

# NUTRITION IN NEPAL



## A MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REPORT, Shrawan 2074

Issue 9



Cover Photo: A woman in front of her Chaupadi (menstrual) hut.  
Photo: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

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This report is produced by Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD) as part of monthly media monitoring study conducted by Research Uptake and Communications Unit at HERD. The media monitoring exercise will be conducted for a year from Mangshir 2073 BS to Push 2074 BS as part of the 'Support to Implementation of MSNP' project.

## Executive Summary

This study involves a systematic investigation and analysis of 19 print and online media sources, to identify the current scenario of nutrition in Nepal along with the efforts to improve the situation. Through this study, HERD wishes to highlight the fact that malnutrition continues to be a major public health problem in Nepal, which has a severe impact upon maternal and child health conditions. According to the figures of Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016, 36% of under five children are stunted and 10% are wasted. 27% of all children below the age of 5 are underweight, and among them 5% are severely underweight. The proportion of children who are underweight is greater in rural areas (31%) than urban areas (23%) (NDHS 2016).

The aim of the media monitoring is to study the efforts made to control and reduce the prevalence of malnutrition by government and non-governmental agencies. Through the media monitoring, HERD aimed to recognise current trends and issues surrounding nutrition. To capture a valid picture regarding the nutritional situation in Nepal, the media monitoring specifically focuses on the current situation, vulnerabilities, efforts and progress made in its respect.

Slow but steady progress is taking place in to strengthen the nutrition scenario in the country. The newly elected members of local government are aware about the importance of a healthy society. In some places, they have also committed to make the areas malnutrition free. These sort of activities doesn't just help in making the scenario of malnutrition better but also encourages leaders across the country to do similar work. The monitoring of the funds provided by the government is also being done so that the funds doesn't get misused. The news published about the situation of families with malnourished children have also attracted concerned bodies to take necessary steps.

## Introduction

Nutrition and food security is one of the top priority of the Government of Nepal. Nutrition has been identified as one of the important agendas of national development. Commitments from various national and international partners have been made to tackle the scenario. The government and non-government organisations have focused on various programmes related to maternal and child health. Investments in the sector has increased. Various facilities have been introduced to encourage institutional delivery. Female Community Health Workers have been mobilised which has provided special support in reaching the unreached areas. Nevertheless, even after many efforts, Nepal has noted very little progress in the sector.

This media monitoring sought to track down stories on nutrition in Nepal as reported by the media in an attempt to identify the current picture and the progress made in this regard. Specially, this report synthesises the current context of malnutrition in Nepal in terms of nutrition related interventions, malnutrition trends and have insights on how external development partners , NGOs, business and other relevant stakeholders that are engaged in nutrition in Nepal.

## Major findings

The major findings from the stories in the media have been broadly classified into the following three categories i.e. Current Scenario, Issues and Efforts Made.

## Methodology

*This media monitoring study was conducted for the period of one month from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 16<sup>th</sup> August (covering the month of Shrawan 2074 BS). HERD team collected various stories by conducting daily media monitoring of 17 national mainstream and online news sources viz.: The Himalayan Times, My Republica, The Kathmandu Post, Kantipur, Naya Patrika, Rajdhani, Annapurna Post, The Rising Nepal, Nagarik, Gorkhapatra, Nepali Times, Himal Khabar Patrika, Nepal Samacharpatra, Online Khabar, Setopati, Pahilopost and Nepal Khabar. In addition, random searches were also conducted in the internet with the key words 'nutrition' and 'food security'.*

*The monitoring team managed to gather a total of 20 media stories related to nutrition during this period. The collected stories were recorded in a spreadsheet i.e. Microsoft Excel detailing the date, title, sources and links to the story. This study involves a three step process i.e. information finding, information recording and analysis. The collected stories were then synthesised and categorised into various themes and sub-themes.*

## Current Scenario

According to the news published in Kantipur Daily, the risk of malnutrition has increased in Bara and is seen mostly among the Dalit and marginalized community. Adolescent girls, pregnant women, under 5 children and mothers have been suffering from malnutrition in the district. Despite spending NPR 4,300,000 last year in education and awareness activities related to maternal, neonatal and child health, the desired goals were not met. The District Public Health Office of Bara, informed that the problem exists due to prevalence of the mind-set of eating green leafy vegetables, meat and beans only after getting ill.

