



# SPAN-HNC

END OF PROJECT REPORT  
2025-26

**IMPLEMENTED BY**  
Dakshama Health

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# Project Overview

The **SPAN-HNC (Screening, Patient Awareness, and Nutrition Support for Head and Neck Cancer Patients)** project was implemented by **Dakshama Health** with CSR support from **Merck Specialities Private Limited**.

The project aimed to strengthen supportive cancer care services through an **integrated approach**:

- Patient counselling and navigation support
- Nutritional supplementation
- Community awareness
- Institutional partnerships with government hospitals

The project was implemented across Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, with on-ground activities in:

- Basaidarapur Hospital (Delhi)
- ESIC Hospital (Faridabad)
- Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute (Lucknow)

The initiative focused particularly on economically vulnerable cancer patients who often face treatment interruptions due to malnutrition, psychosocial distress, and lack of system navigation support.

## Project Objective

- Strengthen patient counselling and psychosocial support services within hospital settings.
- Improve treatment tolerance and adherence through targeted nutritional supplementation.
- Increase awareness of head and neck cancer risk factors and early symptoms in vulnerable communities.
- Strengthen coordination between hospital systems and community-level patient support services.
- Develop replicable supportive care models that can be integrated into public healthcare settings.



Image description: MoU signing with Prof. M.L.B. Bhatt, Director, Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute and Mugdha Barik, Sr. Program Manager, Dakshama Health

# Implementation Model

SPAN-HNC adopted a multi-layered intervention model addressing patient needs across the cancer care continuum.

## Hospital-Based Services:

- One-on-one patient counselling
- Treatment navigation support
- Nutritional counselling
- Nutritional supplement distribution
- Patient experience sessions

## Systems Strengthening

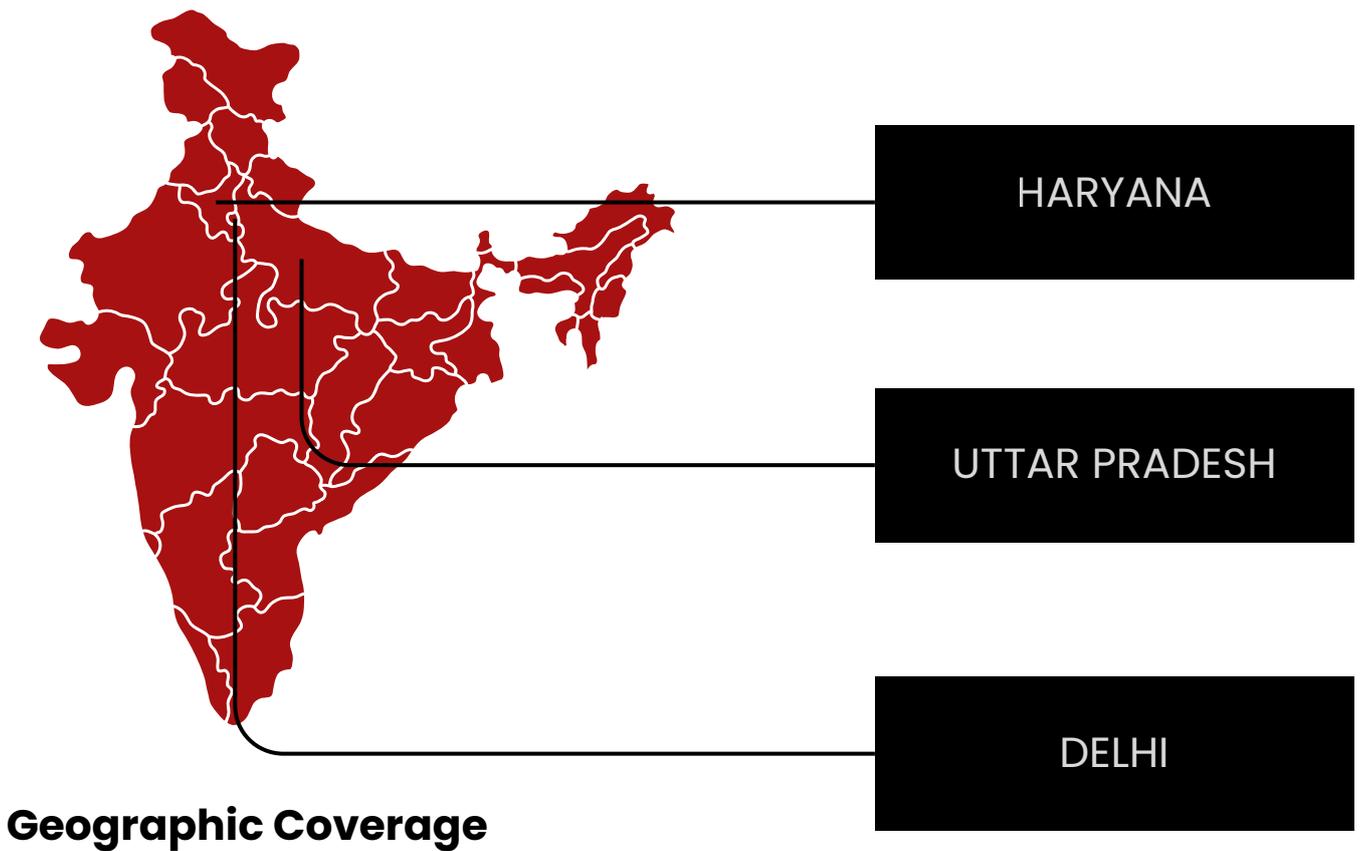
- Formal partnerships with public hospitals
- Coordination with clinicians and hospital administration
- Development of patient education materials and knowledge resources



