

NUTRITION IN NEPAL



A MONTHLY MEDIA MONITORING REPORT, Bhadra 2074

Issue 10



Cover Photo: A lactating mother with her newborn child during the flood in Bara.
Photo: [Kantipur](#)

Study Team

Dr Sushil Baral
Rajesh Ghimire
Kritagya Regmi
Aanchal Parajuli

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 Kartik 2074 BS.

Executive Summary

This study involves a systematic investigation and analysis of 17 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.

Nepal is prone to different kinds of disaster. Many pregnant and lactating mothers had a hard time saving their children in the flood that occurred in Tarai. They were not provided with emergency nutrition support. The government has not been ready for such a crisis. Every month news are published regarding the number of malnourished children in many areas. Many governmental and non-governmental organisations are working for the problem but still numerous children are deprived from treatment. There is a need to find the actual reason regarding the issue so that the concerned bodies can take necessary action and take a step forward in creating a healthy environment for children.

Introduction

The Government of Nepal has put the issue of nutrition and food security in its top priority. Nutrition has been identified as one of the important agendas of national development. There has also been a high-level commitment from the government and external development partners. The government has started providing allowance for women opting for institutional delivery. Regardless of numerous ongoing activities and programmes in various parts of Nepal very little progress has been noted.

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 aid donors, NGOs, business and other relevant stakeholders are engaged in nutrition in Nepal.

Methodology

This media monitoring study was conducted for the period of one month from 17th August to 16th September (covering the month of Bhadra 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 16 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. The major findings from our media monitoring study are as follows:

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.

Current Scenario

The District Public Health Office, Bajura has informed, [2,000 children are malnourished](#) in 4 Municipality and 5 Rural Municipality of the district. Of them, 600 children are suffering from severe malnutrition and 1400 are suffering from moderate malnutrition. The malnourished children were detected through MUAC measurement among 1-5 years of children. "DPHO has been implementing IMAM program to minimize malnutrition", said Public health officer and Information Officer, Ramesh Kunwar. There are 6 health institutions that have been operating treatment centre for malnourished children. These centres are being operated in DPHO Tante, Dogadi Health Post (HP), Kolti PHC, Rugin HP and

Gotri HP. They conduct regular check-up and provide nutritious food. The children are sent back home only after they become healthy. In Bajura, Multi Sector Nutrition Plan, IMAM program and SUAAHARA II have been working for nutrition among children.

According to the news published in [News 24](#), despite various efforts made by the Government, number of malnourished children in both rural and urban parts of Mugu district is increasing. Under the Multi Sector Nutrition Plan, government through District Development Committee has spent a total of 1.1 million NPR to eliminate malnutrition. However, every week two to three children are found to be malnourished. During MUAC assessment of 10,225 children in Mugu, 982 children were found to be malnourished. Similarly, 2467 children were found to be suffering from moderate malnutrition and 3801 children were found to be moderately malnourished. According to DPHO Mugu, the number of malnourished children has been increasing since past year. Kali Bahadur Rawat, Secretary, Ward no 8, Khatyad Rural Municipality, Mugu said, "Multi Sector Nutrition Plan has been ineffective, health training is being given by staff of Water and Sanitation Office, 3 day training is being completed in an hour etc."

According to the news published in Rastriya Samachar Samiti (State owned News Agency), the situation of nutrition in Kalikot has become frightening. The children's are not getting treatment and the number is increasing tremendously.

The health workers are in stress as the people are not going for treatment. Recently, Gogan BK of Tilagufa-11 did not agree to go to District hospital to treat his malnourished son. He said that his son is suffering from God's punishment and doesn't need any treatment.

BKs son as found to be malnourished during MUAC. He was asked to take him to the district hospital for treatment but denied saying his son was cursed by God. AHW of Chilkhaya Health post, Durga Prasad Acharya himself went to Gogan's house, counselled him for more than 2 years to treat his son. He said, "When I said if the child is not taken for treatment, then the District Police will be informed, only then the father took his child for treatment. Last year Sushila Yogi of Raskot Municipality (previously Sipkhana VDC) died while treatment due to severe malnutrition.

