

SESSION 2

Background Paper

Creation of a 30 hour Module on Food/Nutrition Security and Public Policy for inclusion in the Post-graduate Programme for Public Policy.

In spite of the alarming nutritional and micronutrient deficit and food deficit status of our population, the subject has not yet entered the domain of the public policy debate, whether at the academic or policy making levels. The only time the subject is highlighted is when a new national or international report is released or when unfortunate malnutrition deaths are reported in the country.

There are several reasons for this: such as, the invisibility of undernutrition; the fact that the afflicted are not aware of their condition; the complexity and inter-sectoral nature of chronic food and nutritional insecurity which even policy makers have not yet grasped. All of these have resulted in an absence of public demand, and consequently lack of pressure on policy makers for giving prioritizing the subject on the development agenda. Policy makers or economists have also not taken cognizance of the enormous economic loss caused to individuals and to the nation in terms of GDP, through undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency of its work force.

Even in academia, or among professionals in the social development sectors, whether in the governmental, non-governmental or governmental policy making sectors, there is little composite subject matter, data or research regarding the complex causal interconnectivity of causes of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency, its social and historical context, its behavioural and gender aspects. Even where there is information and knowledge about this, there is absence of strategy or innovation to find a solution, as the issue has still not become part of the Public Policy debate.

A case in point: A national programme to combat malnutrition within 6 months was announced in the Budget speech of July 2014. Despite the fact that this has still not yet happened, the subject has not become a public policy issue, and there is no lobby agitating on this issue, even though the nutritional status of India`s population is among the worst in the world.

Presently, this subject is not taught in any of the Public Policy courses, and this may well be another reason as to why there is lack of information/ knowledge/ capacity regarding this it both at the policy pushing and policy making side, or among development consultants, think tanks or development professionals etc.

A 30 hour Module has been created as per the topics detailed below.

Expected Outcomes

The Module will fill up a great gap in our public policy debate, provide knowledge and awareness to future professionals about our last unaddressed outpost of development, and trigger off greater energy for influencing policy. Students doing the Masters in Public Policy programme generally get employed as Consultants with Government, or think tanks who work with government, such as Price Waterhouse and Tata Consultancy Services, or with NGOs. Equipping them with knowledge regarding undernutrition and public policy would enable them to become catalysts and agents of change, to mainstream the subject of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency in whatever domain of public policy they are working with.

This initiative will be a strong advocacy tool for creating awareness and knowledge among young professionals entering public policy related fields, regarding the hidden scourge of malnutrition that is preventing our human resources from realizing their true potential, preventing faster release from poverty, reducing India's GDP.

To begin with Universities in Karnataka and elsewhere will be requested to incorporate the Module in their Public Policy/Nutritional Sciences/Social Sciences curriculum.

Course Title

Masters in Public Policy (MPP),

Programme Title

Module on Food/Nutrition Security and Public Policy

Aims/Objectives

The course is designed to enable a student to:

Study India's nutritional indicators and their causes.

Understand varied dimensions of Food and Nutrition Insecurity as it exists in India, and how it impacts human resource development and economic development.

Critically examine the Policy responses, initiatives or lack of them, and their effectiveness in addressing the problem of Food and Nutrition Security in India

Study the design and content of on-going national programmes addressing under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency, and their impact

The module includes the following topics:

1. Food Security, Nutritional Security and Public Policy – India's status today
2. Historical situation analysis of food and nutrition security in India. Causes for Under nutrition and Micro-nutrient deficiency in India
3. Public Health implications of under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency on individuals, communities and society
4. Economic implications of under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency on individuals, communities and society
5. Gender, Caste and Ethnicity dimensions of under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency
6. State and Policy Responses, Strategies in the 5 Year Plans: Present Policy framework
7. Programmes and Interventions, Outcomes of existing programmes. Have they worked?
8. International comparisons. What worked for reducing malnutrition in other developing countries?
9. Field Visit Observations
10. Closing Seminar - What needs to be done to influence Policy

Field Visit:

In order to expose students to the actual face of malnutrition in the family and community and existing efforts to address them, field visits will be organised to various settings, not exceeding total module hours of 6. These visits will be facilitated to institutions/points of delivery for nutrition related schemes, facilities to address malnutrition (NRCs).