

Nutrition Security in India Towards an Integrative Approach



Proceedings and Outcomes of the Welthungerhilfe Annual Theme Oriented Workshop 2007

New Delhi, 26-27 November 2007

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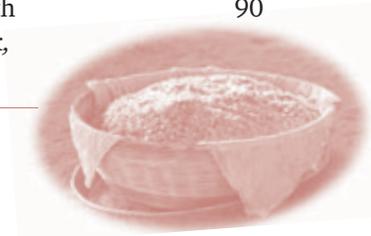
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Preface

In 2007, although the Indian economy grew at the rate of 9.6%, the benefits of this growth were slow to reach women and children: 200 million children in India suffered from malnutrition, 30% of all newborns had low birth weight, and 56% of women suffered from anaemia.

Concerned at such a situation, Welthungerhilfe facilitated an annual theme oriented, consultative workshop, titled “Nutrition Security in India: Towards an Integrative Approach”, at the International Youth Centre in New Delhi on 26 and 27 November 2007. The workshop focused on analysing food insecurity and formulating strategies to tackle malnutrition in Welthungerhilfe-supported partner project areas.

The workshop facilitated a shared learning dialogue between Welthungerhilfe partners, based on their understanding of the issue of malnutrition and their experience in tackling it. The discussions were placed in the macro context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty eradication.

In India, malnutrition numbers continue to climb, contributing significantly to child mortality. Clearly, there is a mismatch between economic progress and food security: India now ranks 94th in the Global Hunger Index (GHI)¹ of 119 countries.

Further, national food security does not always translate into local food security, as has been seen in India’s large tribal areas. Therefore, Welthungerhilfe and its partners decided to look more deeply into growing socio-economic inequalities and household food security issues.

Workshop participants got a holistic understanding of the complex nature of nutrition, deliberated on the factors leading to malnutrition, and shared initiatives to tackle nutrition deficit in rural areas. Participants also learned about policy and institutional frameworks and how to apply locally available instruments to analyse and combat malnutrition.

Workshop discussions provided opportunities to share good practices in other areas and projects, thereby generating a debate on how to embed nutritional concepts in poverty alleviation programmes.

In order to analyse and address food security issues in its project areas, Welthungerhilfe invited a number of resource persons from a range of disciplines: researchers, development

¹ In 2005, Welthungerhilfe and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) presented a report on the Global Hunger Index. This GHI index was made public worldwide and is an ideal tool to record hunger and support advocacy work on both national and international platforms. Welthungerhilfe is engaged in this process on several levels together with IFPRI. The GHI is based on three equally weighed indicators: % of population undernourished, prevalence of underweight children < 5 years and under-5 mortality rate. Worst possible score =100



practitioners, action-oriented civil society groups, international agencies and representatives from both government and the private sector. Participants deliberated on methods to identify those worst affected by hunger and malnutrition, and on developing innovative strategies to ensure well-being. This sharing of experiences to fight malnutrition helped partners give shape to effective plans in their own areas.

The workshop facilitated a rich discussion on the linkages between the food prejudices and taboos that result eventually in malnutrition. It also called for attention to the multi-dimensional measures of poverty and malnutrition that can guide targeted actions for poor groups such as women and children, specially pregnant women and the girl child.

Workshop participants also explored poverty traps such as droughts, floods and other disasters which drive the already poor deeper into situations of inequality, discrimination and vulnerability. Discussions also covered the new challenges facing efforts to reduce malnutrition: rising food prices, agrarian crisis, resource scarcity and ecological insecurity.

A clear message emerging from the workshop was that tackling hunger and malnutrition now requires initiatives anchored in issues of access and equity. Bottlenecks in promoting human development – such as poor access to roads, markets, schools, health services etc. – are accentuated when experienced by socially marginalised groups with a low asset base. Response to such challenges calls for enhancing access to assets, infrastructure, services and social safety nets, and facilitating greater inclusion in society. This may prevent future generations of such marginalised groups from entering the poverty trap.

However, such a response requires a change in perspective for development actors. India's most deprived need to be viewed as people with potential, not problems. Such an attitude will enhance livelihood-related initiatives as the focus will shift from eking out a living to ensuring long-term well-being. This also requires a demand-driven approach that should be a positive outcome of nutrition education at the community level. Civil society actors need to concentrate on building alliances and linkages with government administration and lobbying for more effective implementation of the various schemes and programmes aimed at reducing poverty and hunger.

