

# Sustainable Development In India: Role Of Women And Nutritional Status Of Children

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**Abstract - Nutrition is the key element of sustainable development, in almost all the countries of the world. World Health Organization data (2018) shows India carries one third of the malnourished children in the world. Poor nutrition is a global problem, as it leads to social, economic, environmental problems, loss of human potential, early mortality, early pregnancy, school failure, unemployment and spread of diseases during the life span of women and children. Women empowerment is another important element of SDGs. Sustainable development goals-2 explicitly mentions and recognizes that good nutrition is a fundamental input for SDG. Twelve out of all the seventeen SDGs are directly and indirectly related to improving nutrition and health of women and children. The need of women empowerment is directly mentioned in SDG5. Both health of the children and utilization of women's capacity in its full potential can be considered as human resource and it will ultimately lead to SD. In India malnutrition is growing at an alarming rate. Latest NFHS data shows even if the percentages of stunting and underweight are declining, the percentage of wasting is increasing tremendously. India needs a long term investment for the improvement of child nutrition, to attain sustainable development.**

**Keywords - Nutrition, women empowerment, food accessibility, human resource development, sustainable development goals.**

## Introduction

Malnutrition is an invisible obstacle to the successful achievement of the SDGs. so good nutrition can be considered as the motor for accomplishing the feasible improvement Economic growth and development is fundamental for the advancement of human welfare and it is also true that Human capital with sound health is a clear determinant of economic growth and development. The choice to put resources into well being by policy makers by considering the vital role of health is an important component of macroeconomic policy.

Sustainable development is a continuous advance towards eco planning that aim to stimulate eco, social, cultural aspects and to promote a dynamic economy with a high level of income, employment, health, education, women empowerment etc. by considering the principles of democracy, fundamental rights, and equal opportunity for all in a peaceful world by protecting the quality of life of the people both for current and future generations.

Nutrition is the food intake, considered in relation to the body's dietary needs. Good nutrition means an adequate, eating routine joined with normal physical action – is the groundwork of good wellbeing. "Nutrition is equally a producer and a indicator of development." (**Scaling up Nutrition-2018**). Improved nourishment is the stage for advancement in health, education, employment, empowerment of women and the reduction of poverty and inequality, and it can also establish the framework for peaceful, secure and stable social orders".

## Children and the nutritional status

Children are most important human resources, by having concealed powers for the future development of every country. Malnutrition among children under 5 is an alarming problem in almost all the countries of the world. Every country in the world faces malnutrition in either form namely stunting, wasting, underweight and overweight. Broad forms of under nutrition indicated by UNICEF are stunting, wasting, underweight, (UNICEF, Progress for Children 2007)-and deficiencies in vitamins and minerals.

**Nutritional status of children** shows whether the children are under weight, overweight, or any other index which shows the actual health condition of the child. It is the most suitable globally accepted indicators of wellbeing in children and one of the important factors influencing human resource development for achieving sustainable development.

**Stunting** refers to a child who is too petite for his age. These children will suffer severe incurable physical and cognitive damage that follow stunted growth. **Wasting** refers to a child who is too skinny for his or her height. Wasting is the result of resent rapid weight loss or the failure to gain weight. **Underweight** is defined as low weight-for-age and it replicate past (chronic) and present (acute) malnutrition.

**Globally, about 151 million** children under 5 suffer from stunting. The Joint Malnutrition Estimates 2018 shows that stunting prevalence has been declining very slowly since the year 2000.In 2017, nearly 51 million children under 5 were wasted and 16 million were severely wasted.

**2018 statistics of WHO shows:** 52 million children under five are wasted, 17 million are severely wasted, 155 millions are stunted, and 41 million are overweight or obese. Around 45% of deaths among children below 5 are linked to under nutrition. These mostly take place in low and middle income countries. Children and the nutritional status

**The most important linkages of child nutrition** are income, food accessibility, role of women to reduce poverty and caring of children through their income generating works and decision making power, climate and environmental problems etc. Both health of the children and utilization of women's capacity in its full potential can be considered as **human resource** and it will ultimately lead to SD.

