

5.2 Education for Sustainable Development: An Open Access On-line Course to Improve Community Wellbeing and Inform Policy-makers.

Despite India's rapid socio-economic growth, large numbers of Indians continue to experience food insecurity and nutritional vulnerability. This problem is compounded at policy level by poor understanding of contextual constraints and local nutritional know-how, as well as the inability to communicate in ways responsive to local needs, aspirations and cultures.

Two-way knowledge-exchange between government and local communities is needed so that both policy-makers and local people can make better informed choices, improving health outcomes and the sustainability of diets.

To facilitate this, TIGR2ESS and related GRТА project partners in India and the UK created a free Massive Open Online Course, called 'Communication and extension for sustainable development' for Indira Gandhi National Open University the world's largest university. Hosted by the Swayam platform of the Indian government's Ministry of Human Resources Development, the course launched in September 2021.

Aimed at a broad range of learners, from postgraduate students to frontline workers in NGOs and government organisations, the 15-week course uses contextual examples from recent TIGR2ESS research to explain key theoretical concepts in simple language.

Through 20 hours of video material, case studies, and written text, the aim is to empower and improve the wellbeing of rural (and urban) communities, especially indigenous groups, women and children.



Photograph: Atul Purty, PRADAN

Organised in four blocks, the course seeks to educate participants in the latest creative tools in extension, communication for development, training and advocacy, and key elements of creating and nurturing sustainable food systems and community resources.

At its launch in English over 500 learners enrolled. To reach a larger audience, especially frontline and extension workers, a Hindi version of the course launched in July 2022. The course can be accessed at: https://onlinecourses.swayam2.ac.in/nou21_ge38/preview

'What is unique about the course is the ability to bring together theoretical frameworks on various topics of communication and collaboration, with practical approaches/solutions for sustainable development.'

Ayesha Pattnaik, current student.

'The Course is already benefitting online students, including community health workers, social change makers, teachers and those interested in welfare and development. Efforts to develop the Course in Hindi are under-way and after its launch, frontline health workers in the communities who are well versed in Hindi will be hugely benefitted.'

Dr Umesh Pandey,
IGNOU Regional Director, Bhopal

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LEAD INVESTIGATOR, CO-INVESTIGATORS & PARTNERS	Prof Nitya Rao, Nivedita Narain, R. Padmaja, R. Rengalakshmi, Sanchita Banerji, Heena Bijli, Arundhita Bhanjdeo, Imran Amin, Chandni Khanduja, Anuprita Shukla, Kavitha Kasala, Shubhashree Shankar, Raj Kumar, Bharti Goel, Smedha Singh, Jorgen Johnson, Sumantra Ray, Luke Buckner, Shane McAuliffe, Wanja Nyaga, Helena Trigueiro, Kai Kargbo, Sehjo Singh, Reetu Sogani UEA, PRADAN, ICRISAT, MSSRF, IGNOU, KISS, PU, NnedPro, Lok Chetna Manch

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