

Hidden Hunger, A Global health problem

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People of developing & underdeveloped countries often does not give much attention to healthy & nutritious food. It is mostly because of their ignorance & poverty. That's why they often suffer from malnutrition & chronic vitamins & minerals deficiency. Specially they suffer from Iron, vitamin A, iodine & zinc deficiency. So anemia, goiter, increase chance of infection, mental retardation, stunting are predominantly common in these countries.

Hidden hunger is a lack of vitamins and minerals. Hidden hunger occurs when the quality of food, people eat does not meet their nutrient requirements, so the food is deficient in micronutrients such as the vitamins and minerals that they need for their growth and development. Two billion people suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Women and children in families with low-income often don't get enough vitamin A, iodine and iron, and sometimes other essential nutrients. This limits their growth, development, health and working capacity. Ensuring people get vitamins, minerals and essential nutrients will help to prevent malnutrition.¹

"The Hidden hunger due to micronutrient deficiency does not produce hunger as we know it. You might not feel it in the belly, but it strikes at the core of your health & vitality." -Kul C Gautam, former deputy executive director of UNICEF.

The cost of hidden hunger is huge in our lives-more than 2 billion people worldwide suffer from hidden hunger, almost twice the number of those suffering from hunger of food. Approximately 7% of the annual global disease burden. 2%-3% loss of GDP. Almost 9% of global childhood disability

adjusted life years (DALYs). More than 10% losses of lifetime individual earnings.²

Deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals-also termed hidden hunger-are pervasive and hold negative consequences for the cognitive and physical development of children.³

A study conducted in Nepal to find out the cause, consequences & solution regarding micronutrient deficiency. They found the general people are not aware of food rich in micronutrients & they are also not aware of consequences of micronutrient deficiencies.⁴

Hidden hunger is a preventable condition. But one of the World's greatest challenges is to secure sufficient and healthy food for all, and to do so in an environmentally sustainable manner. Through a systematic holistic approach can prevent this condition.⁵

Many indigenous foods are found to be rich sources of micronutrients like calcium, iron, vitamin A and folate. Maximizing utilization of indigenous foods can be an important and sustainable dietary diversification strategy for addressing hidden hunger.⁶

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To change this scenario increase awareness & attitudinal change, regarding healthy food is mandatory. First 1000 days (conception to two years) feeding for our children is very important. We have to give due attention to the food of our pregnant & lactating mother & simultaneously have to give emphasis on infant & young child feeding. As we know better food, better nutrition, better health & better future.

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