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An Overview of Palghar District Malnutrition

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ABSTRACT

Maharashtra is the Third largest state of Indian state. However, there are so many social issues in Palghar district. In this social issue particularly malnutrition in tribal children is the biggest issue. In 2005, child malnutrition claimed as many as 718 lives in one single district namely Palghar. The state then announced a slew of measures to address child malnutrition in tribal dominated areas. So without solving malnutrition we cannot achieve development targets of Palghar district. Hence, in this present study focus on overview of Palghar District malnutrition issue.

Keywords: Health issues, Development, SAM, MAM, Malnutrition, Research, Social

Introduction

WHO define malnutrition Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization. The double burden of malnutrition consists of both under nutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related non-communicable diseases.

About The Study

Research Methodology: For the research secondary data are used, Online articles, research paper and Magazines also used.

Objectives

- To understand Health of Human being.
- To Understand and know about Palghar district social issue.
- To Understand malnutrition.
- To find out and understand Palghar district Malnutrition.
- To find out death of children in Lockdown.

Symptoms of malnutrition

- Loss of appetite and lack of interest in food or fluids.
- unplanned weight loss - this might cause clothing, rings, watches or dentures to become loose.
- tiredness or low energy levels.
- reduced ability to perform everyday tasks like showering, getting dressed or cooking.

Malnutrition of Palghar District

The district has severe cases of malnourishment and deaths of children due to malnourishment. In Palghar, 59% of children are stunted, 20% wasted and 53% underweight, as per a TISS survey. Nearly 83% of the children had consumed food belonging to only three groups as against the necessary eight groups. Malnutrition occurs when an organism gets too few or too many nutrients, resulting in health problems. Specifically, it is "a deficiency, excess, or imbalance of energy, protein and other nutrients" which adversely affects the body's tissues and form. Malnutrition is not receiving the correct amount of nutrition. Malnutrition is increasing in children under the age of five due to providers who cannot afford or do not have access to

adequate nutrition. Maharashtra with a total area of 307,713 km² (118,809 sq mi), is the third-largest state by area in terms of land area and constitutes 9.36 per cent of India's total geographical area. Palghar DISTRICT total population is around 29,90,116. The district has a total of 8 talukas, Mokhada, Dahanu, Talasari, Vasai, Vikramgad, Palghar, and Wada. Palghar DISTRICT has 4,69,699 hectares of the total geographical area in a total 1008 villages and 3818 sub-villages as well as 477 gram panchayats. However, prevalence of under nutrition is unacceptably high in Maharashtra, particularly among the tribal children. In 2005, child malnutrition claimed as many as 718 lives in one single district namely Palghar. Even after a decade of double-digit economic growth, in 2016, more than 600 children died due to under-nutrition in the same district. The state then announced a slew of measures to address child malnutrition in tribal dominated areas. There has not been any study to check whether the nutritional scenario has improved since then in Palghar. Hence, the present study was undertaken to assess the magnitude of under-nutrition among the tribal children under six years of age, their dietary pattern and food practices in the Vikramgad block of Palghar District.

Defination OF Health:- The WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization. The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related non communicable diseases. Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies. Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. It usually occurs when a person has not had food of adequate quality and quantity and/or they have had frequent or prolonged illnesses. Wasting in children is associated with a higher risk of death if not treated properly. Stunting is defined as low height-for-age. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poverty, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness and/or inappropriate feeding and care in early life. Stunting prevents children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential. Underweight is defined as low weight-for-age. A child who is underweight may be stunted, wasted or both. Micronutrient deficiencies are a lack of vitamins and minerals that are essential for body functions such as producing enzymes, hormones and other substances needed for growth and development. Despite several government schemes, at over 300 deaths per 1,000 children under age five years, Palghar's children mortality rate is way higher than the national (50) and state average (28). Palghar: Rupali, Ashok Taral's 15 months old baby, does not stop crying. Weighing 5.4 kgs, she is severely malnourished (SAM) with visible bones and eyes popping out. She often falls ill and has blisters on her body. She has been in the SAM category for the last four months, her father said. Rupesh, Rupali's twin brother, was also in the SAM category four months ago but now is in the mildly malnourished (MAM) category.



To the baby who is in bed is Rupali Taral, severely acute mal-nourished

Ashok, 25, a Kathkari tribal, cultivates rice and finger millet on their one-acre land in Taralwadi in Jawhar taluka of Palghar in Maharashtra. Ashok and his wife also have to work as labourers as the farm income is not sufficient to feed the family of four. The Kathkari tribe is one among the three Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTGs) in Maharashtra.

