

National Young Media Fellowship Programme – NYMF Programme

Context

Over the last 79 years, numerous policies and initiatives have shaped Indian food systems and transforming the nation from a food shortage to a surplus country. However, we still lack a food systems approach in governance, the result of which is huge indirect cost as public and individual spending, as revealed in various studies carried out recently. As these policy initiatives have been largely in response to one or the other immediate issues at hand, such as food insecurity, poverty, and poor nutritional status, even the media reportage around these have been reactive in nature, focussing on their immediate outcomes.

Despite being a new emergence, the term 'food systems', has increasingly become a topic of urgent focus given the current geo-political conflicts preceded by COVID-19, both of which severely disrupted the global food supply chains. It is therefore important to elevate the current public communication including journalistic narrative from being crisis-driven and reactive to being more analytical, inter-disciplinary, and solution-driven, to present a holistic view of the food systems to the public.

Towards this end, FOLU India has conceptualised National Young Media Fellowship Programme (NYMF). This annual programme will focus on students from across India, beginning with Delhi-NCR in its initial year. At the end of its five-month module, NYMF is expected to have produced a group of well-informed, sensitised young professionals capable of covering topics of food systems and ready to enter mass communication industry at the national and sub-national level with in-depth knowledge of the same.

Outcomes

- The NYMF programme will create more space in mainstream mass media for greater focus on food systems. In specifically journalism, this is presently limited to opportunistic reporting and largely on agriculture related stories, and affordability issues related to price spikes in essential household commodities; as opposed to a balanced focus on other aspects of food production, distribution, processing, consumption patterns and nutritional issues.
- Young mass media professionals will be trained in analytical approach in their coverage, which will shift the perspective from reactive to proactive narrative, at the sub-national and national level. They will learn to draw connections between global climate agreements to the everyday realities of local smallholder and marginal farmers, thereby breaking down jargons to transform abstract science into a clear, relatable and actionable knowledge for the civil society.

Impact

- At the end of the programme, a significant number of professionals will have developed a food system lens in their thinking. Aspirationally, with a number of young professionals highly trained in food systems communication, the subject may potentially open up more job opportunities.

- This will provide a much sharper and wider focus to the sector, thereby prompting corresponding and proportionate action by policymakers in the long term.

Key aspects of the NYMF programme – Year One (due to start in September)

 **Orientation workshop** - A subject orientation workshop will be held for 20 students, leading to final cohort of six.

 **Module design** - A mix of interactive workshops, talks, field visits, and engagement with practitioners for adequate exposure to both the grassroots and the national policy perspectives.

 **Mentorship** - Mentorship opportunity with senior experts – sectoral and communication.

 **Content** – Group output – Fellows will be assigned one of the two groups. Each group will present 15-minute each on any two topics, in the form of speed talks/online seminar before the full group of mentors and other fellows. Two of such sessions will be held over five months, for an hour each.

Individual output - At least one content developed on any topic in any format - written, audio or audio-visual format, as guided by mentors.

 **Programme delivery** – At the concluding event cohort members will present their content and share their experience of the programme, opportunity to interact with more experts and journalists. The final output from fellows will also be compiled in a suitable format for external sharing. Development of a concluding report at the end of the NYMF programme to capture outcomes.

Subject Orientation
20 students

Final cohort
6 members

Duration
5 months

Field work grant
₹ 10-15,000*

*may be revised subject to availability of resources

Suggested training topics:

- Overview of food systems
 - The concept and theory of change for food systems transformation
- Food systems in the Indian context – peculiarities, challenges and acceleration points
 - Policy-based analysis of initiatives and programmes
- Understanding the food value chain from the ground up
 - Knowing the actors and stakeholders

– Value chain-based approach to understand the economic aspect of commodity movement

- Current geo-political crisis and its impact on Indian food systems
- Stocktaking of changes in the food systems post COVID-19 and Middle-East crisis; global events affecting domestic scenario

- Future of Indian food systems - building journalistic narratives

– Understanding pressure points of the Indian food systems and policy gaps, in view of changing consumption patterns, and economic and environmental realities

- Relationships between actors within the urban and peri-urban foodscape

Key dates:

18th September – Orientation workshop, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

End of January – completion of fellowship/valedictory workshop

Why FOLU India

The NYMF programme is in line with FOLU India's strategic approach of creating an enabling atmosphere for exchange of knowledge and ideas among stakeholders. Its working experience with various government, non-government, private, philanthropic and civil society institutions places it in a unique position to comprehend the multiple issues surrounding the food systems, as well as appreciate their uniqueness. Through its network, FOLU India will connect budding young journalists with various actors and stakeholders of the food systems, to enable perspective sharing, thereby ultimately supporting whole systems transformation, which aligns with its theory of change.
