

National Nutrition Week: A Implement to Reduce Malnutrition

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Abstract

National Nutrition Week is celebrated in India from 1 September to 7 September to create awareness about good nutrition and health by government of India since 1982. The objective of the study is to assess the impact and functioning of National Nutrition Week in India. The method of the current study is a narrative review based and data were abstracted from an online data source like research articles, intuitional reports, and press releases. The available study on the relevant topic shows that National Nutrition Week has helped to bring a strong focus on improving nutrition outcomes during the first 1,000 days. National Nutrition Week has enabled a nationwide Jan-Andolan to catalyzing nutrition related behavior change at scale for a positive impact on feeding and health care practices.

Keywords: National Nutrition Week; Rashtriya PoshanMaah; Malnutrition; Government schemes; Nutritional Status.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Global Hunger Index 2023, the situation in India is getting worse in terms of hunger and India ranks 111 among 125 countries. Thus India is facing a 'serious' level of hunger.⁴ The latest National Family Health Survey (2019-21) shows high levels of malnutrition among children under the age of five years. According to the survey, more than 35.5 percent of children are stunted, 19.3 percent are wasted and 32.1 percent are underweight.⁵ Anemia was found to be significantly higher (67.1 percent and 57 percent, respectively) in the age group of children under

five and women of reproductive age. Among newborns and young children, there was a decrease in the initiation of breast milk (41.8 percent) and the timely introduction of complementary feed (45.9 percent). Only 11.3 percent of the children get minimum adequate food.⁶

The Global Burden of Disease study for India indicates that 68.2 percent of all deaths among children under the age of five years are due to malnutrition.⁷ Evidence indicates that a child's poor physical development in childhood is passed on to subsequent generations and is associated with a loss in economic productivity. In a small scale study in India, spacing between births, low birth weight, duration of maternal breastfeeding, maternal age at conception, and education was associated with appropriateness in children under five years of age.⁸ It has been found responsible for the lack of physical development.⁹

With the introduction of the Integrated Child Development Scheme in 1975 and the mid-day meal program (now PM Poshan Yojana) in 1995, India has accorded high priority to the fight against malnutrition.¹⁰ The National Nutrition Policy was also launched in 1993 to combat the problem of nutritional deficiency through direct and indirect measures. Similarly, under the National Food Security Act 2013, food and nutritional security in human life was provided by ensuring access to a sufficient quantity of good quality food at affordable prices. But despite these steps, malnutrition among children under the age of five years remains a public health concern.¹¹

National Nutrition Week (NNW) is a part of the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyan), which is celebrated every year in September Week. It aims to spread awareness about the importance of nutrition for good health, growth, and economic development.¹ The idea of NNW in India was initiated in 1982 to create awareness about the importance of nutrition in a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.² Subsequently, the National Nutrition Mission was launched to reduce stunting and low birth weight among children under five years of age by 2 percent and 1 percent annually to achieve the goal of a 'malnutrition free India' by 2022. Anemia can be reduced by 3 percent. After the launch of the nutrition campaign, the month of September is celebrated as Poshan Maah and the first week of the month were deliberation as NNW.

The objective of the study is to assess the impact and functioning of NNW. Evaluation of the impact of the event will help to find the gaps for improvement.

METHOD AND MATERIAL

A narrative review of the literature was carried out from April to May 2023. Applicable articles were identified by applying search strategies to six academic electronic databases: Scopus, PubMed, Article First, Springer Link, Wiley Online, and Science Direct as well as published institutional reports and press releases. Search terms and keywords included: Nutrition week, Rashtriya Poshan Maah, malnutrition in children, Poshansaptaah, nutrition schemes, NNW, and the Nutritional Status of India. All retrieved titles, abstracts, and full-text publications were studied and screened for importance to the topic. Furthermore, references from retrieved articles were reviewed to identify additional applicable publications. In this research, the study and reports were included within 5 years of publication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes of NNW

Theming is fundamental to the conceptualization and delivery of every successful event theme sets the tone for the entire experience and drives all subsequent planning decisions and activities on NNW. The theme is the first impression people will have of the NNW event.

Table 1: Themes of NNW in the last 5 years

Year	Theme
2018	Go Further with Food
2019	To increase the public's awareness of the importance of good nutrition and position registered dietitian nutritionists as the authorities in nutrition
2020	Eat Right, Bite by Bite
2021	Feeding smart right from the start
2022	Celebrate a World of Flavours

NNW theme is announced by the Indian Government every year.