"We feed rice and dal to both the babies thrice a day. We buy cow milk for them even though we can hardly afford it. What else we can do?," he asked, as he stood in front of his thatched hut which is hardly 6-7 feet high. Sarika, his wife, said that an Anganwadi worker had given them ration consisting of wheat, rice and pulses.

"Babies over one year should be ideally above 8 kg. Maharashtra government runs the Village Child Development Centres (VCDCs) scheme for kids under SAM and MAM category. Anganwadis, child care centres run by the central government, provide nutritious meals six times a day to the SAM and MAM babies. Kids can become healthy within a month or two if the scheme is implemented properly," said Sita Ghatal, director, Bal Sanjivani Chhavani, a private centre run by Shramjivi Sanghatana that works for the eradication of malnutrition in Palghar. Hardly 90 km from Mumbai, also known as the financial capital of India, Palghar has witnessed an increase in children falling in the SAM and MAM categories since the lockdown began in March 2020. Deaths due to undernourishment have also gone up, as per figures provided by the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Zila Parishad, Palghar. The number of malnourished cases has been going down since 2016 steadily though. From April to September this year, during the lockdown period, 166 children under age five have died. The number of deaths were 156 last year. The reason for the deaths is not necessarily malnourishment," Dr. Dayanand Suryawanshi, District Health Officer (DHO), Zila Parishad (ZP), Palghar

Monthly data of SAM, MAM children and deaths during lockdown

2020	March	April	May	June	July	August
SAM	272	213	226	234	290	258
MAM	2386	2186	2218	2225	2567	2431
Deaths	25	28	28	27	31	26

(Source: Zila Parishad, Palghar)

Year-wise data of SAM, MAM and deaths:

Year	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	Sept 2020
SAM	861	603	276	155	272	227
MAM	4349	3362	3334	1684	2386	2053
Deaths	565 (2015-16)	557 (2016-17)	469 (2017-18)	348 (2018-19)	303 (2019-20)	166 (six months of 2020-21)

(Source: Zila Parishad, Palghar)

The national average of children under age five years suffering from Wasting (SAM and MAM both) is 21%, as per the National Family Health Survey IV (NFHS IV), which is much lower than that of Palghar. Maharashtra's average for SAM and MAM children per 1,000 is 9.4 and

16.4 respectively, according to NFHS 4.

The National Under Five Mortality rate is 50 as per NHFS. For Scheduled Tribes (STs), the number stood at 27. In Maharashtra, the average is 28 deaths per 1,000. However, at over 300 deaths per 1,000 children under age five years Palghar's mortality rate is way higher than the national and state average.

The district has severe cases of malnourishment and deaths of children due to malnourishment. In Palghar, 59% of children are stunted, 20% wasted and 53% underweight, as per a TISS survey. Nearly 83% of the children had consumed food belonging to only three groups as against the necessary eight groups. The children eat only rice and dal (pulses), as that is what their parents can provide. Only 13% of the children achieved a minimum level of diet diversity, as per the study, 'Undernutrition among tribal children in Palghar district'. The study, published in February 2019, included 375 tribal households having kids of age 1-6.

MAM Cases:-

Akash Bala Govind, a 3 year old child, weighing 7.5 kgs was crying in his home where he was sleeping alone. Falling under the MAM category, he was still asleep when his 7-year-old elder brother carried him to us. Taking a look at the child with small legs and visible bones, Sita from Bal Sanjivani commented, "There is no way he is MAM. He falls under the SAM category." Gulab, their mother, who had gone to fetch water from a nearby well, returned with two pots on her head. Herself looking malnourished, Gulab said, "I take care of him by cooking separate dal without chilli for him."



Gulab govind with her Malnourished son Akash

Also from the Kathkari tribe, Gulab went into her house, a shack made of bamboo and tree trunks and returned with packs of wheat, chana and chilli powder distributed by anganwadi to them under the government-run VCDC scheme.

Nearby, Vrushali Yashwant Govind, another MAM child, was playing with her elder sister near their shack-like hut. Their parents had gone to harvest rice since morning, leaving the babies with their neighbours.

Sita said, "Parents have to go out to work, leaving kids with neighbours or relatives or sometimes even alone at home. Children who are malnourished or ill have to manage without parents till they return."

