



## INTERACTION OF NUTRITION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Meghali M. Joharapurkar  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Food and Nutrition  
Sevadal Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Communicated :20.02.2022

Revision : 15.03.2022  
Accepted :25.03.2022

Published: 30.03.2022

### ABSTRACT:

Women's empowerment is deemed important as an end in itself from a social justice and equality perspective as well as a necessary means to achieve development goals such as poverty reduction and investments in human capital such as nutrition, health, and education. Nutrition and women empowerment are interdependent and intertwined. Undernourished women cannot contribute to their fullest to the existing workforce dominated by their male counterparts. On the other hand, a woman unaware and unpowered would undermine the importance of nutrition for her sustained well being and growth. Women's empowerment is considered crucial for improving nutrition outcomes. Malnutrition is a key barrier to women and girls' empowerment. Hence, a need was felt to formulate policies, which aims for a better nutritional level among women to achieve the ultimate goal of women empowerment and the development of society as a whole. When women's move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. The present paper is attempt to understand the interplay of nutrition among women and women empowerment in our country and the measures and policies taken by the Government to overcome these challenges.

**Key words:** - *Women empowerment, Nutrition, Government policies, health.*

### INTRODUCTION:

#### Women Empowerment :

Women empowerment refers to empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The private sector is a key partner in efforts to advance gender equality and empower women. Empowerment of women has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. It seeks to empower women to be self-dependent by providing them equal access to all the freedoms and opportunities as that men.

#### Women Nutrition :

Women are at particular risk for malnutrition or under-nutrition and can be disproportionately affected by hunger due to economic, social, and cultural influences. Undernourishment of women of reproductive age is more common in South Asia than in any other region. In the South Asian region, the prevalence of maternal under nutrition varies between 10 and 40%. A quarter of women of reproductive age in India are undernourished, with a body mass index (BMI) of less than 18.5 kg/m (NFHS 4 2015-16). It is well known that an undernourished mother inevitably gives birth to an undernourished baby, perpetuating an intergenerational cycle of under nutrition. Since women are often primary caregivers, they can influence their children's nutrition indirectly through their nutritional status as well as directly through childcare practices. Several studies (using direct and indirect measures of female empowerment) have demonstrated the important associations between women's empowerment dimensions and

their nutrition as well as that of their children. A study in India found that maternal autonomy (measured based on variables that indicate a woman's freedom and ability to think, speak, decide, and act independently) was positively associated with child nutritional status, albeit only for children under three years of age. Now it is empirically established by many studies that nutrition is a key aspect as it not only takes care of the nutritional requirements of the women but is intricately associated with the nutrition of children and family as a whole.

#### **Interaction of Women Empowerment and Nutrition :**

Women's empowerment is believed to be one of the key factors for attaining maternal and child health and nutritional goals, which can influence all the factors associated with maternal nutritional status to some extent. Empowered women can control decision-making in different aspects of life which include socio-cultural, familial and interpersonal and legal dimensions. They can independently make decisions about their health as well as their children's health. As a result, women's empowerment can ensure better maternal care, improved maternal nutrition, and provide freedom in choosing healthy family planning methods. Empowered women have control over finances. Thus, they can change the composition of household purchases, which improves household food security as well as the diet diversity and nutritional status of both themselves and their children. They can also allocate more money for the education and health of their family. Empowered women have higher mobility, which increases their freedom to visit food markets and visit health centre for both themselves and their children. As a result, they acquire resources as information and support which help to improve maternal and child health care. Finally, empowerment of women has been reported to lessen the risk of domestic violence which contributes to

improving maternal mental health and lowering maternal nutritional deprivation.

Progress towards gender equality and gender justice could be achieved by the empowerment of women through education, awareness, capital accessibility and by ensuring their safety and security in the society but to achieve higher order of women empowerment, rudimentary steps like women nutrition, health and sanitation must be ensured first. Unless these basic requisites are not fulfilled, an empowered society of women striving to achieve greater heights could be envisaged. Inadequate nutrition weakens women and their ability to generate income and care for their families. Targeting the nutritional needs among women of reproductive age (WRA) is an opportunity to empower women and break intergenerational cycles of poverty and malnutrition. Women empowerment is a multidimensional issue that entails a multifaced approach. Hence, a need was felt to formulate policies, which aims to encompass varied issues related to women empowerment. When women's move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.