Activities under NNW

Many activities will be started at the panchayat level under Nutrition Week. Nutrition Panchayat Samitis along with frontline workers – Anganwadi workers, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA workers), and Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) during the Village Health and Nutrition Day to

create awareness about the nutrition of mothers and children at Anganwadi centers and address problems Will work to solve the problem.¹² The campaign to monitor the development of children will be run by state and district level personnel under the 'Healthy Child Competition'.¹⁴ Health camps will be organized to check anemia in adolescent girls. Campaigns will be run with special emphasis on developing nutrition gardens, rainwater harvesting, and traditional diets in tribal areas for healthy mothers and children. Efforts will be made to link traditional diet with local festivals for which 'Amma ki Rasoi' will be organized full of traditional nutritious dishes. Women and Child Development Department through Anganwadi workers; Department of Health and Family Welfare through ASHA workers, ANMs, Primary Health Centers, and Community Health Centers; Department of School Education and Literacy through Schools; Panchayati Raj Department through Panchayat; And through self help groups, awareness will be spread about good nutrition for women and children by involving the Rural Development Department.^{11,15}

To effectively combat malnutrition, it is necessary to coordinate all measures from conception to the completion of five years of the child. Achieving ideal nutritional practices by addressing social and cultural barriers requires an effective social and behavior change communication strategy.¹⁶ To address the problem of malnutrition, effective monitoring and implementation of programs and reduction of malnutrition among children will have to be included on a priority basis in the national development agenda. The spirit of NNW should be followed throughout the year for better outcomes related to nutrition among children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.¹¹

Ways to celebrate NNW

There are plentiful ways to celebrate NNW and contribute to the cause of spreading consciousness about superior nutrition:

- **Seminars organization:** Host seminars and workshops to educate people regarding the importance of nutrition and its impact on health.
- **Demonstrations of cooking:** Arrange cooking sessions that showcase the preparation of nutritious meals using locally available ingredients.
- **Organizing health camps:** Set up health camps present free nutrition assessment,

counseling, and guidance for persons of all age groups.

- **Organizing walks for awareness:** Organize awareness walks or runs to encourage the significance of healthy consumption habits and physical doings.
- **Challenges about nutrition:** Launch online or community based challenges that encourage people to try new, healthy recipes and share their experiences.
- **Activities at schools and colleges:** Schools can conduct essay and art competitions focusing on nutrition, connecting students with creative knowledge about healthy choices.
- **Collaboration with farmers:** Collaborate with local farmers' markets to highlight and encourage the availability of fresh, locally sourced manufacture.
- **Community gardens:** Start community gardens where citizens can grow their vegetables, fostering an association with nutritious food.
- **Organizing of nutrition workshops:** Host workshops targeting specific groups like pregnant women, mothers, or elderly individuals, addressing their only one of its kind dietary needs.
- **Organizing webinars:** Organize virtual webinars featuring nutrition experts, answering questions, and providing realistic advice.
- **Distribute resources:** Provide pamphlets, brochures, and digital capital that offer practical tips for eating and meal preparation.
- **Campaigns on social media platforms:** Utilize social media platforms to share educational posts, videos, and infographics associated to nutrition.
- **Collaboration with restaurants:** Partner with local restaurants to offer extraordinary, health conscious menus or discounts during the week.
- **Celebrities engagement:** Collaborate with health conscious celebrities or influencers to spread awareness about NNW.
- **School outreach:** Extend the celebration to schools by conducting interactive sessions on the significance of good nutrition.
- **Health & fitness events:** Incorporate nutrition related sessions inside health and fitness events to make a holistic approach to well being.

Impact of NNW

- **Behavioral changes:** NNW triggers a positive behavioral shift towards healthier food choices and eating habits. The Hindu's raids were on 14 September 2023. According to a report, CSIR along with CFTRI celebrated Nutrition Month on a large scale which had an impact in developing good nutrition habits among school children.²⁰
- **Healthcare cost reduction:** Promoting preventive nutrition, contributes to reducing healthcare costs associated with diet related diseases. Department of Food Science & Nutrition in Collaboration with ICDS & Krishi Vidnyan Kendra, organized a Low Cost Recipe Demonstration at Vadholi village at Trimbakeshwar in Collaboration with ICDS & Krishi Vidnyan Kendra. Activities like this in many institutions promote the use of cheap and nutritious food grains.²¹
- **Empowering vulnerable groups:** The week empowers marginalized communities with the knowledge to combat malnutrition and improve their well being. Various campaigns and activities related to vulnerable populations such as girls, adolescents, and children are carried out this week.²²
- **Educational awareness:** It serves as an educational platform, enlightening individuals about the direct link between nutrition and overall health. Ministries such as Rural Development, Health & Family Welfare, and Panchayati Raj are leading with the Ministry of Rural Development alone recording more than 6 lakh activities under NNW 2023 for awareness about nutrition education.
- **Collective responsibility:** NNW reinforces the notion that ensuring proper nutrition is a collective responsibility of society, government, and individuals.²³

The key Impact of NNW

- NNW celebration has helped to bring a strong focus on improving nutrition outcomes during the first 1,000 days.¹
- NNW celebration has enabled a nationwide janandol and catalyzed nutrition related behavior change at scale for a positive impact on feeding and healthcare practices.^{1,11,17}
- NNW celebration demonstrated that the processes for inter-sectoral convergence are effectively operationalized through in-place

institutional mechanisms at multiple levels.^{1,2}

- NNW celebration showed that technology can be leveraged for real time monitoring of large scale health and nutrition programs.
- NNW celebration supported the resilience of health and nutrition systems during COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Through National Nutrition Week, the importance and role of a healthy diet for human beings is emphasized. It is shown from the reviewed literature that the impact of NNW has been at a significant level in improving the nutritional issues of the community. The campaigns being run by the institutions during this week promote awareness as well as coordination among all the stakeholders. Sensitivity towards nutrition issues has increased among the public as well as health care professionals. This week can be better utilized by establishing coordination between various departments.

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