The report is a “living document”, subject to further debate and discussions in the near future. Full presentations and contact details of all resource persons can be found in the annexure to this document, as reference material and background information.

Welthungerhilfe acknowledges the European Union for its support of the annual workshop in 2007 and this publication.

For the steering committee:

Anke Schuermann/Welthungerhilfe in New Delhi

Manasi Chakraborty/Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama Nimpith in West Bengal

Day 1 - November 26, 2007

Introduction and objectives

Brief introduction by Welthungerhilfe

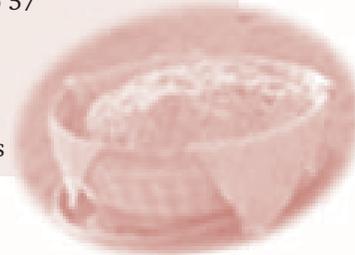
Ms Anke Schuermann, Workshop Coordinator

In a world where technology has propelled human progress and made the world a more tight-knit place, widespread hunger, under-nutrition and poverty continue to scar its progressive face. Although there has been progress in the fight against hunger in a number of regions in the world, pledges made to eradicate hunger are being repeatedly broken.

The first of the MDGs – that aims to halve the proportion of hungry people in the world by 2015, and was agreed to by 189 heads of state in 2000 – is unlikely to be met. This has made hunger and under-nutrition one of the most critical development challenges.

Despite substantial improvements in the health status and well-being of its citizens, India since its Independence in 1947 has continued to suffer from a silent emergency of hunger and under-nutrition. Statistics paint a very grim picture. The third edition of the National Family Health Survey 2005-06 (NFHS-3) gave some provisional data on health, population and nutrition in India:

- 47% of children are underweight – a rate much higher than in other developing countries
- 30% of newborns are low birth-weight babies
- 56% of women who have ever been married are anaemic
- 79% of children of age 6-35 months are anaemic
- Major nutritional deficiencies of public health importance are in vitamin A and iodine
- Under-nutrition is the underlying cause in about 50% of the 2.1 million “under-5” deaths each year
- Many of those who survive are stunted (too short for their age), wasted (too thin for their height) or under-nourished (too thin for their age)
- Trends in child mortality reveal a marginal improvement from 68 to 57 deaths per 1,000 live births
- Prevalence of under-nutrition is highest in Madhya Pradesh (55%), Bihar (54%), Orissa (54%), Uttar Pradesh (52%) and Rajasthan (51%), while Kerala (37%) and Tamil Nadu (27%) have lower rates



Preventing under-nutrition has emerged as one of the most critical challenges facing India's development planners in recent times.

Welthungerhilfe's mission is to achieve: "A world without hunger and poverty." It is fully committed to the realisation of the MDGs, particularly the first one that targets hunger.

Welthungerhilfe's projects are mainly focussed on food security and are set up at the local level to improve either availability or access to food. There is a need to re-examine and re-address how food security projects are addressing the survival and well-being of malnourished people. This involves re-examining aspects of poverty alleviation, social discrimination, lack of knowledge and education as well as gender inequality. Nutritional objectives are core areas but often are not adequately addressed in food security projects supported by Welthungerhilfe.

About the theme oriented workshop

Welthungerhilfe conducts annual workshops on themes that are centred on its areas of work in India and the "lines of action" of the EU-supported "Geographically Based Programme India". The theme identified for 2007 was "Nutrition Security in India : Towards an Integrative Approach".

The content and design of the workshop was decided by a steering committee that included delegates from partner organisations: BAIF Institute for Rural Development in Karnataka, Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) in Delhi, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama Nimpith (SRAN) in West Bengal and Nysasdri in Orissa. IGSSS provided administrative support in organising the workshop in New Delhi.

Objectives

1. To understand the status and complexity of various factors affecting nutrition security (social dimensions, taboos, traditions, etc.)
2. To define ways of addressing and integrating issues related to nutrition security within ongoing development projects, particularly food security programmes
3. To support development professionals of Welthungerhilfe's partner organisations in enhancing their capacities in the field of nutrition security: Gaining knowledge about various governmental/non-governmental efforts in India to promote nutrition security
4. To share experiences and recommend good practices in addressing malnutrition and responding to it, consequently contributing to more nutrition-secure villages

Questions that came up for Welthungerhilfe and partners in India to address this theme

- How relevant is the topic “malnutrition” for partner organisations?
- How does this topic relate to the projects, and how do we understand it?
- How do we look at the scenario in India?
- Does the state in which the partner works take any notice of this topic?
- What is the status of malnutrition in relation to the MDGs?
- How can Welthungerhilfe and its partners address malnutrition in the projects it supports?
- Do we need to redefine strategies? Are innovative approaches needed in information, education and communication, e.g., nutrition education?

