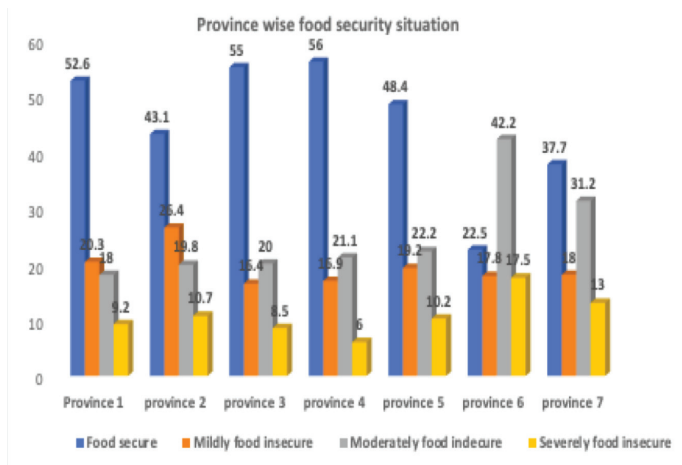


CSA SUN NEPAL MAKING DIFFERENCES ON NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY

In Nepal, the Right to Food is enshrined in the country's Constitution, which states: Every citizen shall have the right relating to food; the right to be safe from the state of being in danger of life from the scarcity of food; and the right to food sovereignty in accordance with the law. In the Global Hunger Index 2020, Nepal scores 19.5 (equivalent to moderate food security status), an improvement from its score of 37.4 in 2000. This development has been attributed to improvements in the country's food security policies, programming, production, and distribution. However, food is still not easily available and accessible to every corner of Nepal.

Figure 1 shows the food security status of provinces in Nepal. Karnali Province has a high food insecure population (17%), followed by Province 5 (7.6%) and Sudurpaschim Province (7.3%).

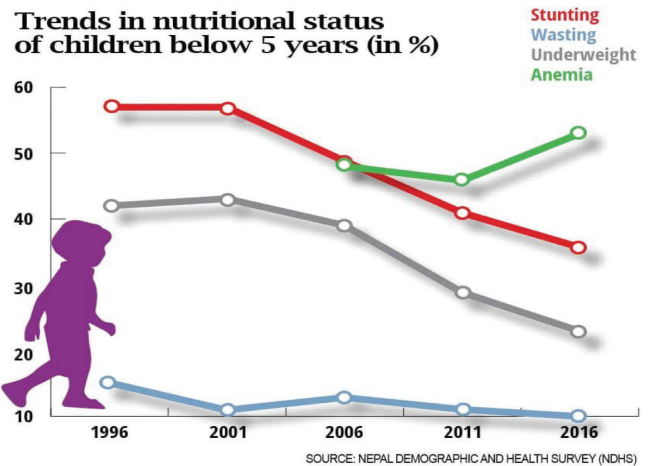


Food access is more limited in the mountains. The main livelihood of the majority of Nepalese is agriculture but arable land is limited (28.7% according to the World Bank¹). There is low productivity in the hills and mountains, and infrastructures are weak. Furthermore, 75% of Nepal's cultivated land is dominated by cereal crops (GoN NPC 2018), contributing to low food sufficiency, especially pulses and vegetables. People's diets have also shifted towards processed foods, which have higher energy, fat, and sugar.

¹ World Bank, 2018

² MoH, New Era, and ICF 2017

³ Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS). 2016. Micronutrient Survey 2016 and the STEPS survey 2019.



Nearly 50% of Nepal's population face food insecurity and only 36% of Nepali children aged 6–23 months receive the minimum acceptable diet.² Anaemia prevalence among children 6–59 months increased from 46% in 2011 to 53% in 2016, and among women of reproductive age, it grew from 35% to 41% over the same time period (MOH et al., 2012; MOH et al., 2017). National surveys have estimated that 22–25% adult Nepali women were overweight and obese.³

Supporting nutrition and food security in Nepal

Since the unification in 2014, with the facilitation of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN), the Civil Society Alliance for Nutrition Nepal (CSANN) has been at the forefront in ensuring active and meaningful participation of civil society organizations (CSO) in key decision-making processes related to the country's nutrition and food security plans, policies, and programs. It consistently advocates for increased investment in the nutrition sector of the government at all levels (federal, provincial, and local) and inclusion of nutrition in Nepal's national development agenda. CSANN has established itself as a credible and able stakeholder that strongly represents the voice of CSOs on nutrition and is a constructive watchdog of nutrition efforts in Nepal. The Alliance is a platform for common voices of different organizations working in nutrition all across the country. Since 2014, CSANN has carried out several activities with notable results.

Key achievements

1. Conducted trainings on *Nutrition Budget Analysis* and *Monitoring and Evaluation* for the nutrition sector. On 27 and 31 January 2019, an orientation for Provincial Parliamentarians on the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan II (MSNP II) was organized. It aimed to: 1) orient Honorable Parliamentarians on the importance of nutrition; 2) prioritize nutrition as one of the major development agenda of Provincial Parliamentarians; and 3) sensitize policy makers in addressing people's nutrition in provincial plans and policies, including the potential challenges in implementing MSNP II in the new federal structure. The participating Honorable Parliamentarians wrote a commitment to prioritize the nutrition agenda and implement the MSNP II to achieve a well-nourished nation.