## Community Outreach

- Awareness camps in high-risk communities
- Distribution of educational materials
- Screening referrals to partner hospitals

*Image description: Distribution of care packages to oncology in-patients and caregivers containing daily care and sanitary items such as mouthwash, soap, clean wipes coconut water, etc. by meditation therapist, Mr. Ajay, and SPAN counsellor, Aastha Kush*



## Key Outputs Achieved

### Clinical Counselling Services

- **833** Head and Neck Cancer patients received recurrent direct counseling.
- **940** non-HNC cancer patients received psychological counselling
- **3,179** counselling sessions conducted across OPD and IPD settings

### Nutritional Support

- **1,988** nutritional supplements distributed
- **833** unique HNC patients supported

### Community Outreach

- **18 awareness camps** conducted in vulnerable communities
- **1,800 direct beneficiaries** reached
- **18,000+ indirect beneficiaries** reached through community networks
- **3,000** educational leaflets distributed

### Institutional Partnerships

- **5** hospital across 3 states engaged
- Strengthened **referral pathways** between community outreach and tertiary hospitals
- Integration of **counselling services** within hospital workflows

### Patient Experience Sessions

- **9** experience sessions conducted
- **833** unique HNC patients supported

### Information and Knowledge Resources

- **Development of Good Practice Guide** for cancer patients
- **Creation of**
- Social media campaigns reaching **120,000**

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	<b>DELHI</b>	<b>FARIDABAD</b>	<b>LUCKNOW</b>
<b>JULY 2025</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>AUGUST 2025</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>SEPTEMBER 2025</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>OCTOBER 2025</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 2025</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>DECEMBER 2025</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>JANUARY 2026</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>FEBRUARY 2026</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>MARCH 2026</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1096</b>	<b>1002</b>	<b>1081</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3179</b>		

Table description: List of Counseling Sessions Conducted at Each Location Per Activity till March 15, 2026

# Distribution of Nutritional Supplements

Under the SPAN-HNC project, **nutritional supplement packages** were provided to head and neck cancer patients to support treatment tolerance and recovery. Head and neck cancer patients frequently experience treatment-related side effects such as difficulty swallowing, oral mucositis, altered taste, and reduced appetite, which significantly increase the **risk of malnutrition** during chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery. Each nutritional support package consisted of a **600 g protein supplement** along with **essential hygiene-care materials** including **cotton rolls, gauze swabs, mouthwash, cleanser, and iodine-based ointment**, addressing both **nutritional and oral care needs** of patients undergoing treatment.

