

Policy Brief

For Scaling Up Nutrition Sensitive Multisectoral Approach to tackle Malnutrition

Summary

In the last decade and a half India has witnessed strong initiatives by the Government to improve the nutrition situation. However, the improvements need acceleration to realize the vision of “Kuposhan Mukta Bharat 2022” (Malnutrition Free India 2022) as conceptualized in NITI Ayog’s National Nutrition Strategy 2017. A paradigm shift in delivery strategy with the help of a nutrition-sensitive multisectoral approach will help. Through our on the ground key recommendations around the delivery process and implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions which tackle malnutrition by addressing the underlying and basic determinants, in particular ensuring food security and availability of nutritious food within the household through interventions in agriculture and natural resource management.

Current situation of hunger and nutrition in India



38.4%

Prevalence of Stunting among children in India



Ranked 100th

Among 119 countries in Global Hunger Index 2017

Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

Since its inception in 1962 Welthungerhilfe has supported more than 8,500 projects across 70 countries raising cumulative funds of 3.27 Billion Euros. Welthungerhilfe is headquartered in Germany and is a leading non-profit, non-governmental organization.



The incidence of undernutrition in India, especially in children, adolescent girls and young mothers have remained persistently high. In recent years, the Government has taken bold steps in reforming the health and nutrition status and have been able to reduce the key impacts of undernutrition.

The findings of NFHS-4 reveal ANC visits, Institutional childbirths, immunization rates and Anaemia levels in women and children, have improved in the last decade. From 48% in 2005-06 the occurrence of stunting among children has reduced to 38.4% in 2015-16, while the prevalence of underweight among children has come down from 42.5% to 35.7% during the same time span. However, in absolute figures, India still is home to world’s highest number of undernourished children, most of whom miss out on the opportunity to become healthy adults.

Although the trend of undernourishment is diminishing, the pace at which things are improving is hardly significant. The Global Hunger Index¹ 2017 ranks India at 100th among 119 countries, positioning it behind most neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The Government’s commitment towards improving the nutrition challenge is unquestionable. But why is India experiencing restrained acceleration in improving its nutrition situation even with the plethora of food and nutrition initiatives and schemes?

India had focussed mostly in resolving immediate causes and symptoms of malnutrition through interventions around food allocation and improving undernourishment among children. In the process, key underlying causes like inequity, disempowerment, inadequate access to complementary sectoral resources remained untouched.

Key Points:

- Nutrition sensitive interventions address the basic and underlying causal factors of malnutrition while nutrition specific interventions address the immediate causes
- Addressing basic and underlying causes makes the approach more sustainable and for the long term
- The underlying and basic causes of malnutrition are multi-sectoral and to effectively tackle them we need an approach which addresses these multisectoral causal factors

Why are we in the current situation?

Over the years, through a continued and dense focus on provision of food, health and care, the Government of India has developed robust nutrition-specific interventions. These have certainly strengthened India's nutrition situation and improved key nutrition indicators over the last couple of decades. But the advancements have lacked pace. There is an opportunity to engage complementary sectors like agriculture, natural resource manage-

ment, water and sanitation, social protection, etc. with nutrition to improve the uptake and pace of the existing Government programmes.

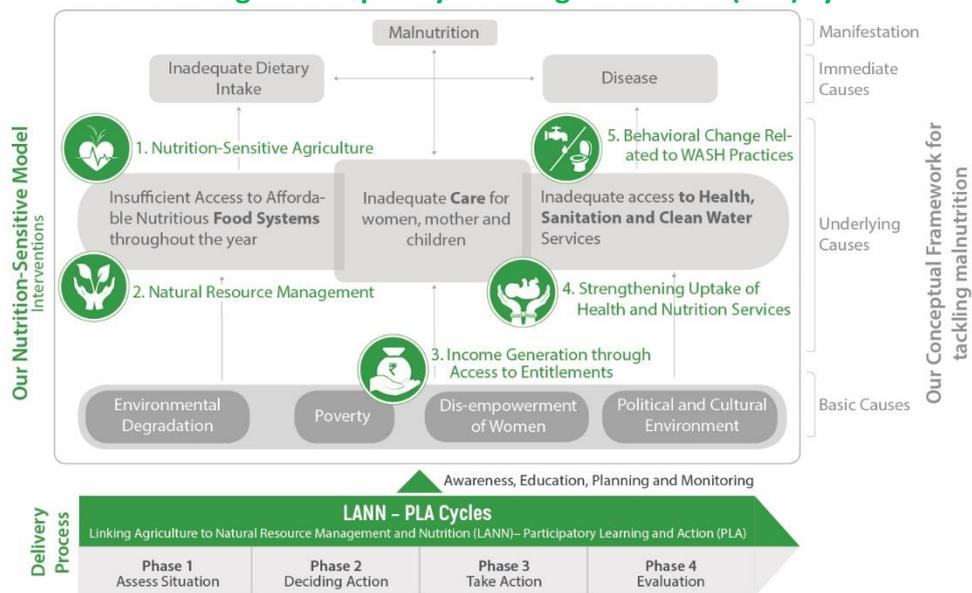
Acceleration of progress in nutrition will require effective, large-scale nutrition-sensitive programmes that address key underlying determinants of nutrition and enhance the coverage and effectiveness of nutrition-specific interventions ² (The Lancet, Maternal and Child Nutrition, June 2013).

