

Theme: Food Security



Editorial



Photo - CHDP Champa

Chronic under-nutrition is one of the most significant causes of ill-health in India. Major reasons for under nutrition include low caloric intake resulting from poverty and lack of purchasing power. Food security is the ability to ensure that the total population has access to a timely, reliable and nutritionally adequate supply of food. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) identifies the four pillars of food security as availability, access, utilization, and stability.

Over the last five decades, policies and programmes have been designed to ensure availability of food grains to all sections of the society. Efforts like investment in agriculture and the green revolution have enhanced food production, but many segments of the population still lack access to a balanced diet. Although pulse production has improved, pulses are expensive. Two responses to food security are the Public Distribution System (PDS) providing food grains at subsidised prices and food supplementation programmes to vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Food security actions build resilience in the food supply to protect it from direct risks such as droughts, supply problems linked to storage and transportation, economic instability, wars and conflicts etc. Indirect but important other risks that also impact food production include environmental issues such as global water crisis, climate change, land degradation and industrial development of agricultural land etc. Providing all of us in this vast land with a sustainable, secure supply of good quality food requires robust policies by government and a coordinated effort by other key stakeholders.

In this issue of Safar we focus on food security which affects every one of us in some way. We all like to know where our next meal is coming from. We hope this issue will provide us all with much useful information for our work with communities. Please take time to share this issue with your community based team members and to discuss it together.

Happy reading!

- Feba Jacob and Kaaren Mathias

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Chacko's Chai column

Food security is a condition related to the supply of food, and individuals' access to it. Concerns over food security have existed throughout history. There is evidence of granaries being in use over 10,000 years ago, with central authorities in civilizations including Ancient China and Ancient Egypt being known to release food from storage in times of famine. At the 1974 World Food Conference the term 'food security' was defined with an emphasis on supply. Food security, they said, is the "availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices." [1] Later definitions added demand and access issues. The final report of the 1996 World Food Summit states that food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." [2][3]

Household food security exists when all members, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Individuals who are food secure do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Food insecurity, on the other hand, is a situation of "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways."

India is a long way from being food secure in spite of the fact that the government has buffer food grains rotting in its warehouse! The high level of corruption, exploitation of the poor, and caste discrimination all contribute to high levels of food insecurity. Almost 50% of our population suffer from food insecurity.

Exploitation of forests, degradation of land, and climate change with a propensity to drought have increased our food insecurity with most small farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

The National Food Security Mission's (NFSM) 12th Five Year Plan has five components to address food

insecurity: (i) NFSM- Rice; (ii) NFSM-Wheat; (iii) NFSM-Pulses; (iv) NFSM-Coarse Cereals; and (v) NFSM-Commercial Crops.

Biblical understanding

The Bible declares that God is both our Creator and Provider who has made things to flourish in abundance. It is man's sin and selfishness which causes food insecurity in the world. The Bible declares that those who follow His principles and laws (in loving God and your neighbour) will never suffer from food insecurity. God provides us our daily bread and Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread and be content, trusting in the grace of our God who is good, without being anxious about the future. Hence the good news (gospel) is that when we confess our sins and accept Jesus as our Lord & Saviour, we can enjoy the security that comes from Him.

In dealing with the community/kingdom of Israel's sinful ways God says "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chr 7:13-14) Thus an acknowledgement of sin, followed by repentance and returning to the Living God brings healing to the land and consequently 'food security'. In the Old Testament God chose Joseph to save both Egypt and his family from food insecurity by giving him wisdom to manage the granaries of Egypt in prosperous times so as to tide them over during the insecure times. God gives us wisdom to manage our land and water resources in ways that will honour Him, by stewarding them with collective community action rather than exploiting them out of self-centred greed.

We often forget the spiritual dimension when dealing with communities facing insecure futures. May we use His wisdom as we help communities deal with issues of 'food insecurity'.

Dr Ashok Chacko, *Director - EHLA's Community Health and Development Programme*

Devotion

Food Security

[*Rev. Prakash George*]

As noted above, the final report of the 1996 World Food Summit states that food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” This state was possible at the time God created the world, though there was no need for economic access because God created a world where there was total sharing. The land and natural resources are gifts to all humankind, not to only a few. “The right of all to use is prior to the right to own.” “Be fruitful and increase” applies to the number of human beings and to the means of supporting them. God has provided abundantly in creation so that this can be done, and God has given humankind the ingenuity and adaptability necessary to create this necessary increase.