The District Coordination Committee has spent over NPR 59,100,000 over a period of 4 years to carry out the "Golden 1000 days" and Multi Sector Nutrition Programme (MSNP) respectively. According to DPHO, in Fiscal year 2073/74, 124 children of under one years of age are severely malnourished, 581 are in risk and 10,587 are in moderate risk of malnutrition. Similarly, 107 children between 1-2 years are in severe risk, 410 in risk and 7000 in moderate risk of malnutrition.

Even though, a nutrition rehabilitation centre in Birgunj is near, the parents are not being able to send their malnourished child there for treatment. According to MSNP, Planning Monitoring and Information Management Officer (PMIMO), Makabul Rain, lack of awareness and carelessness is prevalent in the district. Despite being informed, the children are not taken to the rehabilitation centre. According to the DPHO, 31 % of the adolescent girls have anaemia. Among the under 5 children, 21% are underweight, 41% stunted and 11% wasted whereas 48% of pregnant women are malnourished in the district.

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It has been 25 years since 'The Mother's Milk Substitutes (control of sale and distribution) Act came into force to promote breastfeeding among lactating mothers. However, the government has failed to control and regulate the use of breast milk substitutes which are easily available in the market.

Breast milk substitutes are preferred for infants up to two years of age who, for some reason, cannot be breastfed by their mothers. Mother's milk provides valuable nutrition to infants and helps in proper growth of body and mind. It supports babies' immune system as well.

According to the news published in News of Nepal (the news portal of Nepal Samacharpatra daily), though initial breastfeeding i.e. breastfeeding within one hour of birth is essential, it has not been practiced. It claimed that even after 25 years of conducting awareness and education related activities, still no progress is seen. According to the latest statistics of Health Service Department, Child Health Division of the Ministry of Health 45% women do not breastfeed their child within one hour of birth. 66% women breastfeed their child till two years of age. Similarly, 79% mothers breastfeed for one month, 72% for two to three months, 40% for four to five months and 6% for 6 to 8 months.

Photo: [Kantipur](#)



According to news published in Kantipur Daily, a study conducted by Hellen Keller International and Ministry of Health in 2011 showed that the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in Nepal was 69% which has decreased to 66% in 2015.

MoH has estimated that the rate of exclusive breastfeeding will decrease yearly. The situation of exclusive breastfeeding is worse in urban areas as compared to rural areas. There is a practice of feeding packaged milk to children. To control the decreasing trend of exclusive breastfeeding and minimise malnutrition, the government needs to control the readymade formula milk pointed nutritionist Dr. Atul Upadhyay.

### Issues

Ward secretary of Ishnath Rural Municipality- 4 of Rautahat district, Raj Dev Rama has been held for his alleged involvement in embezzling money meant to be distributed for improving child nutrition in the ward. The government have been distributing NPR 400 as "nutrition allowance" to all the under 5 children of 5 districts of Karnali area and children of Dalit community. In January 2017, the government added three districts; Rautahat, Achham and Bajura in this scheme as children in these districts are severely malnourished. Ram was taken in the police custody on 20 July for further investigation after the locals suspected his bad intentions.

According to the news published in The Himalayan Times, investments by different donor agencies in health and nutrition programmes has gone down the drain in Dolakha district. Aaitamaya Thami, 46, of Kyangpol in Kalinchowk Rural Municipality, is a mother of six children and two of her children are malnourished. A large hoarding board with messages of Golden Thousand Days programme hangs outside the ward office. Her family works as daily wage earners, which is just enough to manage two meals a day. They have no knowledge of nutrition.

GTD programme, funded by USAID, is in operation for the past six years in the district with the objective of curbing malnutrition

Thami said, she heard about the GTD programme on radio once. She recalled, "once a baby chicken was given to us, but it died in a month".

among women and babies of impoverished and marginalised communities. Thami said, she heard about the GTD programme on radio once. She recalled, “once a baby chicken was given to us, but it died in a month”. Like Thami, hundreds of people from backward communities have failed to benefit from the GTD programme in the district. Around 200 Thami people live in Kalinchowk’s Kyangpol area.

Suahara Project spent millions on nutrition and health in the past six years. The problem of malnutrition, however, has worsened. According to District Health Office, Dolakha, there are more than 400 malnutrition patients in the district. However, the DHO Chief Rajendra Prasad Sah, said malnutrition is gradually declining. Sah, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the modus operandi of some International NGOs. He pledged to coordinate with stakeholders and devise a new strategy to tackle the problem of malnutrition.