The news published in [The Himalayan Times](#) has shown how mothers are having hard time saving their children after the flood that occurred last month. 'Babita Mukhiya, 17, resident of Mukhiyatole, Biratnagar gave birth to twins on the second week of August second week has been homeless and displaced as Singhiyakhola flooded her house. Babita along with her relatives has been taking shelter at the school building. There was no food to feed her infants. All food and grains stored by her family was swept away by the flood. The Mukhiya family has neither warm clothes for the babies nor nutritious food for the nursing mother.

Similar to the case above, many pregnant and lactating mothers of Kalaiya

municipality -14, have been residing in wet houses and sheltering in schools after their houses were destroyed by the flood. There are almost 500 lactating mothers with child up to 3 months. These mothers need to eat nutritious food, but they are surviving by eating noodles and beaten rice. Both mother and their children are in serious danger. The babies need to be fed with breastmilk but when the mother is not getting nutritious food, the chances of her breastfeeding is very low causing risk in children.

According to the news published in [Kantipur Daily](#), the DPHO of Bara stated that they are unable to provide relief to lactating mothers and new born babies. "There is no resource and budget, not even for epidemic control. All the budget has been deducted and provided to the local level", informed DPHO Chief Roshan Lal Chaudhary.

The situation of Bin (Malah) community of Morang, Parsa has become worse after the flood. No government relief had reached to this place until August 31. The news published in [Kantipur Daily](#) has informed that some organizations and individual social worker visited the place and provided relief but it was not enough as the area has almost 400 households. The situation of elderly people, children, pregnant and lactating mothers is worse. Shova Devi, 23 who is seven months pregnant complained of not getting even the iron tablets. Eight months lactating mother Rita Devi said, there is shortage of nutritious food and lack of care for her child. She has not been able to breast feed

the child as she has not eaten anything which is affecting her baby.

Issues

[Breastfeeding in public](#) is still regarded as a shame despite knowing how important mother's milk is for an infant. Although mothers are taught to breastfeed their babies, nursing mothers often are obliged to leave their new-born's starving just to avoid the embarrassment and criticism of breastfeeding them in public.

The working women due to the same reason do not exclusively breastfeed their children which ultimately can lead to bad health. Most mothers lament that there are no proper breastfeeding corners in Nepal due to which mothers have to wander about in order to find a place to nurse their babies. There are also some mothers too who don't breastfeed their babies due to the fear of losing their figure. People infected with HIV in Bajura district have [demanded their right to food](#) at the Human Right Commission Regional Office, in Dhangadhi in Kailali district.

A written complaint was filed at the Human Right Commission urging them to guarantee their right to food and live. They have brought the attention of the government about their plight. They have also demanded that the Human Right Commission, play an active role in providing them nutritious food along with the ART therapy and social security allowances, with the government.

Efforts made

According to [DPHO Gorkha](#), 918 children were found to be malnourished in the Fiscal

year 2073/74. Around 60 children are under treatment due to malnutrition. Over the year, 31 children were found to be severely malnourished. Similarly, 383 children were found to be moderately malnourished. According to DPHO Gorkha, 504 pregnant and postpartum mothers were found to be suffering from malnutrition.

Organizations like SUSAHARA, NTAG, Health for life have been working for improving the nutrition status of the district. On the news published in [News of Nepal](#), the focal person of SUSAHARA blamed the records of DPHO. He said, "The results might not have been as per the expectation but the results might be different than that of the data given by DPHO. The number of malnourished children is not as per our report". He added that the reason behind it is said to lack of human resource. There is one staff who looks over two VDCs. The problem of malnutrition has not decreased due to lack of co-ordination between the organizations working for nutrition" says the District Chief of SUSAHARA Programme, Yam GC.

Nawaraj Khadka, Nutrition Officer, DPHO Gorkha says that "although all the organizations have been working for nutrition, the district does not show much exemplary progress."

The [United Nations World Food Programme](#) (WFP) had begun food distributions to 180,000 people in response to the Nepal floods. Within 48 hours after the floods, Nepal Food Security Monitoring System (NeKSAP) supported by WFP, issued a first assessment of the damage,

playing a vital role in determining the extent of food insecurity in flood-affected districts. According to the latest report, almost half a million people in impacted areas are currently food insecure, and 300,000 people have very little access to food and are urgently in need of food assistance.