The supplements were procured through a **structured vendor selection and quality assurance process**, with bulk procurement followed by hygienic repackaging and verification before distribution. Eligible beneficiaries were identified by hospital counsellors **in coordination with clinical teams**, and the packages were distributed on designated OPD days alongside counselling.

This integrated approach ensured that nutritional supplementation was complemented by behavioral guidance, enabling patients to better tolerate treatment, maintain strength, and reduce treatment interruptions associated with malnutrition and treatment-related complications.

*Over the course of the project, the team targeted to distribute a total of **2,250 nutritional supplements** across Delhi, Faridabad, and Lucknow by the end of the project period. Following targeted field assessments and strategic distribution, a total of 2021 nutritional supplements have already been distributed.*

## Distribution Protocol and Monitoring

To ensure transparency, accountability, and appropriate targeting of beneficiaries, a structured protocol was followed for the distribution of nutritional supplement (NS) packages. Beneficiaries were identified by trained project counsellors in coordination with hospital clinical teams during OPD and IPD visits. Priority was given to head and neck cancer patients experiencing treatment-related nutritional vulnerability, as well as individuals identified by treating physicians as requiring additional nutritional support.

Each distribution was accompanied by a brief counselling session. Prior to receiving the nutritional supplement package, all beneficiaries completed a consent form, and basic patient information was recorded to ensure traceability and program monitoring.

For documentation and monitoring purposes, photographic evidence of distribution and signed consent records were maintained, while service delivery data were logged by counsellors through standardized digital forms. The project team conducted periodic internal reviews of this data to monitor beneficiary coverage, distribution trends, and service quality.

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	<b>DELHI</b>	<b>FARIDABAD</b>	<b>LUCKNOW</b>
<b>AUGUST 2025</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>SEPTEMBER 2025</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>OCTOBER 2025</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NOVEMBER 2025</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>DECEMBER 2025</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>JANUARY 2026</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>FEBRUARY 2026</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>MARCH 2026</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>1010</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1988</b>		

*Table description: Break-up of the Nutritional Supplementary Distributions between the 3 target cities till 15<sup>th</sup> March*

# Awareness Camps

Between September 2025 and February 2026, 18 camps were successfully organized across Delhi and Haryana by the SPAN-HNC team to extend outreach and strengthen behavioral change communication among vulnerable urban slum populations.

Each camp was carefully designed to adapt to local settings, maximize participation, and build trust with marginalized communities and directly impacted 150-200, as well as indirectly impacted ~ 1000 people per camp.

## KEY ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- House-to-house awareness visits, where team members engaged residents in small groups and explained head and neck cancer-related information.
- Street-level interactions near common gathering points to maximize visibility.
- Use of IEC materials to explain causes, symptoms, prevention strategies, and the importance of early detection .
- One-to-one counselling by counsellors, addressing myths, fears, and treatment misconceptions
- After completing the awareness activities, refreshments were distributed to community members, including children and adults who actively participated in the discussions .



## Primary Objectives

- Create awareness about head and neck cancer (HNC) and its preventable risk factors.
- Promote oral hygiene and nutrition practices for at-risk populations.
- Encourage early symptom recognition and timely medical consultation.
- Build local partnerships for sustained community engagement.

