



Women in Agriculture and Nutrition in Odisha, India

Focus Policy: The Odisha State Policy for Girls and Women (2014)

Ten recommendation for policy action:

1. **Prioritise SC/ST women and households**
2. **Extension state-package for women tribal farmers to include upland crops, technical and material support for millets**
3. **Women-managed crops and vegetables to have systems for procurement and adequate pricing**
4. **Secure access to common property resources central to women's livelihoods**
5. **Secure prices for food and other non-timber forest products**
6. **Provision of eggs and/or promotion of poultry in homesteads**
7. **Ensure access to clean fuel and drinking water**
8. **Integrate water supply with *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* to encourage use of toilets**
9. **Reliable, quality day-care with nutritional input for children at *Anganwadis***
10. **Community-based contextual nutrition awareness programmes**

The Odisha State Policy for Girls and Women (2014) is a comprehensive document that seeks to create a state where girls and women are equal partners in development. It specifically focuses on:

- health and well-being, through ensuring survival, health and nutrition; and
- equal opportunities in all spheres of life, through livelihood support and promotion apart from equal opportunities for participation and leadership in all spheres of life;

There are seven focus areas that provide a framework for operationalisation. They are: i) Survival, Health and Nutrition, ii) Education, iii) Livelihood, iv) Asset Ownership, v) Decision making, Participation and Political representation, vi) Safety, Security and Protection and vii) Girls and Women with special needs.



LANSA Research Evidence

LANSA research in 7 villages in Koraput district under the ongoing Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) study, suggests the following:

↑ Woman carrying drinking water from a dug well in Banuaguda village, Koraput.

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Women's time for 'reproductive' activities (childcare, domestic work, health care) is limited during the peak planting and harvesting seasons, due to the urgency of both paid and subsistence 'productive' work in agriculture. Women of particular social groups such as the landless *Parojas* and the vegetable-growing *Malis*, work for 8–10 hours on their farms (see Fig 1). Irregular feeding and care (seen primarily as a woman's job) during these periods has significant implications on the nutrition and health of children below two years (Rama Narayanan, 2017 forthcoming). Further, during peak agricultural seasons, women often only have time to cook rice and tamarind sauce. This has implications for their own health and well-being, and of other household members.

A significant proportion of **adolescent boys and girls are also undernourished** (see Fig 2). There are several reasons for this. School feeding programmes normally exclude adolescents; but importantly, many of them are in the workforce, and poor diets combined with heavy workloads deprive them of the last chance to improve their future health and wellbeing.

Water and sanitation are central to nutrition and health, yet there appears to be a disconnect between their provision and women's work, time and effort. While toilets are being constructed under the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, absence of easy water access renders them unused. The task of fetching water to service and clean toilets falls on women, who have little time for this. Even for drinking, *Paroja* (ST) or *Domb* (SC) women (wage labourers), often don't have time to wait in queues to collect water from government-installed taps. Hence they use water from traditional wells for drinking - quality of which is not always ensured.

Finally, **gendered social norms and expectations are not fixed**; they shift through an individual's life-course, but also in response to broader social and structural changes. New production regimes, processes of commodification, migration, price fluctuations, market competition, educational expansion, health provision, and the influx of new conservative religious ideologies, can all change the dynamics of gender relations, and consequently, nutritional

Further reading

Narayanan, Rama (2017 forthcoming) Report on Community Hunger Fighters Programme, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation

National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (2009) Diet and Nutritional Status of Tribal Population and prevalence of hypertension amongst adults: Report on second repeat survey. NNMB Technical Report No. 25. National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR), Hyderabad

Mitra, Amit and Nitya Rao (2016) Families, Farms and Gender Relations in Asia in Family Farming – Meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge FAO-MSSRF pp 41–123 <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/67fcad76-0a67-42a4-9987-9edf25f28800/>

Rao, Nitya and Amit Mitra (2017 forthcoming) Understanding Transitions in Gendered Work and Care in a Fragile Ecosystem of Eastern India

Rao, Nitya and Amit Mitra (2017) Are Adolescent Boys Nutritionally Disadvantaged: Evidence from India LANSa Working Paper Series <http://ims.ids.ac.uk/sites/ims.ids.ac.uk/files/documents/LANSa%20Working%20Paper%20Series%2013%20-%20Gender%20Differences%20in%20Adolescent%20Nutrition.pdf>
<http://a4nh.cgiar.org/2016/06/18/transforming-gender-relations-in-agriculture-through-womens-empowerment>

outcomes (Mitra and Rao, 2016). Seasonal male outmigration, for instance, increases work burdens on women both directly and indirectly. During men's absence, women are entirely responsible for earning and managing their household's everyday needs. But when men return, following intense periods of work, they are prone to illness and need to be cared for, thereby adding to women's work. Yet, such processes of labour commoditisation emphasise women's domestic roles more than their contributions to household livelihoods, reinforcing unequal gender hierarchies (Rao and Mitra 2017 forthcoming).

Amidst competing demands for their time and labour, women face a harsh trade-off: to work (either on their own farms or for a wage) or to care for their children. LANSa's research in India demonstrates that nutrition and wellbeing outcomes are likely to improve substantially only with attention to reducing drudgery, redistributing

“During peak agricultural seasons, women often have time to cook just rice and tamarind sauce, and this has implications on their health and well-being of the family.”

women's work (within households, communities, and with state institutions), and with attention to their socio-economic positionality.

Recommendations for Policy

While several policies exist for women's empowerment, to support women in agriculture, and to improve nutrition, there is need to ensure synergy between them.

