



RRN BRIEFING PAPER

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“Pathways to Resilience: Policy Priorities and Advocacy
for Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security in Nepal”



THE CONTEXT

Food and nutrition diversity play a crucial role in promoting human health and development, especially among women and children under the age of five. However, in rural and marginalized families in Nepal, accessing a varied and nutritious diet poses a significant challenge. This lack of diversity in food and nutrition has severe consequences, particularly affecting the health of women and young children. In fact, more than one-third of all children under five in Nepal suffer from stunted growth due to malnutrition, making it a leading cause of death among young children.

However, despite these efforts, several challenges persist, especially in rural areas of Nepal. Malnutrition, natural disasters, poverty, and inadequate healthcare services continue to be major obstacles in achieving better health outcomes.



MAM child with her mother and her older sister at NERP camp, Runtigadh

Despite these challenges, Nepal has seen progress in reducing undernourishment and child mortality over the past 25 years. Factors contributing to this improvement include rising cereal production, declining population growth rates, and a slight increase in government spending. To address the issues of nutrition and health, sanitation, education, and agriculture, the government has implemented various policies and programs.



Child Growth Monitoring camp in Gairigaun HP Tribeni

Nepal still faces challenges, including low dietary diversity, micronutrient deficiencies, high reliance on staple foods, obesity, and child wasting. This policy briefing paper focuses on food and nutrition insecurity in Nepal, highlighting efforts under the WHH/BMZ Germany supported RRN's Poshan Sudhar, Rolpa Project. It stresses the importance of citizen empowerment in addressing these challenges and the need for policies promoting food and nutrition security and diversity. This is crucial for the optimal health and development of citizens, especially children under five and reproductive-age women (15-49 years), including pregnant and lactating women in Nepal.



A senior citizen with her grandson, who was SAM, now became normal after OTC service and care, Tribeni- 6

Recent surveys, such as the Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), indicates that progress has been made in reducing undernourishment and child mortality, showcasing a positive trend in poverty and child nutrition in the country. Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done to further improve the situation and address the lingering issues affecting vulnerable populations. Some of the facts are as below:

- Living below the poverty line (17.1%) (target to reduce 4.9% by 2030)
- Multidimensional Poverty Index: 28.6% (target to reduce 10% by 2030)
- In 2022 Global Hunger Index (GNI) Nepal ranks 81st out of the 121 countries with a score of 19.1 of moderate (10-19.9), however, still very near to line of serious (20-34.9)
- Childhood stunting-25% (height-for-age is less than -2SD is considered stunted) target reduce 15% in 2030
- Childhood wasting-8% (weight-for-height is less than -2 SD is deemed wasted) target to reduce 4% in 2030
- Childhood underweight- 17% (weight-for-age is less than -2 SD is considered underweight) target to reduce 12% in 2030
- Low birth weight-12%
- Exclusive breastfeeding under six months-56%
- MDD of children of 6-23 months-48%
- MAD of children of 6-23 months- 43% ,
- MDD-W (women 15-49 age)-56%
- Anemia in Children 6-59 months- 43% and Women (15-49 years)-34%
- Diarrhea (ORS)-59.50%
- Vitamin A (child 6-59 months)- 85%

KEY PRIORITIES:

Nepal needs to invest in the social sector, improve child diets, eliminate child marriage, promote gender equality, and empower marginalized groups to combat hunger and malnutrition. Prioritizing agricultural productivity, diversification, and sustainable growth is crucial, while addressing challenges like natural disasters, climate change, poverty, and poor infrastructure. Ensuring food safety and a reliable market for Nepali vegetables requires testing pesticide residues and implementing international standards. Supporting small-scale farmers with fair prices, market access, and investment in agriculture is key to promoting self-reliance. The government can establish fair prices through minimum price regulations, strengthening farmer cooperatives, and providing subsidies for transportation and marketing expenses. This will enhance food security for Nepali families, especially those in rural and marginalized areas reliant on small-scale agriculture.



A women growing healthy vegetable at her home.

APPROACH TO TACKLING MALNUTRITION

The RRN project in Rutigadhi and Triveni Rural Municipalities of Rolpa focuses on improving food and nutrition security through the LANN+ hygiene and Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) approaches. Sustainable agriculture and resource management have contributed to enhancing food and nutrition security in these areas. Child growth monitoring occurs regularly every six months in both municipalities, with identified malnourished children receiving support in collaboration with health posts and project teams.

Good Agriculture Practice (GAP): GAP is a “collection of principles to apply for on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products, while taking into account economic, social and environmental sustainability. It has a series of methods that farmers have to apply in order to protect their own health and well-being, and people who consume their products and the environment. Provided GAP training covers crop planning, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), and the use of bio-pesticides with locally available resources. The training has led to increased knowledge and skills among farmers, resulting in improved production of nutritious fruits and vegetables.



Farmers preparing bio-pesticide (JholMal cum Bishadi)

LANN+ Linking of agriculture and natural resource management towards nutrition security is a multisectoral approach centered around family nutrition focuses on integrating nutrition-sensitive components that address underlying and basic causes of malnutrition. Mindful of the rural context of communities and their dependence on local natural resources for a variety of essential materials – e.g. food and water, livelihoods, fuel – LANN+ gives precedence to the interaction between communities, the local natural environment and local food systems to improve nutritional outcomes.



Women during after LANN+ session

PLA-Participatory Learning and Action is an action oriented qualitative research used to gain an in-depth understanding of a community or situation and is always conducted with full and active participation of community members using varieties of tools- games, storytelling, pictorial and practical demonstration in participatory discussions in the groups.



