

India bears a disproportionate burden of malnutrition and the COVID 19 pandemic in the world

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Equity in gender policies as per needs a must- experts speak on nutrition for women and children

Experts share insights on 'Fighting Nutrition Crisis in India during pandemic especially for women and children by Saksham Sanchar

- Insufficient progress to reach the World Health Assembly (WHA) targets set for 2025 and SDGs set for 2030
- One-quarter of all countries are 'on track to halve the number of children affected by stunting by 2030
- The last COVID-19, 58 million children between the age group of 6 months to 23 months have not developed the classical eating habits
- Food and nutritional security must be proportional

INVC NEWS

Jaipur,

The pandemic has brutally shaken the entire ecology and its functions. To highlight the nutrition crisis that has been faced across all categories of the humanities, Saksham Sanchar organised a webinar on Fighting Nutrition Crisis in India during COVID-19, especially for women and children in India. Experts such as Dr. DK Mangal, Advisor, SD Gupta School of Public Health at IIHMR University, Dr Sudhir Bhandari, Principal SMS, Medical College, Ms Sangeeta Beniwal, Chairperson Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Mr Prashant Agarwal, President Narayan Seva Sansthan shared their views on the subject. Experts spoke hinting on various policies, processes and practices needed which include adequate maternal nutrition before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding; optimal breastfeeding in the first two years of life; nutritious, diverse, safe foods in early childhood; and a healthy environment, including access to basic health, water, hygiene and sanitation services, policies based on gender equity for nutrition, policies indicated in developed and developing countries to be different and opportunities for safe physical activity.

Prashant Agarwal, President, Narayan Seva Sansthan Said, "In recent findings, UNICEF supported the nutrition services of the central and state governments for school children and adolescents in school. Also, in 2020, around 2.5 crore school children and adolescents have benefited from anaemia prevention programmes in India. In eradicating malnutrition from India, steps to take like food fortification, strengthening and expanding nutrition schemes for adolescent girls, panchayats play a major role in running welfare schemes in the state and providing nutrition education from school to college."

Dr Sangeeta Beniwal, Chairman, Rajasthan State Commission for Protection of Child Right said, "Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has always tried to focus on providing enough food to the very poor, and not with more funding for the existing nutrition-focused welfare programs such as the Indira Rasoi Abhiyan in the state. We all must step forward to reach out to the most affected people and spread awareness to ensure the wellbeing of all the key stakeholders, especially the poor and ignorant sections. It is important for all women to adopt a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy, so that healthy women can give birth to a healthy baby."

Highlighting the effect of the pandemic on women and children, Dr. D. K. Mangal, Advisor, Dr. SD Gupta School of Public Health at IIHMR University, said, "**India bears a disproportionate burden of malnutrition and the COVID 19 pandemic in the world.** Response to the pandemic has disrupted routine nutrition programs such as the ICDS and the Mid-Day Meal program. This has adversely affected the nutrition status of millions of children and women. The Continued COVID pandemic has not allowed us to streamline our nutrition interventions in India. The continued COVID pandemic has led many more women and children to suffer due to a lack of food and micronutrients. The impending threat of the third wave of the pandemic is likely to worsen the situation further. Adequate maternal nutrition before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding; optimal breastfeeding in the first two years of life; nutritious, diverse, and safe foods in early childhood; and a healthy environment, including access to basic health, water, hygiene, and sanitation services and opportunities for safe physical activity would improve the nutritional status of women and children. Adequate coverage, continuity, and quality of nutrition interventions will enable us to realize nutrition-related sustainable development goals.

Dr. Sudhir Bhandari, Principal SMS College said, "India initially faced physical challenges during COVID-19. Over time we realised nutrition affected the lives of many where 9.3 million children would be affected by 2022 out of which 20-25% might suffer due to stunted growth. Children experiencing under nutrition are more likely to suffer from pandemic complications.

Under nutrition, may cause more sickness and mortality in people due to COVID-19 & due to other infectious diseases, including pneumonia and various inflammatory diseases. In countries with the 1st and 2nd waves of COVID-19, obesity and non-communicable diseases have been associated with the more severe outcome of the virus. Nutrition status might impact the susceptibility due to COVID-19 and health strategies to reduce micronutrient deficiencies and under nutrition are essential. COVID-19 has had a severe effect on maternal and young children nutritional status. We must strengthen the food security and functioning of the food supply chain to the population. We now must manage cases of acute malnutrition, accelerate micronutrient supplementation and fortification activities, strengthen school feeding and establish nutritional surveillance."

Dr. Bhandari also added, "In the last COVID-19, almost 58 million children between the age group of 6 months to 23 months have not developed the classical eating habits. Inadequate access to health and medical services (supplements) has been important in the cause of nutritional deficiencies in women and children."

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