Why a nutrition-sensitive multisectoral approach?

Nutrition-specific interventions or programmes address the immediate determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development, adequate food and nutrient intake, feeding, caregiving and parenting practices, and low burden of infectious diseases. Nutrition-sensitive interventions, on the other hand, draw on complementary sectors like agriculture, child and maternal care, public health, social protection, early child development, education, and water & sanitation to affect the basic

and underlying determinants of nutrition - including poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, lack of knowledge and awareness, scarcity of access to adequate health and care resources, unavailability of clean water and sanitation services. Nutrition-sensitive interventions can serve as delivery platforms for Nutrition-specific programs and reach out to large segments of the population potentially improving their scale, coverage, and effectiveness.

Our model connects the dots in tackling the underlying and basic causes of malnutrition with a LANN+ approach delivered through Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) cycles



What is LANN+?³ Linking Agriculture and Natural Resource Management towards Nutrition Security (LANN+) is Welthungerhilfe's inclusive approach to tackle malnutrition by designing a nutrition sensitive multisectoral model which aims at addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition. It is modelled to address nutrition security by making specific interventions in complementary sectors like agriculture, natural resource management, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and access to resources to solve the basic and underlying causes of malnutrition.

Key Recommendations

- Inclusion of malnutrition as an outcome indicator for all poverty alleviation schemes
- Adoption of LANN+ and delivering it through PLA Cycles
- Introduction of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture to reduce the incidence of household food insecurity and increase dietary diversity
- Inclusion of nutrition related outcome indicators under Ministry of Agriculture and cascading to block level
- Preservation and collection of traditional uncultivated food systems to establish an alternate channel of nutritious food
- Provision for research support towards nutrition sensitive models to address malnutrition through convergence of related sectors

Outreach through WHH FHFH Project



3074

LANN PLA meetings conducted



303

Villages Covered



182,000

Direct Beneficiaries Reached

Our Policy Recommendations

We have shaped our recommendations from the observations and learnings of our nutrition sensitive model and understanding the existing nutrition policies and schemes in India.

We believe malnutrition should be made the outcome indicator for all poverty alleviation schemes and severe malnutrition (Wasting -3SD) can help us identify families living in poverty.

For that, India needs an overarching community-led delivery process of nutrition-sensitive interventions. We propose Participatory Learning and Action of our Linking Agriculture to Nutrition and Natural Resource Management with an all-encompassing module for sensitizing the community.

We strongly feel the role of agriculture in accelerating our nutrition status should come to the forefront.

We propose Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture as a key recommendation for addressing insufficient access to nutritious food systems. This can be further strengthened with inclusion of nutrition related outcome indicators under the Ministry of Agriculture and cascading them to block levels.

In addition to that to improve nutrition security during lean periods and creating an alternate channel of nutritious food we strongly recommend preservation of forests, water bodies, and restoration of biodiversity by promotion of ingenious crops, fishes, poultry and fruits.

Lastly, to develop knowledge base we recommend provision for research support towards nutrition sensitive models to address malnutrition through convergence of related sectors

Adoption of LANN+ as an approach and PLA Cycles as a delivery mechanism to sensitize the community on basic and underlying causes of malnutrition

The PLA cycle is a 4-phase 17 meeting module for awareness, education, planning and monitoring nutrition situations and of the community. It takes the participants through a bottom-up participatory process through 4 different stages:

- a) Assessment: Taking stock of the problems and understand its immediate and underlying causes
- b) Decision: Arriving at a consensual decision for doable actions on improving the nutrition status
- c) Action: Drawing an action plan with duly allocated roles and responsibilities
- d) Evaluation: Social Auditing by the participants of outcomes and impact of the LANN process

The key participatory members in each of the meeting cycle are Government health and nutrition service providers like Anganwadi and ASHA workers, SHG

members from the community. Currently, there are 3.3 million 5 frontline service delivery team including Anganwadi, ASHA and other health workers in India. We propose scaling up of the LANN PLA cycle by mass adoption through specific government programs.