Deaths Due to SAM

Shreya, born to Mangala and Laxman Taral, on November 29, 2018, was malnourished for over six months when she died on October 27. Mangala, skinny and gloomy, was holding a newly framed photo of her daughter as she sat at the veranda of her house in Piparpada village of Jawhar taluka. One has to travel 15 km through ghats to reach Piparpada from Jawhar.

Mangala Taral holds newly framed photo of her daughter Shreya who recently died

"Shreya used to play, laugh, and walk with her walker till a year ago. But then she began to develop dark skin on her legs and hands. She would often get blisters all over the body. We were taking her to the hospital. The Anganwadi worker had categorised her as malnourished. We used to give her all food that was provided by the worker," Mangala told NewsClick.

"We had taken her to doctors at the PHC (primary health centre) and the District Hospital in Palghar a couple of times. We could not take her to Palghar since the lockdown started as it was converted to a COVID-19 hospital. We had also arranged for blood donation for her in a private hospital at Tryambak by borrowing money from relatives. Later, the doctors told us that we should take her to the Thane Civil Hospital but did not tell us when. Meanwhile, she died," Laxman said. They have two more children, Ajeet, 9, and Ninjila, 6. Laxman, from the Thakur tribe, cultivates rice, urad, and finger millet at their 12 acres of land in Piparpada along with his parents, four brothers and their wives. Like most tribals in the region, they produce only for consumption. All four brothers work as construction labourers for a few months at Kalyan, Bhivandi and Palghar, around 50-100 km away from home. Failure of Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS)? The ICDS section of the Women and Child Development Department are responsible for providing supplementary nutrition and healthcare to young children. Anganwadis provide nutritious food that includes cooked food, milk and fruits. Currently, 15 kgs of the pack including rice, wheat, pulses, salt among other things are given as Take Home Ration (THR) for two months due to the lockdown. Despite that, the number of children with malnourishment and undernourishment are increasing. However, Sandhya Nagarakar, deputy commissioner, ICDS, Maharashtra, did not respond to questions about measures taken to deal with deaths of kids due to malnutrition. What do Experts Say? "Almost all the tribals in Palghar work as labourers and they lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown. They have been unable to feed families due to a lack of income for over eight months now. This is one of the major reasons for increased cases of malnourishment and deaths of kids," said Prachi Hatiwalekar from All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). She added, "Besides, tribals are scared to go to the government hospitals and primary health centres due to fear of COVID-19. Lack of treatment for fever or other illnesses is pushing kids into the malnourished category and deaths. They are also superstitious and don't allow ASHA workers to enter the houses to check kids, again due to fear of COVID-19."

"Increased deaths cannot be linked only with lockdown or the pandemic. Illiteracy, extreme poverty, lack of livelihood options, lack of accessible healthcare, and poor health of mothers are major reasons of undernourishment. Not only WCD but all departments are responsible for this undernourishment," another activist told on condition of anonymity.

Composition of Palghar

Palghar district's population is 15.47 lakh, out of which 37% are Scheduled Tribes (STs). Six of the eight talukas are tribal majority, including Warli, Thakur, Malhar Kolis, Konkana, and Kathkaris.

As per the 2019 TISS study, "47% of mothers were illiterate and every second mother married before 18 years of age. 95% of them were found to be living in Kuccha (25%) and Semi-pucca houses (70%). Further, almost 40% of the households did not have a toilet. Nearly 9 out of 10 families used wood as fuel for cooking. More than half of the households reported using well-water (54%), which is considered as an unimproved source of water according to WASH guidelines."

Another study, 'Socio-economic study of tribal households in Palghar District' by Rajendra Patange, published in 2017, underlines the acute poverty levels among the tribals in the region. It stated, "Though 54% of the tribals are farmers, their lands are not very fertile and without irrigation. They work as laborers either at farms or at other places. Their per capita income is Rs 14,217. They don't have enough income to educate children. Landless tribals (over 40%) also face the constant problem of unemployment. Their consumption of calories (2263 cal) is much lesser than the required (2688)."

Findings

- Health condition of Adivasi specially Katkari community is bad.
- The cause of malnutrition is Under age marriage, lack of unhealthy food
- Lock down effect on death rate of malnutriat baby

Solution

The best way to prevent malnutrition is to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Try not to miss or skip meals and aim to eat three small meals a day and two to three snacks a day if your appetite is poor. Take drinks after your meal, not before or during as that can fill you up

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