This situation did not last long as humankind rebelled against God. God cursed humankind and also the created world. Food became a problem. Instead of sharing the food produced, people kept more for themselves and used food to exploit those who did not have enough. So over the ages food security has been a problem.

But in this fallen world God through the people of Israel showed that food security is possible. From slavery in Egypt God took the people to the promised land in Canaan. There he provided sufficient land for the 11 tribes of Israel. Each family had enough land to work on in order to provide food for themselves and also bring their

tithes and offerings so that the 11th tribe the Levites could be taken care of. God also set certain norms in place, such as the Year of the Jubilee and the practice of gleaning. God’s intention was that no one will be in need of food. On their part all that the people had to do was to obey God and follow his norms given through Moses (Leviticus 26: 1-13). He said “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8: 3). He also warned them not to forget Him when they have sufficient food (Deuteronomy 8:10,11). If they disobeyed God they would meet with dire consequences (Leviticus 26: 14-46).

In the New Testament, while teaching his disciples, Jesus tells them that for God the most valuable part of creation is humankind. He knows their needs of food, clothing and shelter. He will provide for them, but we have to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to us as well (Matthew 6: 33). Food security will not be possible if God is not taken into account because he is the provider of all food.

In the age to come God promises a world where “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat” (Revelation 7: 16). So looking forward to that day let us share what we have and encourage others to share as well.

Drought a threat

[*Thomas Verghese John, Programme Manager - Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Programme*]

Drought is a natural hazard, known primarily in terms of scarcity or supply deficit of water due to failure of rainfall, deficiency of reservoirs and water resources, resultant failure of crops, and consequently a level of serious socio-economic distress. Drought is a weather related natural disaster often aggravated by environmental degradation and socio-economic deprivation. It can affect a large geographical area for shorter or longer periods and, thus, has serious impacts on life, ecosystems, livelihoods, economy, environment and overall human well-being.

Drought-prone districts account for 42 per cent of the country's cultivatable lands. According to the NRAA¹ rain-fed crops cover 48 per cent of the total area under food crops, and 68 per cent of the area under non-food crops. Nearly 50 per cent of the rural work force is concentrated in these areas. Rain-fed areas in the country are highly drought-prone and face drought-like conditions once every three years on average. Often the impact of drought persists for three to six years, and affects the availability of water for people, livestock, crop and fodder production.

Most small farmers live in areas where monsoon rains are the only source of irrigation; hence they have to practice sustenance farming and are able to cultivate only one crop each year. This makes them highly vulnerable to drought and climatic changes such as erratic monsoons. This decreases productivity and reduces the chance of profit. Seventy-eight per cent of the farmers who committed suicide in the last decade were small farmers, and 76 percent of them were dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

Drought in rain-fed areas has critical consequences for the country's food security. While India's

population is increasing by two per cent every year, the area under food crops has shrunk by 12.5 per cent over the last decade. Thus food grain availability in rural India has fallen to 152 kg per capita, 23 kg less than in the 1990s, creating large-scale food insecurity in villages.

In 2015 an unusual long spell of unseasonal rains impacted farmers in 15 states as the country witnessed its second consecutive deficit monsoon. 2015 was the third year in a row when the rabi season was thrown out of kilter in large parts of India by deviant weather. In 2013, five states were hit by drought and 0.35 million hectares (ha) of standing crops were damaged. The next year, drought affected six states and 5.5 million ha of crops were damaged. In 2015, at least 15 states were hit and 18.23 million ha of crops were damaged. The 15 states account for approximately 75 per cent of India's population and about 70 per cent of its geographical area, and produce approximately 81 per cent of the country's food grains.

The current drought (2016) that affected 10 states is turning out to be the worst in the country's recorded history.

The Figures²

- 330 million people affected
- 254 districts affected out of 678 districts
- 255,000 villages affected
- 200,000 villages are without a water source within their geographic boundary

1. NRAA – National Rainfed Areas Authority

2. Source:

State of India's environment 2016 published by Center for Science and Environment.

Situation report on Drought in India (April 2016) prepared by EHA and EFICOR

Success Story

System of Root Intensification (SRI)

D. Johnson, Project Manager, CHDP Madhepura

Introduction:

System of Root Intensification is a methodology aimed at increasing the yield of rice produced in farming. It is a low water, labour intensive, organic method that uses younger seedlings singly spaced and typically hand weeded with special tools.

