

The indigenous plants for alleviating dietary deficiencies of tribal: A case study of Nandurbar District (Maharashtra)

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Abstract

Present paper deals with the review of the malnutrition deaths in the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra (India). Possible measures to avert this phenomenon on a sustainable basis are also suggested. The paper focuses on methods of rural nutritional intervention identification, propagation and introduction of nutritionally rich, indigenous plant species in existing cropping system is also looked at tribal dominated areas in Nandurbar District mostly has forests and are inaccessible having hilly terrain with poor infrastructure. These areas are bypassed by the process of development and even after 58 years of independence visible development have not taken place. On the contrary their livelihood has been threatened by the process of development. They had once upon a time, in recent past, lush green thick forests fulfilling their needs of food, fodder and livelihood. However, due to indiscriminate cutting of forests the area has become dry and barren. The locals, who were more dependent of forest than on agriculture to meet their nutritional needs, are now facing problem of feeding their young ones and the lactating and pregnant mothers. The locals cultivated ragi, jowar, bajara and other minor millets on the scanty unfertile and sloppy land. Their agricultural practices were of primitive type and hardly involved any modern methods of cultivation. Ashtekar has reported the causes of malnutrition as deficiency of essential components in diet leading to malnutrition, protein calorie malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (vitamin A, iron and iodine) are common[1]. Goiter of various grades is also endemic in some of the tribal areas. Water borne and communicable diseases: Gastrointestinal disorders, particularly dysentery and parasitic infections are very common, leading to marked morbidity and malnutrition. The survey also showed that not only were the children malnourished, their mothers' were too. The weight of adult mothers ranged between 40-45 kg. Girls constituted around half the total number of malnourished children indicating the precarious condition of these future mothers. The survey revealed that although generations of malnourished children are born in this region, the policy of the government still does not look beyond the singular health aspect of the problem, on the basis of which mitigation measures are designed. The issue of malnutrition is required to be addressed comprehensively otherwise the tribal community in this part of the country is headed for extinction. The tribals of Nandurbar are engaged in a continuous struggle for existence. Malnutrition and child mortality are part of their everyday life, even as issues related to rights over natural.

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