### Review of literature

**Lawrence Haddad6 (1999)**, in his study on 'Women's status: levels, determinants, consequences for malnutrition, interventions, and policy', he uses a gendered conceptual framework of the determinants of child survival, growth and development. He studied the causal linkages between child nutrition outcomes and the relative status of women in seven Asian countries and found that among the seven study countries, the status of women comparative to men is lowest in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

**Alok Bhargava (2001)** in his book 'Nutrition, health and economic development: Some policy priorities' reveals that most developing countries face different resource and infrastructural constraints that limit their economic growth. Nutritional paucity, poor ecological conditions and inadequate educational infrastructure impede children's learning, which is critical for the future supply of skilled labor and hence for economic development

**Peter Glick<sup>15</sup> (2002)** conducted a study entitled by 'Women's employment and its relation to Children's health and Schooling in developing Countries'. The study reviews the effects of women's work on investments in children's human capital-their nutrition particular, childcare) that can reduce the potential conflicts, or increase the complementarities, between women's need or desire to work and their children's wellbeing

**Rita Abby, et, al<sup>31</sup> (1988)**, in their study, "The impact of maternal work status on the nutrition and health status of children", explored the relative risk of a child of a working versus a non-working mother being malnourished, the relative risks of developing anemia and vitamin-A deficiency, and the relative risks for younger children of getting measles, severe diarrhea, and worm influx were significantly higher in those whose mothers who worked. They showed that poor income appeared to be the major detrimental factor, with the mother's working status being an aggravator.

**Radhakrishna and Ravi 39 (2004)** stated that about half of the preschool children are malnourished and are exposed to the risk of functional impairments. Malnutrition levels are uneven across states. Middle-income states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu have moderately healthier nutritional achievements than elevated income states like Maharashtra and Gujarat. Northeastern states are comparatively better performing states and some of them have even out-performed Kerala.

### Statement of the Problem

Both women employment and child nutrition play a vital role for the SD. In Developing countries around the world, including India, female employment is very essential for family survival, as the increasing cost of living and existence of poverty and malnutrition compel them to enter into the workplace while compared to previous time (Airin Roshitha, 2011). Women employment provides supplementary income to the family; thereby they can help the family to improve. When woman earn their own income, it helps her to empower her ability to make decisions regarding the allocation of house hold resources which have a direct effect on children's nutrition (Amridha Pradhan,2012). So empowerment of women is a key factor for achieving sustainable growth of the economy. For that they must have education, health, employment and gender equality.

At the same time, mother's role is indispensable for the health and wellbeing of her children. The overall physical and mental status of a human being is determined by how they were brought up in their early childhood. The mothers are the primary care takers of the children in almost all the countries around the globe; they are assigned by custom to be the primary caregivers to infants and children (UNDP 1995).

Various studies show different results about the effects of mother's labor participation on the health and nutrition of their children-tradeoff between women employment and the nutritional status of their children. Other studies say both are positively related. So it deserves special attention in economics, whether and how mother's employment influences the nutritional status of their children is a matter of question, whether the positive income effect mitigates the negative time effect for child caring effect? In this context a study on the "Sustainable Development in India: Role of Women Employment and Child Nutrition" under five deserves a special attention. Therefore this important topic has been taken up for the study.

### Objectives of the study

1. To examine the nutritional status of under five children in India.
2. To compare the nutritional status of under five children of working and non-working mothers in India
3. To study the role of female employment and child nutrition for SD.

### Hypothesis

1. The nutritional status of children of nonworking mothers is better than that of children of working mothers.
2. Female employment plays very important role for improving child nutrition.
3. Female employment and child nutrition plays an important role in achieving SDGs.

### Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study is descriptive one. Simultaneously primary and secondary data are used for the study. Available secondary data related to the nutritional status and sustainable developments were used for the study. Worldwide child nutritional status were collected using the various publications of International institutions and Details regarding the global nutrition and sustainable development were collected from FAO,WHO, UNICEF, WORLD BANK ,IFPRI etc

In the case of Indian status, there are two main sources of data for nutrition figures. The first extensively used and considered plausible, is the data from the National Family Health Survey that is collected periodically by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), designated for the purpose by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Four rounds of data

have been collected so far (NFHS1 in 1992-93, NFHS2 in 1998-99, NFHS3 in 2005-06, and NFHS4 in 2015-16). The researcher used the NFHS data and National Census Report for the present study.