Methods of SRI:

- The basic requirement of SRI method is to plant the crop square with wider spacing.
- Farmers in this region believe that rice needs plenty of water and grows best in standing water, but under SRI, paddy fields are not flooded but kept moist during the vegetative phase. Later only one inch of water is maintained in the field.
- It requires less water, involves less expenditure and gives greater yields, thus it is beneficial for small and marginal farmers.
- In SRI method the markers are used for transplanting the seedlings in a uniform pattern and with equal spacing.
- The spacing is 25cm x 25 cm. Wide spacing gives the plants more space, air and sunlight, resulting in root growth that is healthy and expansive and absorbs more nutrients, resulting in more tillers on the plants.



Photo - CHDP Madhepura

Success Story:

Harendra Yadav is a farmer. His wife is a member of our Self Help Group (SHG). Through the SHG he came to know about the farmers training which was organized by CHDP - Madhepura Christian Hospital. After this training he adopted the new method of cultivation of paddy called “SRI Vidhi” (Scientific Rice Intensifications). Harendra had initial hurdles and it was difficult for him to arrange for seed, fertilizer and irrigation. The project required extended help. A few farmers mocked his new method of preparing the seedlings and planting. But he was determined to try this new found knowledge in his land (18 khatta which is a little less than one acre).

Others told Harendra that he would have to till his field again as there would be no yield. But when the tillers appeared people were so

surprised. They were bigger, healthier and provided a greater yield. There were 30 to 50 tillers per plant. With excellent management up to 100 tillers per plant can be achieved. Farmers came from far off places to see the crops.

After the harvest Harendra was very happy with the yield which was more than double and there was considerable saving in time, seed, manpower and energy. Earlier the yield was 900 kg / acre but now it was 2200kg / acre.

Today, 95% of small farmers are adopting SRI method. As a result the migration rate has reduced to 60% in this village. Now the villagers are able to afford a better education for their children. Government also appreciated their success and awarded this village as “PRAGATISHIL VILLAGE”. Now the farmers have direct contact with District and Block Agriculture Department and are receiving subsidies on agriculture.



Photo - CHDP Madhepura



Photo - CHDP Champa



:: INTERVIEW ::

An interview with
Mr Dennyson Abraham
 Unit Manager, Justice and Care, Patna
 [(By Feba Jacob, Editor, Safar)]

Safar- *What are the key nutritional problems faced by the communities in our country?*

Mr Dennyson- Disease and inadequate intake of food contribute to malnutrition. In a rural community both these are key issues. The delivery of health services in rural India is in a woeful state and this creates a vicious cycle of malnutrition (as shown in the Figure).



Poverty causing lack of access to food, combined with the desire of the rural poor to eat like urban people is also an important reason for the deteriorating nutrition status of communities. Traditional healthy food is fast vanishing from the plates of rural populations.

Apart from this, poor child care practices including lack of optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) leaves lasting damage in the lives of scores of Indian children. A World Bank report says that the prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world, and is nearly doubles that of Sub-Saharan Africa. Undernutrition is concentrated in a relatively small number of districts and villages with a mere 10 percent of villages and districts accounting for 27 percent of all underweight children, and a quarter of districts and villages accounting for more than half of all underweight children, suggesting that future efforts to combat malnutrition could be targeted to a relatively small number of districts/villages.¹

Safar- *How are these problems linked with food insecurity in the communities?*

Mr Dennyson- As I mentioned earlier, access to quality nutritional food is still a concern in rural pockets and many marginalized communities in India. Ditching traditional nutritious hardy grain crops for cash crops has also contributed to the agrarian crisis of small farmers. These are some of the downsides of policies promoting ‘Green Revolution’ mixed with globalization. There are no easy answers to these situations which are manmade.

Safar- *To what extent is climate change a threat for ensuring food security of communities?*

Mr Dennyson- Climate change is caused by rich nations but it is the poor who are affected the most. Erratic climate systems of untimely rain, cyclones and dry spells have worsened the agrarian crisis. Disease and pests associated with high temperatures are also likely to increase. Adaptation interventions that enhance farming communities’ resilience to climate change induced effects are critical for the realization of Food Security.