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<b>EVENT</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
<b>CAMP 1</b>	<b>25-09-25</b>	<b>Jhuggis near Rohini Sector-18 Metro Station, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 2</b>	<b>27-10-25</b>	<b>Krishna Colony Jhuggi, near Pacific Mall, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 3</b>	<b>27-10-25</b>	<b>Mujessar and Atto Ki Jhuggi, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 4</b>	<b>21-11-25</b>	<b>Badi jhuggi, Near Suraj Park, Samaypur Badli, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 5</b>	<b>09-12-25</b>	<b>Jhuggi Cluster near Mahila Park, Rohini Sector-18, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 6</b>	<b>09-12-25</b>	<b>Kalyan Puri Jhuggi, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 7</b>	<b>09-12-25</b>	<b>Nehru Colony, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 8</b>	<b>10-12-25</b>	<b>Prem Nagar Jhuggi, New sector 8, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 9</b>	<b>10-12-25</b>	<b>Canal Jhuggi, Sirdi Sai temple, New Sector 4, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 10</b>	<b>11-12-25</b>	<b>JJ colony, Rohini sec 18, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 11</b>	<b>11-12-25</b>	<b>Badli Gaon Jhuggi, Samaypur B</b>
<b>CAMP 12</b>	<b>07-01-26</b>	<b>Pratap Nagar Railway Jhuggi, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 13</b>	<b>07-01-26</b>	<b>Samaypur Badli Jhuggi, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 14</b>	<b>08-01-26</b>	<b>Suraj Park Jhuggi, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 15</b>	<b>08-01-26</b>	<b>Gadha Jhuggi Badli gaon, Delhi</b>
<b>CAMP 16</b>	<b>06-02-26</b>	<b>Kalyan Puri Jhuggi, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 17</b>	<b>06-02-26</b>	<b>Prem Nagar Jhuggi, New sector 8, Faridabad</b>
<b>CAMP 18</b>	<b>06-02-26</b>	<b>Canal Jhuggi, Sirdi Sai temple, New Sector 4, Faridabad</b>

# 🌿 Cancer se Jung, Ummeed ke Sang 🌿

Cancer ka naam sun ke ghabraana nahi,  
Karen Ghaav koi undekha nahi.  
Pehchaan hi hai Pehla padaav,  
Tabhi hoga cancer se bachaav.

Munh ke ghaav jo bharte nahi,  
Do hafte baad bhi na hote sahi.  
Lal ya safed challa agar aye nazar,  
Doctor ji ko karo turant khabar.

Aawaaz agar baith hi jaaye,  
ya nigalne mein koi dikkat aaye.  
Khansi ho par bukhaar na ho,  
Tab to Jaanch kara hi lo.

Tambaku, gutkha koi khel nahi,  
Na swaad koi Na sehat ke liye sahi.  
Alcohol ko bhi bhul hi jao,  
Chordke inko naya jeevan pao.

Aao samjhe bachav ka paigaam,  
Nutrition hi dusra bachav ka naam.  
Bhukh na ho, fir bhi thoda khao,  
Juice, soup se taaqat badhao.  
Haldi, lahsun roz milaaao,  
Patta-gobhi aur dal-chawal apnaao.  
Zada Paani piyo, muh ko rakho saaf,  
Rozana hygiene na kare koi kitanu maaf.  
Naram khana, ghar me banana,  
khane me zada na teekha milana.

Poshan ki dhaal banake cancer se  
bachaav karo,  
Bimari se ladne ki shareer me shakti  
bharo.  
Ilaaj se dosti karo, kabhi daro mat,  
Beech mein chhodna Baat badi galat.

ao Sarkari hospitals agar ho beemar,  
Counsellors bhi wahan karte hai mann  
ko taiyaar.  
Pura ilaaj, poori jeet,  
Ummeed ka suraj chamkega meet.

Dar ke aage jeet hai pakki,  
Cancer se bhi zindagi jeet hai sakti.  
Toh doston, yaad rakhna yahi:  
Jaanch karao aur Poshan apnao,  
apne mulywaan jeevan ko behtar  
banao. 🌸