To measure the nutritional status of the under five children, data were collected from *Anganvadis, Day care centers, preschools*, in different areas of Kannur District in Kerala. The children of both the working women and non-working women were selected for the study. For the assessment of nutritional status of the children anthropometric variables were used. Anthropometry is the most recurrently used method to evaluate the nutritional status of individuals or population groups. Volume of dietary anthropometry is based on growth in children and body weight changes in adults. Chi-square test was used to test the significance of difference in nutritional status of children based on the employment of mothers.

### Results:

The most recent global and regional figures of the Global Nutrition Report was done jointly by WHO, UNICEF, and WORLD BANK, to explore the entire series (1990-2017), prevalence and number affected for stunting, overweight, wasting, anemia etc. The period 2015-25 was declared as the ‘decade of nutrition’ by WHA (World Health Assembly), and also incorporated into the SDG2 of ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Most important SDGs that directly mentioned nutrition and health are as follows:

SDG	Aim	Remarks
SDG1	End poverty in all its kind	“Better nutrition equals less poverty. “World Bank (2006). (Global Nutrition Report 2014).
SDG2	End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition, and Promote Sustainable Agriculture	<b>SDG2</b> give emphasize to ‘end Hunger, Achieve Food Security, Improved Nutrition, and Promote Sustainable Agriculture’. SDG2 determinately aims to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030, including achieving the WHA targets on stunting and wasting in children younger than 5 years by 2025, (and addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating mothers women, and older people)
SDG3	<u>Ensure Healthy Lives</u>	The <b>SDG3</b> aims to “strong connections between health and nutrition” (World Bank 2013).
SDG5	Achieve Gender Equality and Empowerment	The link between nutrition and productivity is particularly important for women, “because of the role women play in food preparation, and child care and just because of their special vulnerabilities related to reproductive health”. Andersen (2011)
SDG6	Sustainable Water and Sanitation	The nutrition problem derives from waterborne diseases, accidental presence of microbes such as bacteria, yeast, fungi, virus, protozoa or their toxins and by-products. ( <b>Microbial contaminants</b> ) that cause inflammations, diarrhea etc. Lack of good sanitation will lead to lack of hygiene-related nutritional problems.
SDG12	Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns	Good nutrition results in higher labor productivity, mental capacity, and longer healthy lives.

**The Joint Malnutrition Estimates 2018** shows that stunting prevalence has been declining very slowly since the year 2000. Nearly one in four-151 million children under 5 were stunted in 2017, and 51 million children were suffered from wasting, but the number of overweight children worldwide has remaining stagnant for more than a decade. This nutrition data will help to determine whether the world is on track to achieve the sustainable development goals.

### Global Child malnutrition estimates 2017; WHO, 2017a; WHO, 2017 b-3)

Stunting		Anemia		Overweight	
Total	72	Total	125	Total	95
Only stunting	1	Only anemia	6	Only overweight	10
Stunting and Anemia	38	Anemia and stunting	38	Overweight and anemia	52
Stunting and overweight	4	Anemia and overweight	52	Overweight and stunting	4
Stunting, overweight, anemia	29	Anemia, stunting, overweight	29	Overweight, anemia and stunting	29

Source: Child malnutrition estimates 2017; WHO, 2017a; WHO, 2017 b-3)

According to the estimates, 72 countries have stunting burden (1 with stunting only; 38 with stunting and anemia; 4 with stunting and overweight; 29 with stunting, overweight, and anemia. 125 countries have anemia burden (6 with anemia only; 38 with anemia and stunting; 52 with anemia and overweight; 29 with anemia, stunting and overweight). 95 countries have

overweight burden (10 with overweight only; 52 with overweight and anemia; 4 with overweight and stunting; 29 with overweight, anemia, and stunting).

