Effects of COVID-19 on nutrition in Bihar

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EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON NUTRITION IN BIHAR

BACKGROUND

- An extended nationwide lockdown and resulting stoppage of economic activities caused a substantial loss of income for many families. One of the significant implications of that is a food shortage in households, reducing food intake. This nutrition shock may hit females harder than males due to the deep-rooted gendered culture prevalent in India.
- This study’s key objectives are to understand the extent of food shortage in households, any change in food intake, and coverage of government nutrition schemes.

METHODS

- Data was gathered between May 13–22, 2020 from an existing study cohort of households under the UDAYA (www.projectudaya.in).
- Interviews were conducted with a total of 794 participant households enrolled in the study.
- Respondents: Young boys/girls participants who consented to participate in future surveys under UDAYA were contacted. Of 794, 87% were direct participants of UDAYA study, and the remaining were adult members from the same household.

PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS SURVEYED

Profile of study respondents:
- Young (<25 years): 86%; Males – 31%; Females - 69%; Currently married – 54%; Caste: Scheduled caste/tribe (SC/ST) - 16%, Other backward castes (OBC) – 64%, General caste – 20%.

IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON FOOD INTAKE IN HOUSEHOLD

- Half of the households in Bihar reported food shortage in the past month, causing most of them to reduce food intake; overall, three out of five reported reduced food intake.

- Support from government nutrition schemes such as take-home rations for pregnant women and small children, and mid-day meals for school-going children need to improve the coverage.

LIMITATIONS

- Although the study sample is a subset of the state-representative UDAYA SDG cohort of adolescents, the representative nature of the selection could not be retained because of differential phone ownership by adolescents from lower and lower economic strata, mobile number retention/portability, etc. As mentioned in the Method section, the sample is biased towards households with a higher standard of living. The results may thus be interpreted with caution.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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