According to WFP, the area already has high rates of malnutrition, with 14 percent of children aged 6-59 months acutely malnourished. These children, along with pregnant women and nursing mothers, are particularly vulnerable to water-borne diseases and food insecurity after disasters. To prevent malnutrition, WFP, along with the Government of Nepal and its partners, will be providing 200 MT of fortified food to 19,500 pregnant women and nursing mothers and about 27,700 children aged between 6 to 23 months, across 13 flood affected districts of the Terai.

According to the Nepal Humanitarian Situation Report of [UNICEF](#), the nutritional situation of children from low-income households in Tarai was already regarded as poor, and has worsened since the onset of flooding. A Rapid Nutrition Assessment conducted by, covering more than 7,000 children aged 6 to 59 months in 16 districts in August revealed a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 23.7 per cent (Severe Acute Malnutrition [SAM] of 6.3 per cent, and Moderate Acute Malnutrition [MAM] of 17.4 per cent). This is well above the 15 per cent categorised as "Critical" (highest level of severity) according to WHO's Guideline on the Management of Nutrition in Major Emergencies and very serious.

A [two-day roundtable discussion](#) on the Government Action for Nutrition in the South Asia was organised by the National Planning Commission (NPC) with the support of various development organisations, and the South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative. The event aimed at reviewing the situation of food security and nutrition in the region took place where a total of 116 representatives from various 16 countries in the region including Nepal had participated.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba stating that Nepal had made significant achievements in reducing stunting among under-five children from 57 percent in 2001 to 36 percent in 2016 yet stunting remained worryingly high. He pledged to further streamline and make the food and nutrition programme, aimed at girl child below five, students and women, more effective. The PM shared that Nepal had effectively implemented the Multi-sector Nutrition Programme (2013-2017) and expressed his confidence that the second phase of such programme (2018-2022) would be brought into effect effectively. According to him, the government had attached priority to agendas such as sustainable agriculture development for poverty reduction, increase in the agricultural produce, development of physical infrastructures and health reforms among others.

[Dang sub metropolitan city](#) has decided to provide 5,000 NPR as the incentive programme for postnatal care. Sub Metropolitan's Chief Ghanashyam Pandey said that they made this investment in golden 1000 days mothers to reduce maternal and neonatal deaths. The main

aim of this incentive program is to improve the quality of health service in women and children, decrease maternal and neonatal death, expanding women and children friendly services and development of healthy and active citizens.

The incentive programme will begin from 19 wards of Tulsipur Sub metropolitan. The incentive for postnatal care which is a total of 5000 NPR will be provided in two instalments under which 900rs will be provided after 4 A.N.C. check-up and delivery in listed health facility. While the rest 4100 NPR will be provided by Tulsipur Sub metropolitan's ward office. The incentive will be provided to a women for upto two children.

To get the incentive, a proof of institutional delivery needs to be listed in health facility, B.C.G. vaccine given to the child and birth certificate should be provided to ward within 35 days of delivery.

[Discussion](#)

Despite numerous efforts from government, donor agencies and many organisations malnutrition still remains a challenge in Nepal. This media monitoring has strengthened the fact that the scenario is even worse for children under 5 years of age. The outcome of this problem has hampered the overall development of the nation as well as an individual. The disasters occurring at various times has even affected the scenario as the government is not well prepared. Many mothers and children have been deprived of proper care and nutritious food. Similar to the coverage in previous months the stories related to nutrition is very less. Much

attention this month was provided to the disaster caused due to flood in Tarai.

Even after efforts high number of children suffering from malnutrition in many parts of the country. As many as 2000 children were found to be malnourished in Bajura. The figure represents only one district. The health facilities have been providing check-up as well as counselling but still numerous children are suffering from malnutrition. Number of malnourished children in both rural and urban parts of Mugu district is increasing. Every week two to three children are found to be malnourished.

