership seeks to leverage RySS's extensive experience in Community Managed Natural Farming and IPHS's expertise in public health, nutrition, research, monitoring, evaluation, and capacity building.

The MoU focuses on promoting health, nutrition, and sustainable dietary practices; strengthening community-based health and nutrition counselling; and generating scientific evidence to support policy and scale-up. Particular emphasis is placed on vulnerable populations, including women, children, adolescents, elderly populations, and households during the critical first 1,000 days of life.

Strategic Significance of the Partnership

The PHFI IPHS-RySS collaboration offers a unique opportunity to create an integrated model that links:

- * Healthy soils and biodiversity
- * Safe and nutritious food systems
- * Improved farmer and community health
- * Climate resilience
- * Sustainable livelihoods

This approach aligns with national priorities and global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the One Health Approach, and the emerging Planetary Health agenda.

The partnership can demonstrate how natural farming is not only an agricultural intervention but also a public health strategy capable of improving nutrition, reducing environmental risks, and enhancing community well-being.

Current Areas of Collaboration

Under the MoU, both institutions have agreed to:

1. Strengthen Community Health and Nutrition Systems

Develop and implement capacity-building programs for Community Health and Nutrition Counsellors who can support farming communities with nutrition education, health promotion, and behaviour change communication.

2. Improve Nutrition and Dietary Diversity

Promote interventions that improve access to safe, locally produced, and nutritious foods through natural farming systems. This includes encouraging dietary diversity and addressing malnutrition among vulnerable groups.

3. Generate Evidence for Policy and Scale-Up

Conduct joint research, monitoring, evaluation, and dissemination of findings through scientific publications and policy advocacy. This evidence will help inform future public health and agricultural policies.

4. Build Research Capacity

IPSH will provide technical support and training in research methodology, data analytics, monitoring and evaluation, scientific writing, and evidence generation for RySS teams and associated stakeholders.

Future Opportunities for Expansion

While the current MoU establishes a strong foundation, the partnership has significant potential to expand into several high-impact areas.

A. Farmer Health Initiative

A major future priority should be the creation of a comprehensive Farmer Health Initiative focused on prevention, early detection, and management of health conditions affecting farming communities.

Key areas include:

- * Screening for diabetes and hypertension
- * Chronic kidney disease surveillance
- * Mental health and stress management
- * Occupational health and injury prevention
- * Musculoskeletal disorders
- * Heat stress and climate-related health risks

This initiative could establish one of India's first large-scale farmer health monitoring systems and generate valuable evidence for policymaking.

B. Natural Farming and Public Health Research

The partnership can create a robust research agenda examining the health impacts of natural farming.

Potential research questions include:

- * Does natural farming reduce pesticide exposure and associated health risks?
- * Does it improve dietary diversity and nutrition outcomes?
- * Does it lower household healthcare expenditures?
- * Does it improve farmer well-being and resilience?

Longitudinal studies and impact evaluations could position Andhra Pradesh as a global leader in research on agriculture, nutrition, and health.

C. Women's Health and Nutrition

Women are central to agricultural production and household nutrition. A dedicated program could focus on:

- * Maternal and reproductive health
- * Anaemia reduction
- * Adolescent nutrition

- * Mental health and well-being
- * Women farmer leadership

Such interventions would contribute directly to gender equality and improved family health outcomes.

D. Climate Change and Farmer Resilience

Climate change increasingly affects agricultural productivity and farmer health. Future collaboration could include:

- * Heat stress monitoring
- * Climate-resilient agriculture
- * Drought and water stress assessments
- * Climate-related mental health impacts

These activities would strengthen adaptation strategies while supporting sustainable agricultural systems.

E. One Health and Planetary Health Framework

The partnership can evolve into a broader One Health platform, connecting:

- * Human health
- * Animal health
- * Soil health
- * Ecosystem health

This integrated approach would support research on biodiversity, water quality, antimicrobial resistance, livestock health, and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

The PHFI IPHS-RySS partnership has the potential to become a nationally and internationally recognized model demonstrating how sustainable agriculture can improve human health, nutrition, livelihoods, and environmental outcomes simultaneously. By expanding beyond nutrition counselling into farmer health, climate resilience, research, digital innovation, and One Health approaches, the collaboration can generate transformative impact for farming communities while contributing significantly to India's sustainable development agenda.

Vision: Healthy Farmers, Healthy Families, Healthy Ecosystems, and Sustainable



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