1. Survival, health and nutrition are the first policy domain identified in this document. It provides a list of 13 strategies and action points to achieve this goal, implemented and monitored by the Department for Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti.

Evidence from LANSAs research points to the following recommendations:-

1. The data on quantity and quality of food intake, disaggregated by gender, caste and age reveals that nutritional gender gaps remain high from childhood into adulthood, particularly among the socially and economically vulnerable sections. SC/ST women and households need to be prioritised.
2. Seasonality is an important variable in rural, agricultural contexts. Time for domestic and

care work is squeezed, especially during the peak agricultural seasons. Anganwadi centres need to provide reliable and quality day care for children, along with the nutritional input.

3. Eggs are valued as a source of nutrition by both children and parents. Provision of eggs and/or promotion of poultry in homesteads maybe considered on a household basis rather than targeted to individuals.
4. Food consumption patterns, driven partly by a loss of wild and uncultivated foods, changes in cropping patterns and male migration, suggest a decline in dietary diversity and consequent worsening nutrition outcomes over time (NMMB, 2009). Nutrition awareness programmes need to be community-based and contextual in order to ensure an improvement in cooking, feeding and healthy diversified diets.
5. Toilets and sanitation are central to the Swachh Bharat mission. In order to encourage the use of toilets; water supply needs to be integrated with the sanitation mission.

“ Given their significant time contributions to farming, women must be recognised as ‘farmers’, and be entitled to credit irrespective of land titles as noted in the National Policy on Farmers, 2007. ”

Figure 1 Average hours spent daily on SNA, ESNA and NSNA (male & female) by season, Koraput

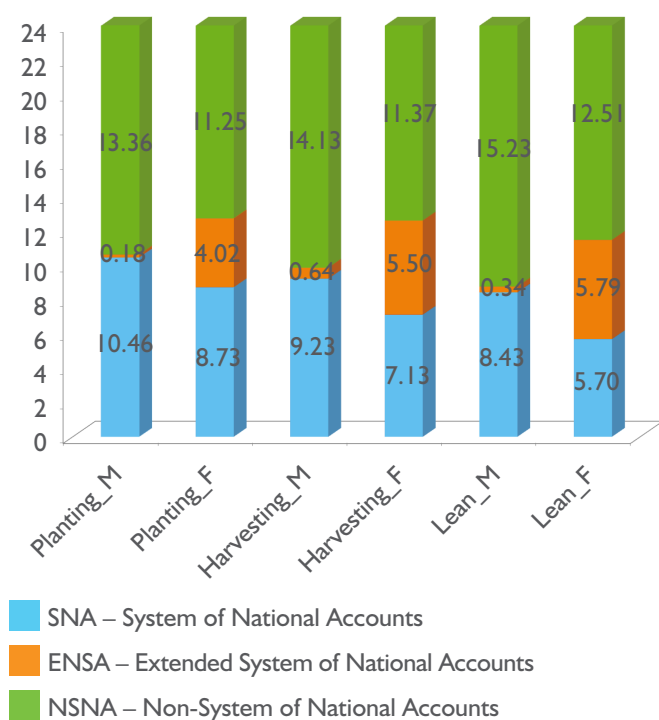
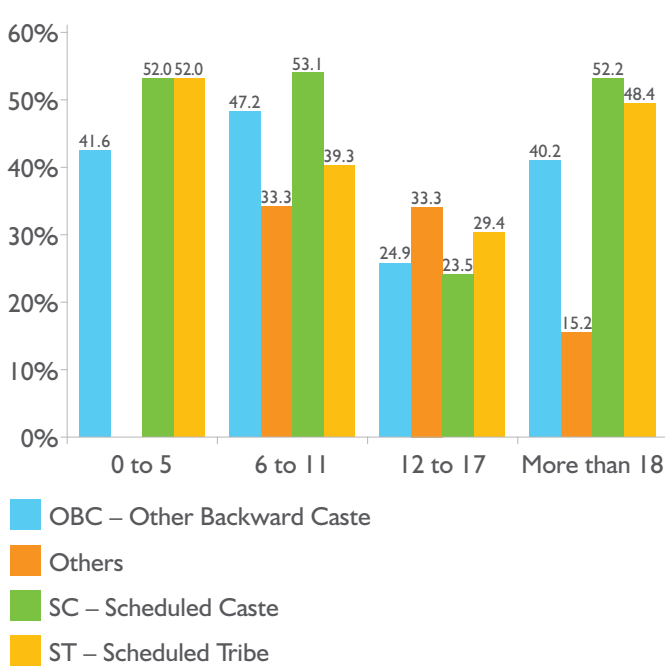


Figure 2 Undernutrition status in Koraput according to caste and age group



Source: Baseline Survey 2014



← Woman farmer harvesting pigeon pea in Koraput, Odisha.

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II. Another major goal of the policy is livelihood support and promotion.

Based on LANSA research findings, recommendations to be taken up by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment:

1. Given their significant time contributions to farming, women need to be recognised as 'farmers', entitled to credit and other support, irrespective of land titles, as noted in the National Policy on Farmers, 2007. Technical and material support on millets and traditional varieties of rice, as well as upland crops, controlled by women, to be included in the extension package for women tribal farmers.
2. Systems for procurement and adequate pricing for millets, vegetables and other crops traditionally managed by women need to be ensured in order to protect and promote women's livelihood activities.
3. Access to common property resources, central to women's livelihoods, needs to be assured. Prices for food and other non-timber forest products secured from the common property need to be remunerative.
4. Access to clean fuel and drinking water need to be ensured, both to reduce drudgery and women's time burdens.

Credits

Nitya Rao, Gender crosscut – LANSA.

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