

Summary of “Effect of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions with participatory videos and women’s group meetings on maternal and child nutritional outcomes in rural Odisha, India”

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Kadiyala et al, 2021. “Effect of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions with participatory videos and women’s group meetings on maternal and child nutritional outcomes in rural Odisha, India (UPAVAN trial): a four-arm, observer-blind, cluster-randomized controlled trial” at <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2542-5196%2821%2900001-2>

The detrimental impact of undernutrition on both women and children is well-established, leading to negative pregnancy outcomes, hindered physical and cognitive growth in children, and heightened risks of morbidity and mortality. A concerning statistic reveals that approximately 21% of children in India suffer from wasting, and nearly a quarter of women are underweight. This dire situation is compounded by the fact that a significant portion of the Indian population, exceeding fifty percent, relies on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. Given these circumstances, there is a critical need to develop novel strategies that seamlessly incorporate nutrition goals into agricultural initiatives. This emerging paradigm, known as nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA), aims to address the nutritional needs of communities while engaging in agricultural activities. However, for these efforts to be effective, robust evidence of their impact is indispensable. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by investigating the effects of integrating nutrition objectives into agricultural programs in India, shedding light on the potential of NSA interventions to combat the pervasive issues of undernutrition among women and children.

The study’s goal was to evaluate the impact of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions, complemented by participatory videos and women’s group meetings, on maternal and child nutritional outcomes in rural Odisha, India. The authors designed a trial with four distinct arms involving different combinations of interventions and controls. The interventions consisted of nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices that aimed to improve the availability and consumption of diverse and nutrient-rich foods. These interventions were delivered through participatory videos and women’s group meetings, designed to engage and educate the local community.

The researchers conducted a cluster-randomized controlled trial, dividing participating communities into four groups. Each group received a different combination of interventions, allowing for a comparative analysis of their effects on maternal and child nutritional outcomes.

The study’s outcomes were assessed using observer-blinded measurements to ensure the reliability of the results. Maternal and child nutritional indicators, such as dietary diversity, height-for-age, weight-for-height, and anemia prevalence, were among the key parameters evaluated.

The findings of the study shed light on the effectiveness of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions in conjunction with participatory videos and women's group meetings in improving maternal and child nutritional outcomes in rural Odisha, India. The results contribute to the understanding of community-based approaches to addressing malnutrition and underline the significance of integrating agriculture and nutrition interventions.

In conclusion, the "UPAVAN Trial" research paper demonstrates the positive impact of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions, supported by participatory videos and women's group meetings, on maternal and child nutritional outcomes in rural India. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers engaged in designing effective interventions to combat malnutrition and improve the health of vulnerable populations.