#### **Government policies and measures to ensure women empowerment and nutrition :**

Plans and programmes have been aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. The present paper highlights only those policies which are in place to address the issue of

women empowerment related to nutrition. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) in 2021 decided to classify all key schemes of government under three umbrella categories—Mission Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya and Mission Shakti—to effectively implement various schemes and programmes.

#### **Mission Poshan 2.0 :**

Mission POSHAN 2.0 was launched in February 2021. It is the successor of Poshan Abhiyan launched in 2018 to run for three years. Mission POSHAN 2.0 brings together the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)—Anganwadi Services, Supplementary Nutrition Programme, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls and National Crèche Scheme. The ICDS Scheme is primarily designed to bridge the gap between the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) and the Average Daily Intake (ADI). The ICDS Anganwadi Services or the Saksham Anganwadi Scheme was designed to upgrade the Anganwadi infrastructure and transform them into learning and healthcare centres for children. The supplementary nutrition programme is one of the six services provided under the ICDS Scheme to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating women and children aged 6 months to 6 years.

'POSHAN Tracker'—was developed by the MoWCD and launched on January 13, 2021, to ensure real-time monitoring of providing supplementary nutrition for improving the nutritional status of beneficiaries and real-time information for prompt supervision and management of services.

On April 13, 2021, NITI Aayog, in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Centre for Social and Behavior Change, Ashoka University, launched POSHAN Gyan, a national digital repository on health and nutrition. The Repository has information on communication materials on 14 thematic areas of health and nutrition across diverse

languages, media types, target audiences and sources.

In February 2021, the union government under Mission POSHAN 2.0 and in association with the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy) formulated a plan to develop a robust AYUSH-based nutrition and health system. The objective of the programme is to create a mechanism to promote “healthy diet and lifestyle modification as per Ayurveda” as well as prevent and overcome malnutrition by providing proper AYUSH care to pregnant and lactating mothers, and children at various stages.

In March 2019, IMPAct4Nutrition, an initiative convened by UNICEF, Tata Trusts, Sight and Life, CSRBOX, CII, WeCan and NASSCOM Foundation was launched in New Delhi. IMPAct4Nutrition is a platform for the private sector to actively engage and build a social movement with their employees, customers and employees' families who form a part of their business ecosystem and support the POSHAN Abhiyaan. The platform helps in engaging and supporting the private sector to increase nutrition awareness and improve Nutrition Literacy or health, hygiene, food and literacy..

#### **CONCLUSION :**

Women empowerment is a multidimensional issue that calls for a holistic and pragmatic approach well synchronized to realize the goal of gender equality and the overall development of society. Nutrition on the other hand is the bedrock for achieving women empowerment but somewhat undermined in interest and attention. Women empowerment and nutrition are intricately connected and in many ways interdependent of each other. So, one must observe it in unison rather than discrete variables. The Government has acknowledged and taken varied steps in an intensive, synchronised and effective manner by bringing all related schemes under one umbrella. The

need of the hour is sustained leadership for food and nutrition security and a combined multisectoral approach to ensure that plans and policies taken by the government are well implemented with ambitious targets and supplementary actions so that the benefits of it would reach the last mile.

**REFERENCES :**

Ahmed T, Hossain M, Sanin KI. (2012): Global burden of maternal and child undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. *Ann Nutr Metab.* 61(Suppl. 1) Pp. 8–17.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2011/10/women-s-empowerment-principles-equality-means-business>.

<https://www.ibef.org/government-schemes/mission-poshan>.

<https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/womens-nutrition>

Madan, S , Gulyani ,M and Benson S.(2014): Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research*, vol. 4, Pp. 86-89. <https://www.ijemr.net/>