

Combating malnutrition in Rural India

Dr. Sarita Kumari

Asst. Professor, Dept of Political Science, Marwari college, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

Author Email: saritaru77@gmail.com

Abstract—In rural India, unhealthy dietary patterns and nutritional deficiencies remain a public health problem, and achieving food nutrition, and health security is a major challenge. Therefore, over the years, several policies and programmes have been implemented for addressing the nutrition and health issues, especially in the rural areas, tribal areas and in urban slums. The consequences of malnutrition extend beyond immediate health concerns, affecting educational outcomes, work force productivity and overall economic growth. By understanding the economic ramifications, policy makers, stakeholders, and communities educational programme can work together to address the issue effectively and promote nutrition and well-being.

Keywords: Combating, Malnutrition, nutrition security, household food, Dietary diversification, nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive measures.

Nutrition is absolutely essential for individual well-being. Nutrition, at its most fundamental, is about eating a regular, balanced diet. Good nutrition provides fuel for the body for daily routine work and ensure development of the body. Nutrients includes proteins, carbs, fat, vitamins, minerals, fibre and water. People are more likely to acquire various health disorders if their diet lacks the proper nutrient balance.

The Government of India's institutional actions, interventions and programmes have brought about a great revolution in the entire nutrition management ecosystem. The phenomenon is evolving and will continue to contribute to the integrated development of all vulnerable groups in India, especially women and children.

Impact of Malnutrition- Malnutrition has a severe impact on human capital development. Children who suffer from malnutrition experience stunted growth and cognitive impairments leading to reduced learning abilities and lower productivity in adulthood. India loses approximately 2-3% of its GDP annually due to the reduced productivity of its malnourished workforce. Malnourished individuals are more susceptible to infections, chronic illnesses and other complications. Families and the healthcare system are put under a great deal of financial stress by the cost of treating and managing illnesses linked to malnutrition. Malnutrition affects cognitive development, leading to poor educational outcomes. Malnourished children often face difficulties in concentrating, retaining information and performing well academically. Reduced educational success has a negative impact on future work prospects and economic mobility, which feeds the poverty cycle. Malnutrition is closely linked to agricultural productivity, as undernourished farmers face challenges in sustaining agricultural activities effectively, lack of proper nutrition hampers. Physical strength, endurance and productivity among farmers, affecting crop yields and agricultural output. That can be detrimental effect on food security and rural livelihood.

Apart from that the economic consequences of malnutrition extend beyond the immediate impact on individuals. A malnourished population faces reduced earning potential, limited employment opportunities and increased dependency on social welfare programmes. This creates a drag on economic growth and places an additional burden on government resources, diverting funds that could be allocated to other developmental initiatives.

How to combating malnutrition- I think by promoting household food and nutrition security India is not only addresses the immediate challenges of hunger and malnutrition but also contributes to poverty reduction, improved health outcomes, gender equality, sustainable consumption and production climate resilience and overall sustainable development.

Millets play a significant role in promoting household food and nutrition security in India. By increasing the cultivation, consumption, and value addition of millets, India can significantly enhance household food and nutrition security, improve rural livelihood and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient agriculture system. The sustainable production of millets can fight hunger and contribute to food security & nutrition. Making millets an important part of regular diet can contribute immensely to overall health & wellbeing. For many generations, millets were a regular part of the diet. These grains are rich in many essential nutrients for nutrition and health. A new study has shown that regular consumption of millets can improve hemoglobin and serum ferritin levels to reduce iron deficiency anemia.

In rural India, millets can play a significant role to combating malnutrition. Here is some suggestion

- 1) We promote awareness programmes on the health benefits of various millets grains.
- 2) Chaupals for millets related awareness sessions at the gram panchayat level.
- 3) Training and promotional campaigns on millet cultivation for farmers and farmer producer organization, at the district, gram panchayat and block levels.
- 4) Supplementation of millets in integrated child development services, Mid-day meal, public distribution system and other state funded programmes.
- 5) Promotion of millets cultivation, distribution of seed mini kits to farmers, awareness about improved millets production, identification of village clusters for promotion of millets. Promoting kitchen gardening can play a significant role in enhancing household food and nutrition security in India by increasing access to fresh and nutritious food, promoting sustainable agriculture practices, and empowering individuals to take control of their own food production.