Photo: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

#### Efforts made

More than a decade after the Supreme Court outlawed Chhaupadi, an ancient practice that banishes women from the home during menstruation and after childbirth, the Legislature-Parliament on August 9 enacted a new law criminalising the centuries-old custom. As per the new law, which will come into effect soon, anyone forcing a woman to follow the custom will be liable to a three-month jail sentence or Rs 3,000 fine or both.

The new law says a woman during her menstruation or after childbirth should not be forced to practise Chhaupadi or treated





with any kind of discrimination. As part of the Chhaupadi custom, women during her menstruation and post-natal state are forced to live in cowsheds, away from the home, exposing them to abuse as well as life-threatening risks. Many women die due to various reasons like snake-bite, smoke inhalation or hypothermia among others, but only a few such cases are reported.

A news published in [Kantipur Daily](#) last month about Shiladevi Mahara, 27 and her malnourished children has drawn attention of the concerned bodies. Health workers have begun inspection of their health. The MSNP officer Makabul Rain is now working in their treatment.

Mahara's family has not been able to afford nutritional food [due to poverty](#), which has posed risk to their lives. She expressed that meat, green vegetables and milk is like a dream for her.

According to the news published in *Junkiri Sanchar Weekly*, Rolpa's Mankali B.K. lost her seven years old child due to Malnutrition. Until last year she had no knowledge about nutrition. But now, after the implementation of Multi Sector Nutrition Plan, she is much aware. Similarly, Dilsari Bhudha of Ropla's Harjard came to know about the issue after MSNP came into implementation in her place. She informed that the programme has helped a lot of poor families in protecting their children from malnutrition.

The concerned bodies have said that MSNP programme being run from 7 different government organizations in the district has become very effective. If expanded this can create a positive impact. The programme has focused on women and children. According to MSNP's PMIMO, Baldev Neupane, in course of programme

## रोल्पामा बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रम प्रभावकारी बन्दै

**कविता उपाध्याय**

रोल्पा- गाम रोल्पाको मनकली विकलाई एकवर्ष पहिले सम्म पोषण तथा कुपोषणका बारेमा केहीपनि थाहा थिएन तर आफ्नै गाउँमा बहु क्षेत्रीय पोषण योजना लागू भएपछि उहाँले पोषण र कुपोषणका बारेमा अहिले राम्ररी बुझ्नु भएको छ । कुपोषणका बारेमा जानकारी नहुँदा उहाँले केहीवर्ष पहिले सात वर्षीय छोरालाई गुमाउनु पथ्यो ।

मनकली जस्तै हाजँड रोल्पाको दिलसरी बुढालेपनि आफ्नो गाउँठाउँमा कार्यक्रम संचालन भएपछि मात्र पोषण वा कुपोषणका बारेमा थाहा पाएको बताउनु भयो । हाल उहाँलाई हेर्दा सामान्य जस्तो लाग्ने कुपोषण महामारी नै जस्तो लाग्न थालेको छ । आनीबानी तथा खानपानमा विशेष ध्यानदिन सकेमात्र पनि बासबालिका कुपोषणको शिकार नबन्ने उहाँले बताउनु भयो । उहाँका अनुसार गार्वोको रेखामुनि रहेका रोल्पालीलाई कुपोषणबाट बच्नका लागि कार्यक्रमले ठूलो गुण लगाएको छ । जिल्लाका विभिन्न ७ वटा सरकारी कार्यालयद्वारा