The PLA cycles can help in generation of special reports for National Health Mission at Block & District levels to support the families having children with severe wasting. The Government can link schemes from different sectors like employment, integrated farming, water harvesting systems, drinking water, animal husbandry and fisheries, sanitation, housing, health & nutrition, and education with a vision to impact their livelihoods.

Perceptible outcomes of LANN PLA:

- Increased savings due to reduction in expenditure on food and healthcare
- Increased availability of nutritious food
- Reduced illness due to improve nutrition intake
- Increased engagement on farm due to increased utilization of land during lean period
- Awareness of entitlement and rights through microplanning

19,288



Families adopted nutrition sensitive agriculture

Key Impacts

19%



Reduction in stunting in children of 6 months to 3 years

1-2 months



Reduction in hunger period on an average

>= 5 food groups



Consumed by 68% of the women in reproductive age

Introduction of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture to reduce the incidence of household food insecurity and increase dietary diversity

Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture aims to reduce nutrition inadequacy by improving dietary diversity and household food security by integrated farming systems, diversification of food crops and revival of traditional agricultural practices and chemical less farming. Through specific interventions like seed preservation, integrated farming, kitchen gardens, improved cropping sequence- nutrition-sensitive agriculture ensures steady

inflow of nutritious food along with increased savings on bought food items We see an opportunity of scaling up nutrition-sensitive agriculture model through Government organic farming schemes like Paramparik Krishi Vikas under the Ministry of Agriculture and the Mahila Kishan Sashakti Pariyojna (MKSP) under the NRLM. Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture can be further strengthened with specific nutrition outcome indicators under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Perceptible outcomes of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture:

- Regular intake of nutritious farm sourced food
- Revival of traditional food crops like millets, oilseeds and flak seeds
- Increased savings due to reduced usage of chemical farm inputs and decreased dependency on market bought food
- Increased income from surplus marketable crops

Preservation and collection of traditional uncultivated food systems to establish an alternate channel of nutritious food

Communities traditionally used to preserve and collect uncultivated food forms like mushrooms, leafy greens, roots, tubers, wild vegetables, varieties of fruits etc. from forests, water bodies and farmland. Due to environmental degradation, changes in farming pattern and shift in eating habits these customs have faded with time. Our partner organization, Living Farms conducted an exploratory study in three districts of Odisha in 2013 and recorded 121 kinds of

uncultivated food being harvested by the sample households between July to December. In these households, consumption of uncultivated food was a significant 18.84% of the total cooked food consumed per day. The actual consumption may be even more as many uncultivated foods are consumed uncooked.

In South 24 Parganas, West Bengal 30% of the food consumed in the riverine regions come from uncultivated sources.

We strongly recommend promoting these lost traditions and preserving and collecting these uncultivated food systems as an alternate channel for nutrition.

Perceptible outcomes of Conservation of traditional uncultivated food:

- Improved nutrition security during lean period
- Reduction in drudgery in search and collection of food during lean seasons
- Additional source of nutritious food throughout the year

Why do we think our recommendations will work?

Our recommendations come from an experience of closely working with the community for 6 years in Nutrition Sensitive Interventions. Through our First Hunger First Initiative programme, we have reached out to 182,000 direct beneficiaries across 5 states and 303 villages in the last 3 years. The outcomes of our efforts make us confident to recommend adoption and scaling up our model. Our model has been able to reduce hunger period in the project areas by 1 to 2 months on an average. There has been a remarkable reduction of 19% in stunting among the children of 6 months to 3 years in our project areas.

Today, 68% of the women in reproductive age in our project areas consume 5 food crops at minimum. Our model is currently being scaled up by the Government and prominent organizations. UNICEF India is scaling up the good practices of our programme in Bihar, Odisha and Chhattisgarh through WHH India Partners. Government of Madhya Pradesh and GiZ have directly partnered with WHH India to upscale the model across 8 blocks impacting 1,26,210 adolescent girls and women between 15 to 49 years. With support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives and Odisha Livelihood Mission, WHH India partner, Living Farms is upscaling the model in Odisha across 314 blocks and planning to outreach around 0.9 million families.

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List of Abbreviations

- NFHS** : National Family Health Survey
ANC : Antenatal Care
LANN : Linking Agriculture and Natural Resource Management towards Nutrition
PLA : Participatory Learning and Action
ASHA : Accredited Social Health Activists
SHG : Self Help Group
NRLM : National Rural Livelihood Mission
FHFI: First Hunger First Initiatives



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