Women during PLA session

Nutrition Education and Rehabilitation Program (NERP Camp)

It focuses on rehabilitating malnourished children using local resources and participation and enabling the family to maintain the nutritional status of their children even after completion of the NERP by promoting behavior changes on various aspects like preparation of nutritious recipes, consumption of wild edible plants, childcare practices, sanitation and hygiene, and other health care practices. referred to OTCs (Outpatient Therapeutic Centers) at primary health posts for treatment, which have been successfully established in both municipalities with RRN's advocacy. The project also engages community groups in food and nutrition problem analysis and advocates for accountability from local governments and policymakers.



Mother carrying her child after visiting NERP camp

Thus, sustainable agriculture and resource management have contributed to enhancing food and nutrition security in these areas. Child growth monitoring occurs regularly every six months in both municipalities, with identified malnourished children receiving support in collaboration with health posts and project teams.

CHALLENGES :

Food and nutrition security is complex, influenced by socio-economic development, political stability, and resource access. Gender inequality, child marriage, and challenges faced by girls exacerbate food and nutrition insecurity. Addressing these issues necessitates collaboration among sectors, agencies, and targeted policies. The RRN project effectively collaborates with sectors and local actors, ensuring access to basic agriculture and health services, especially in remote areas.



Child feeding during NERP camp

LESSON LEARNED SO FAR :

- 1 Empowering citizens for resilient communities requires a human rights-based approach, focusing on the needs of the marginalized and ensuring duty bearer's accountability. Collaboration between CBOs, NGOs, and citizens is crucial for driving change.
- 2 Addressing malnutrition requires a multi-sectoral approach, implementing nutrition and child-sensitive plans and programs.
- 3 Supporting local and provincial governments during the transition to federal structures is essential, involving capacity building and policy development.
- 4 Civil society organizations raise awareness and empower citizens, while the government must lead in setting development priorities and managing programs for better results through mutual accountability.

Child Growth Monitoring (CGM): Detection of malnourished children through Anthropometric measurement (height, weight and MUAC) in half yearly basis.



During child growth monitoring

CBOs advocacy: Enhancing CBOs capacity to lobby and advocate food and nutrition issues, problems identification and prepare agenda as the solutions at local and provincial level.



CBO advocacy submitting Gyapanpatra to RM president, Mr. Karna Bdr. Bantha



Child Growth Monitoring (CGM) through mobile app

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

1 Federal Level:

- Develop and implement comprehensive national policies on food and nutrition security, addressing issues from production to consumption.
- Conduct research and data collection to inform evidence-based policy formulation and decision-making.
- Allocate sufficient financial resources for food and nutrition security programs and initiatives.
- Promote collaboration and coordination among relevant ministries, departments, and agencies to holistically address food and nutrition security through upcoming MSNP III phase.
- Advocate for international cooperation and partnerships to address global challenges related to food and nutrition security.
- Establish regulatory frameworks to ensure food safety, quality, and nutritional standards.



Food and Nutrition Master Plan (FNMP) final validation workshop in Runtigadhi RM hall.

2 Provincial Level:

- Align provincial policies with the national framework on food and nutrition security.
- Tailor policies and programs to address specific regional needs, considering factors such as climate, geography, and local agricultural practices.
- Develop provincial-level strategies to promote sustainable agriculture, improve food production, and enhance access to nutritious food.
- Promote collaboration and coordination among relevant ministries, departments, and agencies to holistically address food and nutrition security through upcoming MSNP III phase.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of provincial policies on food and nutrition security.
- Increase investments in agricultural infrastructure, irrigation systems, and post-harvest and market management to reduce food losses and waste, moving towards a sustainable food system and transformation.



Provincial Workshop on Multi-sectors Nutrition Issue and FNMP sharing meeting held in Rapti Deukhuri, Lumbini Province.

3 Local Level:

- Engage local community-based organizations and citizen groups, such as farmers, women, youth, and marginalized communities, in the development and implementation of food and nutrition security policies.
- Promote community-led initiatives for nutrition-sensitive interventions, such as climate-resilient agriculture, community farming, community gardens, kitchen gardening, women empowerment, and farmer's cooperatives.
- Facilitate access to land, water, and other resources for small-scale farmers, encouraging diversified and climate-resilient farming practices.
- Establish local food markets, distribution networks, and storage facilities to improve access to fresh and nutritious food.
- Advocate for international cooperation and partnerships to address Enhanced nutrition education and awareness programs at the community level, emphasizing the importance of balanced diets and healthy eating habits.
- Advocate for food system transformation to promote food and nutrition security, local development plans, and budgets, ensuring effective implementation through citizen's participation.



Citizens and CBOs engagement in settlement level planning process in Runtigadhi

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, policy implications and advocacy efforts at the national, provincial, and local levels must prioritize sustainable and inclusive approaches to food and nutrition security. This involves addressing both the supply and demand aspects of the issue and actively involving all citizen groups and civil society (NGOs/CBOs) at the grass-roots level to ensure their participation and empowerment.


Author/Editors: Bhanu Parajuli, Surangana Rana


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
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P. O. Box: 8130, Kathmandu, Nepal.

 Street Address: 288 Gairidhara Marg, Gairidhara, Kathmandu, Nepal.

 Tel: +977 1 4004976, 4004985, Fax: 977-1-4004508 & 4443494,

 Email: rrn@rrn.org.np

 Website: www.rrn.org.np



Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), re-named in 1993, initially established in 1989 as GRITS Nepal, is a Nepali non-government, social development organisation involved in rural development, action-oriented research and policy advocacy focusing on peasants, poor women, dalits and indigenous nationalities, and other vulnerable communities through the process of acilitation, social mobilisation, empowerment and self-organisation. RRN's work is based on the four-fold approach to rural reconstruction covering: education to combat illiteracy and empower people to access their rights; sustainable livelihood to fight poverty; health to prevent disease, and self-government to overcome civic inertia.



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