संचालित बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण योजना प्रभावकारी बन्दै गएको सरोकारवालाहरूले बताएका छन् । सो कार्यक्रम जिल्लाका साविकका सात गाविसमा मात्र नभएर जिल्लाभर संचालन हुन सकेमात्र उपलब्धिमुलक बन्न सक्ने शिक्षक नवराज सुवेदीको धारणा छ । बहु क्षेत्रीय पोषण योजना सुनौला हजार दिनमित्रका महिला तथा बालबालिकामा केन्द्रित रहेको जिसस रोल्पाका बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रमका जिल्ला संयोजक भूमिस्वर शर्माले जानकारी दिनुभयो । समाजमा रुढासत दीर्घ कुपोषणको अन्त्य गरी स्वस्थ, स्वच्छ र सक्षम मानववर्गीको निर्माण गर्ने उद्देश्यका साथ नेपाल सरकारले ५ वर्षीय बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण योजना ( २०१३-२०१७) कार्यान्वयनमा ल्याएको हो । उहाँका अनुसार जिल्लाका साविकका ७ वटा गाविसहरू गाम, सेरम, हाजँड मसिना, भावाङ, राङसो र पाखापानीमा आ. व. २०७३/०७४ बाट कार्यक्रम संचालनमा रहेका छ । बहुक्षेत्रीय पोषण कार्यक्रमका योजना अनुगम तथा सूचना व्यवस्थापन अधिकृत बलदेव न्यौपानेका अनुसार कार्यक्रम संचालनका क्रममा जिसस रोल्पाले अन्य ६ वटा सरकारी कार्यालय हरूसँग समन्वय, नियमित तथा प्रचारप्रसार सम्बन्धी कार्यक्रम संचालन गर्दै आएको छ भने अन्य विषयगत कार्यालयहरू जिल्ला कृषि विकास कार्यालय, जिल्ला शिक्षा सेवा कार्यालय, जिल्ला शिक्षा बाँकी ५ पेजमा ...

implementation, DCC Rolpa has coordinated with 6 other government offices, for coordination, monitoring and publicity of various programmes.

Under this, District Agriculture Development Committee has been conducting capacity building workshop and training for farmers about production of nutritious food. It has been organizing exhibitions of nutritious food production among others. The District Water Supply and Sanitation Division Office (DWSSDO) has been conducting orientation on complete sanitation for teenage girls, G1000 mothers, secondary school students and other concerned bodies along with other activities.

Similarly, District Education Office, Rolpa has been conducting life skill training for teachers, parents, mothers group among others about mid-day meal, nutrition, kitchen-garden promotion in school and home. Additionally, women empowerment and skill development programme on nutrition was organized by District Women and Children Office (DWCO), Rolpa.

A four-day learning exchange programme was organised by Civil Society Alliance for Nutrition aiming to address malnutrition related issues and share best practices among civil society alliances in Scaling up Nutrition member countries of Asia Region from July 17 to July 20. Representatives from nine SUN countries of the region – Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Nepal had participated in the programme. Good practices, success stories and achievements of Nepal and other participant countries was discussed.

Ten malnourished children from remote northern areas of Salyan district have been referred to Dang for treatment at the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre in Ghorahi. The malnourished children are

Health in-charge of Jimali health post of Salyan, Lok Bahadur Basnet informed that nutrition classes started by unified projects have been effective. Nowadays, mothers have started opting counselling for any baby related problem.

from 6 months to under 5 years. Among those, nine have been discharged after their health improved, whereas one child is still undergoing treatment.

According to the health authorities, the number of malnourished children have been decreasing in VDCs where programmes are being run in coordination of Dalit Vikas Samaj and Save the Children. Health in-charge of Jimali health post, Lok Bahadur Basnet informed that nutrition classes started by unified projects have been effective. Nowadays, mothers have started opting counselling for any baby related problem. Earlier, they used to bring their children only for immunization or if they get sick.

People's Representatives of Kawasoti Municipalities have expressed commitment to make the area malnutrition free in the next five years. The programmes will begin this year and will focus in the improvement in nutritional status of Musahar and other disadvantaged group of people. MSNP will be implemented and effective implementation and monitoring will be ensured to achieve the goal.

Nepal government is implementing a Multi Sector Nutrition Programme on 99 local level of 28 districts in the country to improve the condition of maternal and childbirth. In Nepal, about 37 percent of the children under five years of age are malnourished.

The newly elected members of Panchthar's Yangbarak rural municipality committed to make the municipality malnutrition free within 5 years. A 10-point commitment has been issued which includes creating a school friendly environment and establishing quality education for all children, reaching MSNP at all levels and ensuring the effective implementation and monitoring, good governance and transparency at all levels.

The newly elected members of Panchthar's Yangbarak rural municipality committed to make the municipality malnutrition free within 5 years.

Selling of a popular street snacks chatpate has been banned in Babiyachaur, Beni after the ingredients used were found to harm the body. Some of the sellers were found to use toilet cleaner "harpic" in Chatpatey to make it sour.

### Discussion

This media monitoring has strengthened the fact that even after attempts from the government and non-government sector, the scenario of malnutrition in Nepal is terrible particularly among the women and the children below 5 years of age. This has not just hampered an individual or a community but the development of entire nation is affected. The nutrition status is poor in many parts of the country especially in the marginalised community. Many mothers and children have been deprived of proper care and nutritious food.