## SPAN-ANTHEM


**ICAN**

**"समय पर पहचान ही सबसे बड़ी दवा है।"**



**"स्कैन करें और सिर व गर्दन के कैंसर के बारे में अधिक जानें"**

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**ICAN**

**SPAN - HNC**

**सिर और गर्दन के कैंसर से जुड़ी जानकारी पुस्तिका**



**"संकेत पहचानिए, बचाव अपनाइए और कैंसर को हराइए"**

शुरुआती जानकारी, लक्षण, कारण, बचाव और पोषण से जुड़ी एक आसान पुस्तिका


**ICAN**

**जब आवाज़ बैठी ही रह जाए**

**"आवाज़ चेतावनी देती है — उसे नज़रअंदाज़ मत करो।"**

**आवाज़ और गले से जुड़ी चेतावनी**

- 2 हफ्तों से ज़्यादा बैठी आवाज़
- निगलने में कठिनाई
- बिना बुखार के खाँसी या खराश
- गले में जलन

**क्या आप जानते हैं?**

- स्वरपत्र (larynx) कैंसर में केवल आवाज़ बैठना ही लक्षण हो सकता है — दर्द नहीं होता।
- दूसरों के धुएँ (passive smoking) से भी गले का कैंसर हो सकता है।
- अगर आवाज़ बदली हो और सर्दी/बुखार नहीं — चैकअप ज़रूरी है।

धूम्रपान और तम्बाकू से दूर रहें, तेज मिर्च-मसाले से गले की रक्षा करें। अगर आवाज़ में बदलाव दो हफ्तों से ज़्यादा रहे, तो ENT डॉक्टर से जांच कराएं।


**ICAN**

**तम्बाकू - धीरे-धीरे मारता है**

**गुटखा सस्ता ज़रूर है... लेकिन इलाज नहीं!**

**तम्बाकू और गुटखा से जुड़ा खतरा**

- गाल के अंदर मोटापन
- मुँह खोलने में दिक्कत
- मसूड़ों से खून
- गाल में गठ्ठा या सिकुड़न

**क्या आप जानते हैं?**

- सबम्यूकस फाइब्रोसिस मुँह न खुलने की बीमारी — अक्सर गुटखा खाने वालों में होती है।
- तम्बाकू में लगभग 30 कैंसर पैदा करने वाले रसायन होते हैं।
- तम्बाकू छोड़ने के बाद भी कैंसर का खतरा कई वर्षों तक बना रहता है।

तम्बाकू, गुटखा और सुपारी से पूरी तरह दूरी बनाएं। मुँह में कोई भी बदलाव दिखे तो तुरंत जांच कराएं।

Image description: Education leaflets consisting of information on risk factors, symptoms, good practices, and diagnosis and treatment options for Head and Neck Cancers distributed during outreach activities.

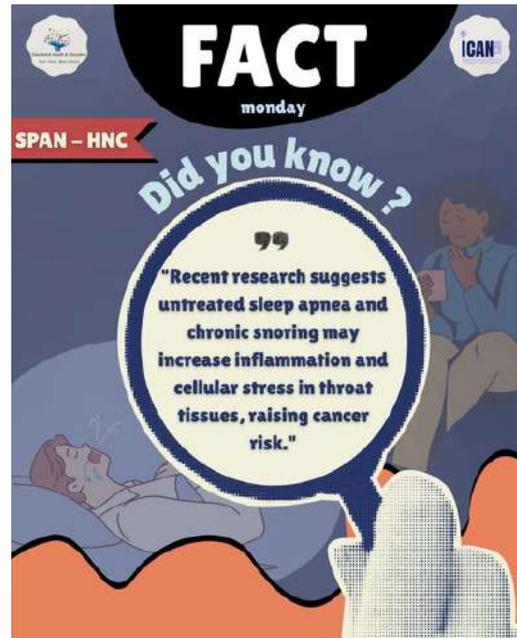
# Social Media Campaign

To compliment on-ground interventions and expand public awareness on head and neck cancers (HNC), the SPAN-HNC project implemented a **structured social media awareness campaign** aimed at disseminating reliable, accessible, and actionable information on cancer prevention, early detection, and supportive care.

