

## **Nutritional Status of Girl Child in India: The role of Government in paving way for inclusive Growth Management**

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**Abstract** : In India, the male & female nutritional status differ significantly there have been several in depth studies in this regard while each study has shown that nutritional standards differ from boys & girls in urban & as well as rural areas in India to an alarming ratio. Some of the studies have been very indicative of the serious defects in Nutrition management & policy making .The traditional values, ethnic beliefs, socio cultural principles hinder the girl child to grow up healthily. This paper studies the extent of dissimilar nutritional standards in India & diagnoses the causes behind such variation. The paper also examines the role of policymakers in managing such abnormalities & protecting the girl child against these odds.

**Key words:** girl child, nutritional values, obstacles, role of policy makers

“I believe that parents need to make nutrition education a priority in their home environment. It's crucial for good health and longevity to instill in your children sound eating habits from an early age” - CAT CORA

### **Introduction**

India is a country of cultural pluralism. The ethnic & caste based traditional principles rule the roost here. The issues concerning the girl child have been very serious & India

accounts for maximum number of girl child atrocities

### **Objectives of Study**

1. This paper focuses on extent of dissimilar nutritional standards in India

2. This paper diagnoses the causes behind such variation

3. The paper also examines the role of policymakers in managing such abnormalities

4. The paper also examines the role of women as mothers in protecting the girl child against these odds.

### **Methodology**

This paper has been prepared with the resources from primary data such as government reports as well as secondary sources such as books.

### **The indicators**

Nearly 2 million girl children are disappearing each year in India due to rigorous tribulations such as sex selective abortions, under nutrition, mal nutrition, etc. (Monica das Gupta- Improving Child Nutrition in India Integrated Health services in India 2014).

UNICEF studies throw immense light on this issue on nutritional variations in India . This is a gender issue with concern for mother. ( UNICEF report on

Child Under nutrition in India – a gender issue ). A girl child passes through various developmental periods during her womanhood such as adolescence period, pregnancy, motherhood, lactation period etc.(Monica das Gupta- Improving Child Nutrition in India Integrated Health services in India 2014). Widespread nutrition deprivation perpetuates in inter-generational cycle of nutrition deprivation in children under nourished girl child grows up to become an under nourished woman, giving birth to another generation of under nourished children. ( Kanjilal. B – Nutritional status of children In India -international journal of equity in Health).

### **Role of Women**

In India woman is considered responsible for rearing children throughout their childhood , their education , their growth , their adolescence etc . But women have very less means to promote nutritional benefits to her children. This encircles the need for empowerment of women. ( Kanjilal. B – Nutritional status of

children In India -International journal of equity in Health).

Women has least responsibility in selecting good food for her children Sometimes her voice is unheard in a male dominated society.(Monica das Gupta-Improving Child Nutrition in India Integrated Health services in India 2014). All powers to purchase decide provision of a household lie as a decisive power of the males' members of the society. Women in India have no rights to visit a market, buy provisions, decide the value added to their nutrition. ( Kanjilal. B – Nutritional status of children In India - International journal of equity in Health).

### **Impact of under Nutrition**

The vicious cycle of nutritional dissimilarities affects the girl child till her death. The inter-generational cycle of under nutrition affects the country in its move towards progress. ( Kajilal. B – Nutritional status of children In India -international journal of equity in Health) .

1. under nutrition is a great malice as girl child with great under nutritional problems suffer from lesser immunity syndromes such as diarrhea , jaundice , pneumonia , malaria ,measles, etc .Several of the girl children do not live to see their first birthday. ( Report on the nutrition status of women ministry of Women & child welfare. New Delhi 2012).

2. In India girl children suffer from under nutrition hence they won't live till five years. .(Monica das Gupta- Improving Child Nutrition in India Integrated Health services in India 2014).

3. For a pregnant women, under nutrition also complicates her delivery as hemorrhage, bleeding , etc obstructs her normal delivery

4. The academic performance of the girl child is thus affected as under nutrition affects her learning potentialities. ( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

5. Governmental concerns towards promotion of girl child becomes imperative as government has to make

budgetary allocation for alleviating these marginalized sections.( Report on the nutrition status of women ministry of Women & child welfare. New Delhi 2012). Heavy investments can otherwise be channelized to other constructive programs .This also impedes the national productivity as the growth rate of a nation is halted or hampered because of this. ( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

6. Leadership at the highest level ensured that priority is given to child nutrition outcomes, with large investments in nutrition interventions and poverty alleviation strategies in the context of rapid economic growth;

7. Targeted nutrition interventions to prevent and treat under nutrition as part of a continuum of care, particularly among the most vulnerable children and women; ( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

8. Reliance on community-based primary health care as the

delivery system to ensure high coverage with essential nutrition interventions for the youngest children, adolescent girls, and pregnant women;

9. Strong supervision, independent monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management to provide the evidence base for timely and effective policy, program, and budgetary action.

### **Role of Government**

Indian government can prioritize the following

1. Policy making towards complete prevention of under nutrition trait in girl child is needed.

2. Breast feeding within one of the child's birth should become a national priority towards healthy upbringing.

3. Millions of girl children can be saved if policy makers administer technical & technological inputs towards saving girl child from nutritional issues( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

4. A great focus on women nutrition should become a part of women empowerment ( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

5. healthy children means a healthier generation India can become a super power if it wishes only when its people are healthy besides the girl child as a harbinger of good health can become a great motivational force in a country's development. ( Arthi Dhar- Child Nutrition issues in India 2014).

6. timely intermediation through Health department social welfare department child welfare department towards upgrading the healthy habits among women of marginalized sections needs a review ( Partnerships and Opportunities to Strengthen and Harmonize Actions for Nutrition in India (POSHAN).

7. the support of self-help groups can become more effective ( Partnerships and Opportunities to Strengthen and Harmonize Actions for Nutrition in India (POSHAN). The NGOs can cater

to the healthy needs of community in their empowerment programs. The support of these institutions can benefit the policy makers to fight the issues of under nutrition & mal nutrition in girl children.

### **Conclusion**

Thus girl child protection should become the priority of the Government, NGOs & such other agencies. healthy children means a healthier generation India can become a super power if it wishes only when its people are healthy besides the girl child as a harbinger of good health can become a great motivational force in a country's development. A number of economies have successfully combated this issue & India can follow their example.

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