The coverage on stories related to nutrition is similar to previous months i.e. very less. The media's preference towards political issue can be regarded as one of the reason for less coverage of health related stories. The disaster that took place in end of the month also took all the media attention.

Higher prevalence of malnutrition in marginalised communities could be the result of illiteracy, lack of awareness and poverty. Adolescent girls and children are suffering from malnutrition. Many of the victims are unaware about the causes and solution of this problem. The government has spent a lot of money to tackle the problem but still very less progress has been noted.

The status of breastfeeding is bad in the urban area compared to the rural areas. The working mothers have been deprived of exclusively breastfeeding the child as they have to get back to work. They start feeding milk substitute which is said to affect the growth

Lack of proper monitoring of the released fund by the government has encouraged some officials to use the fund for personal purposes.

of the child. Although the government has introduced many policies and laws, it is yet to be effectively implemented.

Lack of proper monitoring of the released fund by the government has encouraged some officials to use the fund for personal purposes. A case of Rautahat has shown how the affected families have been deprived of some incentives because of corruption.

The news published about the people being unaware about the golden thousand days in Dolakha where it is being implemented, has raised concerns. Malnutrition is still prevalent in places where different programmes related to nutrition is ongoing.

The government took a bold decision by elimination the centuries old tradition Chhaupadi where women during menstruation and post-natal stage are forced to live in a cowshed away from home. Many lives have been claimed due to this malpractice as they are exposed to life threatening risks and abuse. Many activists fought for centuries to ban the practice. The new law has also been introduced which will help to create a favourable environment to girls and women.

The news published in the last months Kantipur about the locals being unaware about the programmes run have grabbed the attention of the concerned bodies. Necessary action has been taken which can be seen as an example how powerful the media can be.

The Multi Sector Nutrition Programme of the Government of Nepal has been very effective in many districts. The people who were unaware about nutrition are now knowledgeable about it. It has helped all the people in the community including the poor and marginalized. Various offices have coordinated to improve the nutrition scenario which has made a positive impact. These

programmes have put its focus on women and children who are highly affected by nutrition.

Experts from different nations gathered to discuss about the issues related to malnutrition. The suggestions provided during the event, if addressed properly will be very helpful in tackling the problem. The malnourished children of Salyan were sent to Dang for treatment. This can be seen as a positive sign as when they return home healthy it will encourage other parents with malnourished children to receive treatment.

The newly elected members have put health in their priority and have committed to address the issue of malnutrition in their respective areas. Tackling the issue doesn't just result in the healthy development of the child but it will also support in the development of the country. This initiative will contribute a lot in the health sector as well as economic sector of the nation.

The government is running various programmes in different corners of the country. It has kept child and maternal health in priority. The government has also increased emphasis in food security issues. Monitoring of the hotels, restaurants, food stalls among others have started taking place which has revealed how some vendors have been using poisonous product just to make the food tasty risking others health. Strict action against them will encourage others to sell hygienic food.

## Conclusion

The news of poverty, food insecurity, lack of education and awareness, superstitions, ignorance, and these factors contributing to malnutrition are the issues that are normally covered by the Nepali Media. However this month, the Nepali media reported two

encouraging news which will ultimately contribute to improve the situation of nutrition in Nepal. One of those news is related to the newly elected local government. Newly elected local government of Kawasoti Municipalities and Panchthar's Yangbarak rural municipality have expressed commitment to make the area malnutrition free in the next five years. The commitments by these two local government should be shared in other areas and other local government should be encouraged to follow it with proper implementation plan.

Another encouraging news published this month was related to the discrimination during the menstruation and pregnancy period. After more than a decade of the verdict by the Supreme Court to outlaw Chhaupadi, the Parliament finally enacted a new law criminalising the centuries-old custom. Chhaupadi is an ancient practice that banishes women from the home during menstruation and after childbirth. As per the new law anyone forcing a woman to follow the custom will be liable to a three-month jail sentence or NPR 3,000 fine or both. There are many laws in Nepal that are not properly implemented, to avoid the same destiny what we need for this law is a strong political will to implement it and a strong awareness programme. ■

**HERD is a dynamic national non-governmental organisation, promoting evidence informed policies and practices for sustainable development in health, environment and social sectors to improve quality of life.**

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