Dietary diversification is crucial for enhancing household food and nutrition security in India. Dietary diversification refers to the inclusion of a wide variety of foods from different food groups to ensure a balanced and nutrient- rich diet, Here are some strategies-

- I. Nutrition education and awareness through public campaigns school programmes, community workshops.
- II. Promoting local and traditional foods through organizing festivals and events that celebrate local and traditional foods, promoting their cultural significance, nutritional value and collaboration with local famers and food producers.
- III. Encouraging development of recipes and cooking demonstrations that incorporate local and traditional ingredients showcasing culinary versatility and nutritional benefits.
- IV. Promoting the cultivation of diverse crops, including traditional and underutilized crops, home gardening sustainable farming practices.
- V. Developing and implementing policies that priorities nutrition- sensitive agriculture food production and distribution, promoting dietary diversification and addressing food and nutrition security at a systemic level.
- VI. Encouraging food fortification programmes to enhance the nutritional content of staple food such as rice, wheat, flour and edible oils with essential vitamins and minerals improving the nutrient profile of commonly consumed foods.

By implementing these strategies India can promote dietary diversification improve household food and nutrition security and address the challenges of malnutrition and diet- related diseases.

Emphasizing health and nutrition in school is about investing in learners education and their health, nutrition and well-being of the same time with benefits extending to homes and communities ensuring the health and well-being of learners is one of the most transformative ways to improve education outcomes, promote inclusion and equity and to rebuild the education system, especially following the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted these linkages and the critical role that schools play in the physical and mental health, nutrition and well-being of children and adolescents. Interventions focusing to health and nutrition bring children into school and help them to stay and learn- especially those most at risk of missing out. Healthy and happy children learn better and are more likely to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

However, recognizing the importance of health education in schools. NEP 2020 includes health and nutrition, physical education, fitness mental health and well-being, sports sanitation, and hygiene as key subjects for students in order to promote their holistic development. The policy has clearly taken a step towards integrating education and health to enable children to learn and grow as healthy individuals.

Inadequate intake of nutritionally appropriate diets- both in terms of quantity and quality can lead to malnutrition, deficiency diseases and other ailments/ disorders as well as lower life expectancy. The poor health status of the women reduces their productivity earning capacity and ability to take care of their families, particularly the well-being of their young ones. Malnutrition and poor health among women both prior to and lead to high incidence of low- birth weight pre- terms deliveries, stillbirths and abortions, as well as high maternal mortality rate.

Due to the unique physiological developmental needs, women and children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of malnutrition. In India, women face several, nutritional challenges through out their lifetime. Adequate nutrition is important during all phases of life but it acquires a greater importance during the periods of rapid growth namely pregnancy, location early childhood, and adolescence. Therefore, adequate nutrition for women children and adolescents, particularly for the girl. Children is extremely crucial. Very often women- the producers, processors and distributors of the food ignore their own nutrition health needs by taking a back seat, at in most cases, even the family remains incognizant of this fact. Hence, widespread nutrition/health related awareness needs to be generated for addressing the issue of gender bias in intra- household food distribution as well as for overcoming the nutritional imbalances.

Although there are numerous well-planned initiatives undertaken for tackling malnutrition and ensuring adequate nutrition among women and children, the real challenge lies in their effective implementation and to some extent, this can be overcome by regular monitoring, evaluation and innovative modifications of the schemes as per the need at the grass roots level.

Food availability- food access- food utilization- food stability- Governance and policy- empowerment and capacity Building- These are inter connected and contribute to ensuring households have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Here are some key methods, that can employed to ensure combating malnutrition.

Sustainable agriculture, Diversification of food production, Enhancing access to inputs and technologies, social protection, programmes, Nutrition Education and change food behaviors, strengthening health and nutrition services, policy and governance, and Research- innovation.

By strengthening the health systems and ensuring comprehensive health care services, India can enhance its capacity to detect, treat and prevent malnutrition effectively. This not only improves individual health outcomes but also contributes to the overall economic development of the country by reducing the economic cost associated with malnutrition and productivity losses. India can effectively treat vitamin deficiencies, improve dietary diversity, and encourage healthy eating habits by introducing enhanced nutrition interventions. These initiatives enhance general health outcomes, productivity and human capital development while also helping to reduce malnutrition. By enhancing agricultural practices, India can improve food production, increase the availability of nutritious crops, and enhance the overall food security and nutritional status of the population. These efforts contribute not only to combating malnutrition but also to promoting rural development poverty alleviation and sustainable agricultural growth. By prioritizing the adoption of sustainable and diversified farming practices India can ensure a more resilient and nutrition- sensitive agricultural sector. India can create a safety net for poor rural communities by establishing well designed social protection programmes that ensure access to appropriate nutrition and health care. These programmes not only treat the immediate implications of malnutrition, but they also help to reduce long-term poverty, create human capital, and promote economic growth. Society organizations and communities is critical for creating and executing successful social protection programmes that can have a long-term influence on malnutrition in India.