### **Malnutrition in India**

Malnutrition in India is a mind boggling issue. India can be considered as home to the main number of malnourished kids on the planet. While infant and child mortality improved in 2005-2015, India still has about 50% of under nourished children of the world, says the joint report by ASSOCHAM and EY. Even if the country grows sufficient food, has an efficient democratic system, the world's largest public distribution system in place for food delivery and a wide network of state devices to reach every citizen in the country. India has enough policy attention to health and nutrition issues in recent years. According to National Family Health Survey-4(NFHS-4) (2015-16), In India 38.4% under 5 years of age children are stunted, 21% are wasted and 35.7% are underweight.

Nutrition is Central to the achievement of the SDGs of the 2030 agenda (WHO-2016) India carries one third of the under nutrition population in the world. Uplifting the nutritional status of children thereby reducing the malnutrition will be a support for the attainment of Global malnutrition as well and SD of India.

A combination of public policies, agricultural research and economic growth has led to reduction in malnutrition in several countries. Although the overall prevalence of stunting and underweight has been decreasing over the past two decades, India could not meet MDG (having 1990 rates of child underweight by 2015). More over India has higher stunting rates than some of its South Asian neighbors including those with lower income.

Nutritional policy of India is common, but the implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the states and many factors leads to the accessibility of nutritious food. States are facing numerous difficulties with targeting the neediest groups. Therefore the number of stunted, wasted and underweight children under 5 years, are different in different states of the country.

### **Nutritional status of children of employed and unemployed mothers**

Nutritional status of the under five children of employed and unemployed mother is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

**Nutritional status of the children of employed and unemployed mother**

<b>Working status</b>	<b>Normal</b>	<b>Underweight</b>	<b>Wasted</b>	<b>Stunted</b>	<b>Total</b>
Employed	16 (64%)	8 (32%)	1 (4%)	0	25 (100)
Unemployed	53 (71%)	21 (28%)	0	1 (1%)	75 (100)

The table 3 shows that out of the total 25 mother child pair interviewed and also analysis of child nutritional status through anthropometric tool only 16 (64%) children of working mother are normal weight and height. It shows 32% have nutritional problem and occurrence of recurring diseases. Table also reveals that the percentage of normal nutritional and health condition of the children of non-working mothers is comparatively better. It is 71% normal and only remaining 29% is having nutritional problem. Chi-square test reveals that there exist significant difference in the nutritional status of the under five children based on the employment status, since the calculated chi-square value is greater than table value (7.81) at .05 level of significance.

Thus the study showed that the nutritional status of children of working mothers is worse than those whose mothers stayed at home. The mother's deficient of time for child-care activities perhaps aggravated the already poor nutrition condition of economically deprived children. Childcare activities are time intensive, particularly for younger children. Consequently, a decrease in child-care activities during this vulnerable age is bound to affect the child's nutrition and health status negatively.

### **CONCLUSION**

Every Nation in the world is trying to irradiate hunger and malnutrition. About 820 people are globally malnourished and hungry. (FAO and IFPRI, 2018) FAO & International Food Policy Research Institute. In the case of under 5 children, nearly 2 billion suffer from hunger or lacking nutrients (FAO, 2018).In India even if the percentages of stunting and underweight are declining slightly, the percentage of wasting is increasing tremendously. Women empowerment and child nutrition are vital elements for achieving sustainable Development. Children are the basis for all magnitude of sustainable development. They have a right to grow well, develop to their full potential, and live in a sustainable world. As such, children should be at the core of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Both health of the children and utilization of women's capacity in the employment field emphasize the human resource development and it will ultimately lead to SDGs But the employed mother's lack of time for child-care activities possibly intensified the already poor nutrition status of economically deprived children. Childcare activities are time intensive, particularly for younger children. Consequently, a decrease in child-care activities during this vulnerable age is bound to affect the children's nutrition and health status negatively. Nation's policy for the sustainable development must consider the development of women by participating work force and it must be in such a manner that it should not affect without affecting the nutritional status of their children. Thus we conclude that present study reveals that nutritional status of the children of non-working women is better than children of working women.

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