The scenario of Kalikot is worse. A case study of Gogan BK whose malnourished son was not taken for treatment has shown how illiteracy affects treatment. BK didn't take his son for treatment stating that he was being punished by God's and he needs no treatment. He was repeatedly suggested to see a doctor but denied every time and when shown the fear of police he took his son to the hospital. This shows how lack of awareness and traditional beliefs affects the treatment. BK's son who has a high chance of living a healthy life was forced to live like that because of his father's irresponsibility. Many children are suffering from malnutrition due to same reason. There is a need to speed up awareness programmes and strengthen monitoring mechanism so that no child need to suffer because of parent's carelessness.

Numerous mothers are having hard time saving their children after the flood that occurred last month. These mothers have been deprived of nutritional food because of which they have not been able to breastfeed

their child. This has created a risk of disease to both mother and the child. At the time when many families are having a hard time managing a single meal, providing nutritious meal to both mother and the child is a very big challenge. Hundreds of pregnant and lactating mothers are having the same problem. The government is not ready to address the crisis. Concerned local bodies have mentioned that they lack fund to tackle the scenario. In some areas the mothers are not getting medicines as well.

Every year Nepal witnesses some kind of natural disaster which affects thousands of people. There is a need for the government to be fully prepared to any crisis so that the innocent lives are not lost.

The mothers are taught to breastfeed their children exclusively but in practice it has become a challenge. Breastfeeding in public is regarded as a shame and to avoid the embarrassment and criticism mothers don't breastfeed their child according to their need.

The working women due to the same reason do not exclusively breastfeed their children which results in the children's bad health. There is no facility where the mothers can breastfeed the child. Even offices don't have such facility. There is a need to create an environment where breastfeeding can be promoted and won't be seen as a stigma.

The people infected with HIV in Bajura district have demanded the Human Right Commission urging them to guarantee their right to food and live. There is a need that the government bring programmes to

address the needs of people suffering from any diseases. This way they will get a healthy and stigma free environment and contribute to the development of the country.

Many organisations are working to tackle the problem of malnutrition in coordination with the government. There is lack of enough health workers. One health worker needs to cover more than one ward. This doesn't just create pressure to HW but also compromises the quality of health care. There is a need to deploy the required number of HW in districts so that every citizen gets quality health care. Health workers must be provided with benefits and encouraged to serve in different corners of the country.

After the flood the government, WFP and other organisations began distributing food in flood hit areas. The nutritional status of children in Tarai has been regarded as poor which was further deteriorated by the disaster. Many children, pregnant and lactating mothers were in need of nutritional foods. These women and children were provided with dry foods which didn't even fill their stomach. The government and the concerned agencies was not able to provide immediate support to these mothers and their children. There is a need to make an emergency plan so that no mother or child suffers from the same problem again.

Experts had gathered for the government action for nutrition in the South Asia. The event aimed at reviewing the situation of food security and nutrition in the region. Only conducting discussions is not enough,

there is a need to reach the vulnerable people and address the problem. The results if used properly will be very fruitful in tackling the scenario.

To promote the institutional delivery Dang Sub Metropolitan City decided to provide 5000 NRs as the incentive programme for postnatal care. This investment in golden 1000 days mothers is said to reduce maternal and neonatal deaths. Just distributing money is not enough, making sure it is reaching the needy is important. While launching any such programmes there is a need to find the vulnerable area so that the one who are in need get it. Monitoring of the implementation has to be done. If the programmes gets positive results efforts must be made to expand the programmes in other parts of the country.

Conclusion

Most of the news related to nutrition is about the increasing numbers, efforts made, food security, factors associated to malnutrition and efforts among others. This month, some of the news related to the problems faced by pregnant and lactating mothers in the flood hit areas has shown the picture during crisis. The pain of a mother not being able to feed the child was shown. This situation can have severe implications in the health of both mother and child. This has pointed that there is a need that the concerned bodies make an emergency plan where these mothers and children will not have to suffer. If the provision of emergency help can be taken parallel with other relief work. This can save numerous lives.

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.

स्वास्थ्य अनुसन्धान तथा सामाजिक विकास मञ्च
Health Research and
Social Development Forum
www.herd.org.np
email: info@herd.org.np