Participants of one of the orientations organized for local government officials to discuss about the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan II.

2. Held advocacy meetings at the Province Health Directorate in Janakpur Dham, Dhanusha, Province No. 2 (23 October 2018) and the Ministry of Social Development in Dhangadi, Surkhet and Sudurpachhim Province (22 January 2019). The meetings highlighted the status of nutrition specific indicators in the provinces and developed strategies to strengthen the system to reduce malnutrition.

Provincial and local governments give importance on nutrition and food security matters. They recognize the role of CSOs in nutrition improvement and collaboration. CSOs are members of the nutrition and food security steering committee.

3. An advocacy meeting with journalists and an orientation program for media engagement was organized in Janakpur dham, Dhanusha, Province No. 2 (25 November 2018); Bajura District (26 and 27 November 2018); Dhangadi District, Sudurpachhim Province (21 January 2019); and Surkhet of Karnali and Dhanusha District (November 30 and December 1, 2018). In this meeting, the role and responsibility of the media in mainstreaming MSNP II were highlighted. The program strengthened the

awareness of media practitioners on MSNP II so that they can alert stakeholders about it and hold the government accountable. The media signed a commitment letter.

Stories, information, or news about undernutrition and food insecurity come from provinces or communities, which are regularly reported in newspapers and radios.

4. Provincial-level CSANN chapters were established in Province 2 and Karnali Province on 20 September and 13 December 2019, respectively. These chapters aim to: 1) extend the network of civil society alliances in the provincial level that will advocate for nutrition-sensitive and specific activities; 2) create a common platform to discuss nutrition-related issues; 3) lobby with policy makers to add nutrition in the development agenda; and 4) support in achieving the goals of the MSNP (2018-2022).

CSOs are united and more alert in prioritizing nutrition in national and local government agendas.



Parliamentarians from Province 2 and 7 participated in the advocacy and orientation activity organized by CSANN.

5. Citizen engagement through public hearings were organized in Gaumul Rural Municipality (30 November 2018) and SwamikartikKhapar Rural Municipality (13 December 2018) of Bajura District, Province No. 7 and in Aurahi Rural Municipality (21 December 2018) and Laxminiya Rural Municipality (5 January 2019) of Dhanusha District, Province No. 2. Participants were representatives from the local government, MSNP, CSOs, CSANN Chapter, international and local NGOs, media, community people, and the Rural Municipality Chairperson. During the public hearing, the nutrition scenario in provinces were discussed, including the implementation status of MSNP and the challenges implementing it. Commitment was done in collaboration with sectoral offices and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a successful and effective implementation of MSNP in rural municipalities.

Community people are questioning the

accountability of local government and are more concerned about the need of the community for an easy life.



Public hearings about MSNP were conducted at the local level to encourage citizen engagement.

6. Engaged with disadvantaged and marginalized groups to expand their awareness of and improve their nutrition behavior and practices, and inform them of the nutrition initiatives carried out in Province 2 and Karnali Province.

These people are now more vocal of their rights and local governments are now prioritizing them as well.

Challenges

1. There is no dedicated government entity that governs nutrition-related matters in Nepal. Therefore, there is also a lack of dedicated human resources in the local government to support the technical and managerial part of nutrition and food security.
2. The concept of the new federal system is still not established properly as the elected bodies are new to this system. Instability in the system has hindered the coordination process.
3. Newly elected political representatives and newly transferred government representatives are less aware about nutrition and its relation to the country's development agenda. Political commitments are very low for nutrition.
4. Lack of work harmony in Palikas (municipalities) executive bodies that represent various political parties sometimes impact program planning and implantation.
5. The Nutrition and Food Security Steering committee at provincial and local levels are not proactive in nutrition and food security matters.

Lesson learned

1. There is a need for a Soverain Commission/Unit to oversee nutrition matters in the country.
2. Good coordination command and convincing leadership are required in facilitating advocacy programs.
3. A series of advocacy and lobbying activities are essential to alert the government, ministries, political parties, planners, policy makers, decision makers, advocates, and the media about the nutrition agenda. Similarly, the same must be done in rural communities to help community members develop a positive behavior change towards consuming nutritious balanced diet.
4. A public hearing is a sensitive event yet effective if it is comprised of diverse participants and discussions are steered towards addressing the queries of all concerned stakeholders.
5. The role of media is extremely important in prioritizing nutrition issues for they also play the role of a watchdog.

Way forward: Role of civil society

1. Continue advocacy among MSNP stakeholders to create common understanding, commitment, and ownership towards nutrition-related goals and initiatives.
2. Continue to increase awareness among the public, political and government authorities, media people, and relevant nutrition sectors on the nutrition agenda, issues, and ways forward.
3. Ensure CSO participation for increased funding in nutrition and MSNP at the local level and support local government in formulating MSNP action plans.
4. Engage more CSOs at the local level for increased participation and involvement in the planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring of nutrition interventions of MSNP II.
5. Big role for mainstreaming private sector to make accountable production of quality food.
6. Taking on challenges to achieve NFS during natural disasters or emergencies.