The campaign was deployed **primarily through Facebook and Instagram**, ensuring broad digital reach across diverse demographic groups. Educational content was developed using the **“Fact-Lack-Hack” communication framework**, which presents information in a clear and engaging format:

- **Fact:** Evidence-based information or statistics related to head and neck cancers
- **Lack:** Identification of common gaps in awareness, prevention practices, or healthcare access
- **Hack:** Simple, actionable steps that individuals can take to reduce risk, identify symptoms early, or seek timely medical care

Content was posted three times per week, maintaining consistent engagement and reinforcing key messages over time. The topics covered included risk factors such as tobacco use and poor oral hygiene, early warning signs of head and neck cancers, nutrition during cancer treatment, oral health practices, and the importance of early screening and treatment adherence.



# HEAD AND NECK CANCERS



## Let's Learn!

Here you'll find infographics covering some of the most commonly asked information regarding Head & Neck Cancers



### Benefit of Adherence to Cancer Treatments

EXPLORE



### How patients can maintain emotional resilience

EXPLORE



### Nutritional Requirements of Cancer Patients

EXPLORE



### A complete Guide to Head and Neck Cancers

EXPLORE

Image description: Snapshot of the dedicated webpage on Head & Neck Cancers consisting of infographics, complete handbook, presentations, and webinar series.

# Patient Experience Sessions

9 Patient Experience Sessions (PES) were organized to address the psychosocial and emotional challenges faced by cancer patients and their caregivers during treatment. Cancer treatment often involves prolonged hospital stays, physical discomfort, communication difficulties, and psychological distress, which can significantly impact patient morale and treatment adherence. The PES were designed to create a supportive environment where patients could engage in therapeutic activities, share experiences, and build resilience.

Each session was facilitated by trained therapists and included structured activities such as guided meditation, music and sound healing therapy, art-based expression, yoga, and mindfulness exercises. These activities were intended to help patients manage stress, anxiety, and treatment-related fatigue while encouraging emotional expression and peer support. Sessions were conducted within hospital settings in collaboration with medical staff, ensuring accessibility for both in-patients and out-patients.

In addition to therapeutic engagement, participants received wellness hampers containing supportive care items such as aloe vera gel, balm, cooling oil, and coconut water, reinforcing the program's emphasis on comfort and holistic well-being. Group interactions during these sessions also allowed counsellors to assess patient concerns, encourage caregiver involvement, and reinforce positive coping mechanisms.

By integrating psychosocial support alongside counselling and nutritional assistance, the PES component strengthened the overall patient support framework of the project. These sessions helped improve patient morale, foster community among patients and caregivers, and promote a more compassionate and patient-centred approach to cancer care within partner hospitals.



*Image description: Snippet from PES 3 conducted in ESIC Faridabad, aimed to integrate structured yoga and meditation practice. This session of facilitated by Ms. Sunita Gupta, Meditation & Yoga Therapist*



## Challenges & Course Correction

- Institutional Administrative changes
- Procurement & Budget Disbursement timelines
- Hospital level variability (patient economic and geo profiles, patient volume...)

## Strategic Adaptations

- Increase in field visits **67%**
- Collaboration with local NGOs **33%**
- Integration of NS distribution with awareness events like World Cancer Day **70%**
- Strengthening monitoring systems **50%**

## Challenges & Actions



**API Delay:** Resolved via sync with client team



**Timeline Pressure:** Dev team added one temporary resource



**Feature Misalignment:** Adjusted after review and feedback

## Lessons Learned

- Nutritional support significantly improves treatment resilience in HNC patients.
- Counselling services reduce treatment abandonment.
- Community awareness combined with hospital services improves early detection pathways.
- Partnerships with government hospitals require continuous engagement and flexibility.
- NGO collaboration helps strengthen last-mile outreach and patient identification.



## CONCLUSION

The SPAN-HNC project has demonstrated the importance of integrating psychosocial and nutritional support within cancer care systems.

By addressing non-clinical barriers to treatment adherence, the project has improved patient experience, strengthened institutional partnerships, and created a replicable model for supportive cancer care within resource-constrained settings.

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