Photo - CHDP Madhepura

Safar- *How important is it to work with the Government machinery in ensuring food security?*

Mr Dennyson- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution provides the fundamental right to the protection of life and personal liberty. This article mandates the state to ensure the right to life of citizens. Article 47 of Directive Principle of State Policy specifies ‘the duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health’.

The reasons people go hungry are not mysterious. Mass starvation is not an act of God. Hunger is created and maintained by human decisions. Reducing disparity and bringing a level playing field is government’s responsibility. The onus is on the government: pro poor policies, planning and delivery is embedded through their machinery. This is exactly the reason why we need to work to compel the government to deliver.

Safar- *How can the existing nutrition supplementation programmes tackle nutritional problems?*

Mr Dennyson- Well, while there has been reasonable improvement in these services it is far from satisfactory when it comes to the quality

and reach of these services. It is perceived that delivery in some states is better than others. Government in Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Chhattisgarh have become role models in certain aspects, while states like Bihar, UP, and West Bengal have lagged way behind. There are still pockets of communities who are deprived of these services including Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Vitamin A & IFA supplementation. Lack of infrastructure and human resources, poor quality food, corruption and under-utilisation of funds have used this scenario.

A performance audit of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS Scheme) by Comptroller and Auditor General of India noted “Supplementary Nutrition (SN) component had failed to improve the health status of beneficiaries, implementation of the component of health check-up and referral services was found to be deficient, and due to non-fixation of targets and absence of monitoring mechanisms, full coverage under immunization could not be assured besides many other findings.”²



Photo - CHDP Madhepura

Safar- *How effective is the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India in ensuring food security? How could it be further strengthened?*

Mr Dennyson- The Supreme Court has acted as

a beacon when both the Union and State governments had failed. India's food schemes were converted by the Supreme Court into "legal entitlements" in its order dated 28 November 2001. Embedded in this order is a direction to State Governments to fully implement them according to official guidelines.

On 13 May 2016 the Supreme Court ordered that all households in drought-hit areas be supplied with heavily subsidized food grains, rebuking the centre and states for delayed implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA).³

The long standing demand of civil societies has been to have Universal PDS while it is currently Targeted PDS. Some states have already implemented Universal PDS and it is more robust with marginal cost difference as under NFSA over 75% of the rural population is already covered.

Safar- *What are the key challenges you faced while working in this field? How did you overcome those challenges?*

Mr Dennyson- While the key to success is strengthening existing (government) delivery mechanisms, that's the toughest part to do due to the lackadaisical response from government officers. It is equally challenging to bring about changes in attitudes of the community.

Once when we were trying to introduce energy rich snacks made of whole wheat the community was upset thinking we were not providing them with snacks made with refined flour (which is how the city dwellers eat). It took a while to convince them this was much better food.

Similarly, when we were discussing why millet is good, especially calcium rich Ragi, they did not agree. They argued that dark grains will darken the skin complexion and it is poor man's food, hence they would not produce or consume it. The fear of having a dark complexion and being identified as poor has kept them in chains. It is important to work on bringing a change in worldview in order to see success.

Safar- *What are the ideal roles of NGOs in ensuring food security of communities?*

Mr Dennyson- I can think of two things which NGOs can do:

1. Advocate for pro poor policies so that the quality and reach of government services can be improved.
2. There are not many proven community-based models in India so it is important that NGOs work alongside communities in creating community-based models which are replicable and scalable.

Thank you so much Mr Dennyson for your time and input.

¹http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1147272668285/undernourished_executive_summary.pdf

²<http://www.cag.gov.in/content/report-no-22-2012-13-performance-audit-integrated-child-development-services-icds-scheme>

³<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/WoZo91F177GUW6t9FDBSXJ/Release-adequate-funds-to-tackle-drought-SC-tells-centre.html>

Food Security and Advocacy

[*Punita Kumar, Programme Manager, Advocacy*]

The final report of the 1996 World Food Summit states that food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

Food security has been an issue for hundreds of years. It becomes a prominent issue when there is a disaster. The disasters that come to mind are the ones from the Bible such as the flood during the time of Noah, the situations of famine and drought at the time of Joseph, and especially the first and second World Wars that left people hungry, unemployed and cold.