By employing such methods- approaches our country can make significant strides towards achieving household food and nutrition security and can be combating malnutrition from a rural India.

But it requires a coordinated effort involving government institutions, civil society organization, research institutions, private sector, and communities to create an enabling environment and implement effective interventions. To combat malnutrition, the government, civil society, and commercial sector must work together to invest in nutrition- specific and nutrition- sensitive measures. India can unlock its full economic potential promote social well-being and assure a healthier more prosperous future for all of its residents by prioritizing the fight against malnutrition.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that adequate nutrition is vital for overall development and well-being of all individuals, particularly the women and children. Women's adequate nutrition can go a long way in improving the household dietary patterns and maintaining a good health status of the children, family and the nation as a whole. Through a range of governmental interventions, such as food distribution, nutritional supplementation, agricultural support, and capacity building programmes strive to achieve sustainable development goods and ensure a healthier and more prosperous society. To ensure that children in India receive proper nutrition and health care, we must collaborate in more streamlined and integrated ways. By focusing on and contributing substantially to the health and nutrition of children in schools, we will offer a unique opportunity to transform education. Different targeted groups- (such as- in the rural areas, tribal areas, and in the urban areas) are sensitized to address the specific needs by designating nutritional- related information and activities to manage the malnutrition and under- nutrition. The success of national nutritional

initiatives or policies predominantly depends upon food policy, education policy, health policy, agriculture policy and rural development programmes.

REFERENCES

- 1- Ojha, Puneet Kumar & Ojha Pankaj Kumar (2023) Kurukshetra, Combating malnutrition: Achieving prosperity, New Delhi: Publication Division.
- 2- Prasad Urvashi, 2023; Kurukshetra Shree Anna for Nutritional well-being. New Delhi: Publication Division.
- 3- Mohapatra, Amiya Kumar & Nandeesh V. Hiremath, 2023, Kurukshetra, Nutritional Management frame work for Rural India, New Delhi: Publication Division.
- 4- Jain Akanksha & Parminder Sehgal, (2023), Promoting Household food and Nutrition security, Kurukshetra, New Delhi.
- 5- Passi, Santosh Gupta Shiora, 2023, Kurukshetra Adequate Nutrition for women and children- New Delhi: Publication Division.
- 6- <https://static.Pib.gov.in/writeReadData/specificdocs/documents/2022/dec/do20221226147401.pdf>.
- 7- <https://www.nature.Com/articles/s41598-023-37109-w#article-info>.
- 8- <https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-04/Report-on-promoting-Best-practies-on-Millet-26-4-23.pdf>.
- 9- <https://dsel.education.gov.in/scheme/pm-poshan-scheme>.
- 10- In Financial Year (FY) 2021-22, Government of India (GoI) restructured the Integrated child Development Services (ICDS), POSHAN (Prime Minister' Overarching scheme for Holistic Nourishment) Abhiyaan, and the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) into Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, also Known as Poshan 2.0.
- 11- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasedIframePage.aspx?PRID=1897355>.
- 12- <https://www.niti.gov.in/combating-Malnutrition-Requires-Granular-Approach-22.08.24>.
- 13- <https://www.dristiiias.com/combating-Malnutrition-in-India-29.01.24>
- 14- [www.orforline.org. Towards a malnutrition free India: Best practice 13.03.2020](http://www.orforline.org/Towards-a-malnutrition-free-India-Best-practice-13.03.2020).
- 15- <https://give.do>blog/Malnutrition-in-India-the-problem-and-solutions-7.06.2023>.
- 16- [https://timesofindia.indiatimes- How we can reach the unreachable: Tackling malnutrition in India- 17.12.2022](https://timesofindia.indiatimes-How-we-can-reach-the-unreachable-Tackling-malnutrition-in-India-17.12.2022).
- 17- Indian council of Medical Research. (2017). India: Health of the Nation's States. Retrieved from <https://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/policy-report/2019/India-Health-of-the-Nation%E2%80%99s-States-Report-2017.pdf>.