The major themes of the workshop were:

- The variety of interventions to tackle nutrition insecurity in rural areas
- Framework conditions
- Instruments to analyse and combat hunger and malnutrition
- Integrating nutrition into food security projects
- Exchange experiences on instruments and good practices

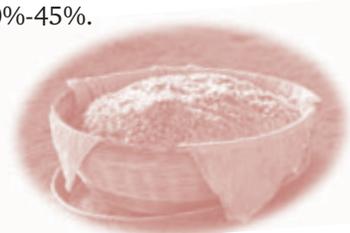
Brief introduction by Indo-Global Social Service Society

Mr Gratian Vas, Executive Director

In the last eight years, IGSSS has partnered with Welthungerhilfe in different parts of India. One of the most significant projects is on food security for small farmers in Jharkhand. IGSSS is also involved in a disaster management project in Kashmir, focussing on the right to life, access of the needy to nutritious and organic food and the impact of social marginalisation on nutrition and food security. Other areas where IGSSS has worked include environmental issues like pollution, access to land for cultivation, study of current government policies, the public distribution system (PDS), expenditure on food security, and the impact of globalisation on marginal groups.

The 2007 World Development Report indicates that India’s nutrition levels are lower than those of sub-Saharan Africa. In 2000, the all-India figures showed that 47% of children were underweight, a figure that had declined slightly by 2005 to 40%-45%.

IGSSS lays stress on livelihood generation, sustainable agriculture and monitoring of the PDS. This workshop aimed to work towards



a pledge to increase the expenditure on food security to 1.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 0.5%.

In Sri Lanka, the expenditure on food security is 1% of GDP, which has made a perceptible difference to the lives of the poor. IGSSS works to build the capacity of local leadership to improve the quality of food distributed through the PDS as well as include it as part payment under the poverty alleviation and livelihood programmes. This leads to more equitable sharing of the resources that are necessary for access to nutritional security.

Brief introduction by the European Union Delegation

Ms Anne Marchal, First Secretary

Witnessing rapid economic growth, India is one of the emerging economies in Asia. But India is simultaneously occupying two worlds – in one world rapid economic growth and social changes occur, while in the other, a percentage of the population appears to be left behind. Bridging this gap is a major challenge as India has more than a billion people and one third of the world's poor. India needs rapid growth, along with strong employment creation and extended social protection, to reduce poverty. A major effort is still necessary if India is to meet the MDGs.

The European Union (EU) has finalised its India Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007-2013 (visit www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en). EU envisages that the need for development assistance will gradually decrease in the future and the CSP will have to focus on other areas of cooperation. The 2007-2013 CSP is in a way a transitional one, showing a shift from development assistance towards support to pro-poor sector reform policies and economic cooperation.

The European Commission (EC) cooperation for 2007-13 will:

- Assist India in meeting the MDGs by providing budget support to the social sector (health/education), encompassing best practice models in good governance, decentralised decision-making and development, including improved service delivery to address poverty, gender issues etc.
- Implement the EU-India Partnership to support India's pro-poor sector reform policies, promote dialogue in areas of mutual interest and enhance economic co-operation.

By the year 2000, India had attained macro-level self-sufficiency and was even a marginal net exporter in some grains. Yet, the national averages hide important imbalances and have not translated into equitable distribution or adequate food availability at the household level.

The EC has been for long supporting the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of

the Government of India through the World Food Programme (WFP). In the background of above, EC has streamlined the food aid programmes focusing on specific areas of timely needs. Food security goes beyond just providing food; it involves increasing people's skills for income generation and conservation of natural resources.

EC is currently supporting large-scale programmes in India in the areas of education, health and family welfare, and rural and natural resources development. EC assistance to India currently involves an expenditure of roughly €100 million (appx. Rs 480 crore). A large part of this is channelled to large bilateral programmes run by the government.

EC also supports many projects undertaken by NGOs. Two calls for proposals were published recently on "health and education". This call is open to all non-state actors, inclusive of political foundations. Indian NGOs may apply independently or in partnership with a European NGO. A sum of € 500,000 to 1 million has been earmarked for a project of three-five years. The total amount available for the overall call for a project is € 4 million. Worldwide calls from the EU for this proposal are also likely to be announced soon. (Visit <http://www.delind.ec.europa.eu/en>)