Without doubt, food is a source of health and an integral part of our life, whether we are poor, marginalised, rich or elite. A huge shift has taken place in food preferences, with processed foods becoming increasingly popular. This food is not making us active and healthy. When Israel had to move to Egypt for food they were able to fight against the drought situation because of Joseph's prudent strategy of cultivating and storing grains. This made it possible to control inflation, and made food available not only for their own citizens but for foreigners also. Joseph's strategy to manage the food crisis involved legislation, communication, negotiation, transportation, safe and efficient methods of food storage, building, economic strategizing and forecasting, record-keeping, payroll, the handling of transactions both by means of



Photo - CHDP Champa

currency and through bartering, human resources, and the acquisition of real estate. After the people ran out of money, Joseph allowed them to barter their livestock for food. This plan lasted for one year during which Joseph collected horses, sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys (Gen. 47:15-17). When all of the livestock had been traded, people willingly sold themselves into slavery to Pharaoh and sold him the ownership of their lands as well (Gen. 47:18-21). Joseph, however, allowed the people to sell their land and to enter into servitude, but he did not take advantage of them in their powerlessness. Joseph would have made sure these properties were valued correctly in exchange for seed for planting (Gen. 47:23).

The wise integration of all these factors not only helped them to survive the drought and famine but relieved the poverty of Egypt. Droughts and famine, floods, insects have always been there to affect agriculture. When we talk of food security or fight for it we need to understand that it is not only about

agriculture or climate change. It is the integration of all the factors that contribute to humanity to establish the Kingdom of God.

The statement by the World Food Summit Report which is mentioned above indicates that this situation, which is full of rights and choices, can only be achieved in the Kingdom of God. The Bible promotes a world where everyone has the right to produce and be self-reliant, and to be good stewards. God not only

wants us to get food but to know the source and be a part of its production. Poverty and its consequences are economic realities. Our first duty is to help eliminate them, but we cannot expect complete success until God's kingdom is fulfilled.

HR Movements

Appointments

[*Hemlatba*]

Ms Bhagirathi	Community Coordinator	Burans, Musoorie
Ms Kamla Devi	Community Coordinator	Burans, Musoorie
Ms Samita	Community Coordinator	Burans, Musoorie
Ms Shalini Thapa	Community Coordinator	Burans, Musoorie
Mr Bijay Kumar	Community Coordinator	Karuna Project, Duncan
Mr Brij Lal Prasad Kushwaha	Community Coordinator	Karuna Project, Duncan
Mr Jaykishun Ram	Community Coordinator	Nayi Roshni Project, Duncan
Mr Pawan Kumar	Community Coordinator	Karuna Project, Duncan
Mr Raj Kishor Prasad	Driver	Karuna Project, Duncan
Mr Raymond Mukul	Community Coordinator	Karuna Project, Duncan
Ms Babita Kumari	Community Coordinator	CBR Project, Duncan
Ms Subasini Murmu	Community Coordinator	Karuna Project, Duncan
Mr Pranay Somit Mohanty	Project Officer	ASISH Project, Duncan
Mr Shrawan Kumar	Community Coordinator	ACT, Duncan
Mr Sunil Kumar Ram	Community Coordinator	ASISH Project, Duncan
Ms Shivkali Ahirwar	Community Coordinator	MCH Project, Chhatarpur
Ms Urmila Ahirwar	Community Coordinator	MCH Project, Chhatarpur
Mr Raju Kumar	Community Coordinator	Sahyog Project
Ms Yashika Walter	Community Coordinator	Sahyog Project



Religious leaders meeting in Mussoorie

CHDP NEWS

- ★ The annual reporting meeting of CHDP was held at Christian Retreat and Study Center, Dehradun from 3rd to 6th of May 2016
- ★ Burans conducted Mental Health training for religious leaders.

Upcoming Events

Building youth resilience “Nae Disha Training”

Dates: 6th -9th August 2016

Venue: Christian Retreat Center, Dehradun

Children at risk training

Dates: 25th-27th August 2016

Venue: Carmel Niwas, Delhi

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NEHRU PLACE, NEW DELHI - 110019
Ph: 011-3088-2008 & 3088-2009

Web: www.eha-health.org

NEXT ISSUE OF SAFAR

Safar Issue 23 is focusing on

Gender Violence

Please send contributions to Feba Jacob
(fjacob@eha-health.org) by

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Editor – Feba Jacob

Co-editor – Kaaren Mathias

Layout & Graphic – Suanlian Tangpua

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Translation – Aditi Singh



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