



**From evidence to action:
Towards a gender transformative approach in nutrition**

**SECURING NUTRITION, ENHANCING RESILIENCE (SENU) - INDIA
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From evidence to action: Towards a gender transformative approach in nutrition

Successful Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) address a lack of gender justice and unequal power relationships. The approach tackles inequality at the root of the problem. GTA approaches scrutinize established norms and gender stereotypes, create an atmosphere of change that extends beyond simply involving women as a target group and as participants but actively involving men in the process.

GTA can play a central role in food and nutrition security. Gender transformative approaches cannot only support the understanding of how gender norms, institutions, and power relations are shaping inequalities in food access, resources, markets, and technologies, but enable the development of solutions to address their structural causes. It is for example not enough to increase women's knowledge on good nutrition and hygiene practices. What is vital is that after completing any form of capacity enhancement, women also have the agency (empowerment) to make use of their capabilities and opportunities and to have a right in all forms of decision-making that impact their lives. It means that gender-based power relations are addressed and joint decision-making and control over resources are promoted. Gender transformative change results from building of self-confidence, expansion of choices and transformation of unequal structures. It also ensures that women are not treated as a homogenous group and considers the dynamics of Diversity – multiple identities and tackles deep-rooted cultural beliefs, norms and traditions.

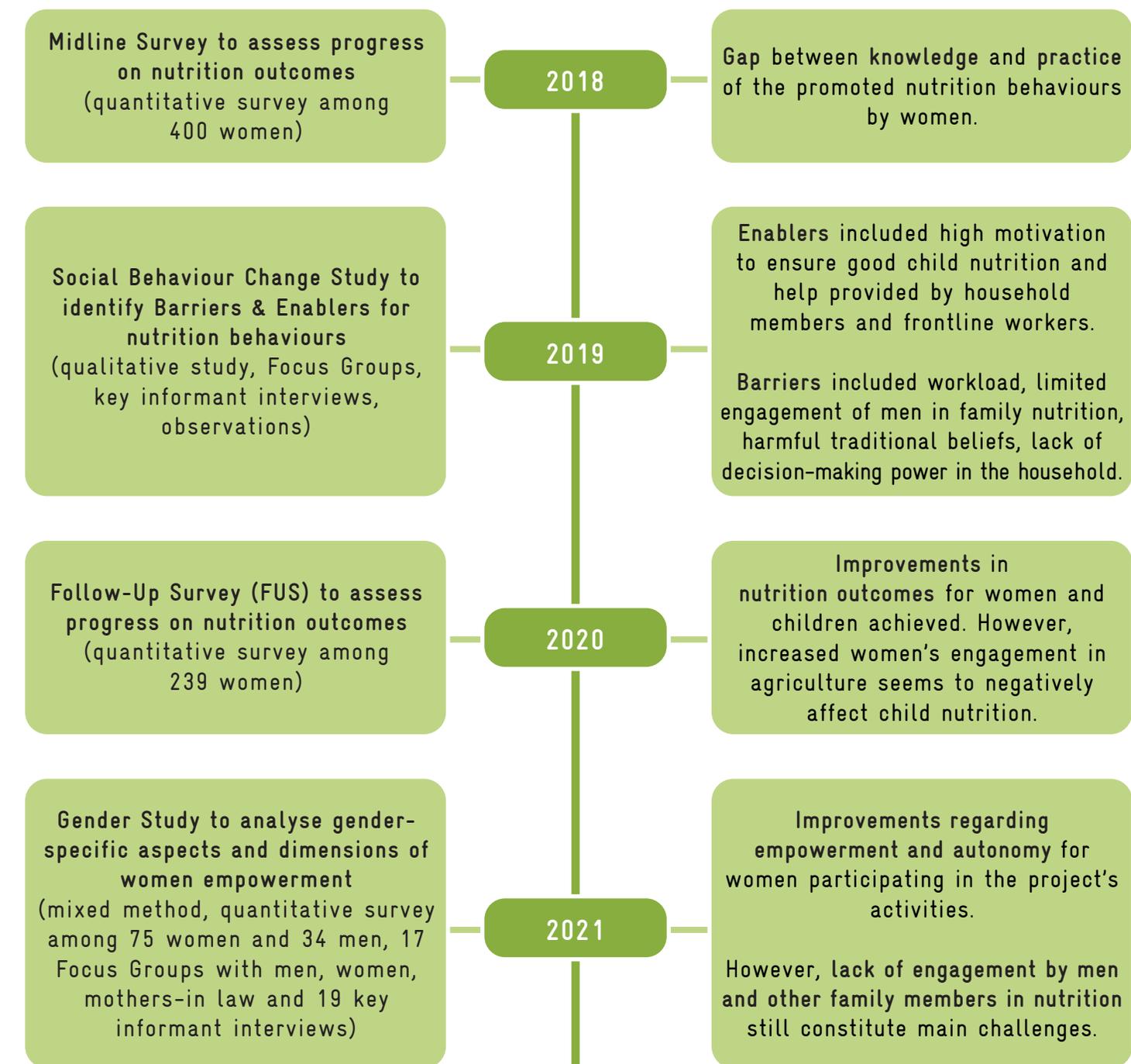


Some of the identified pathways to improve nutrition outcomes through gender-transformative approaches are:

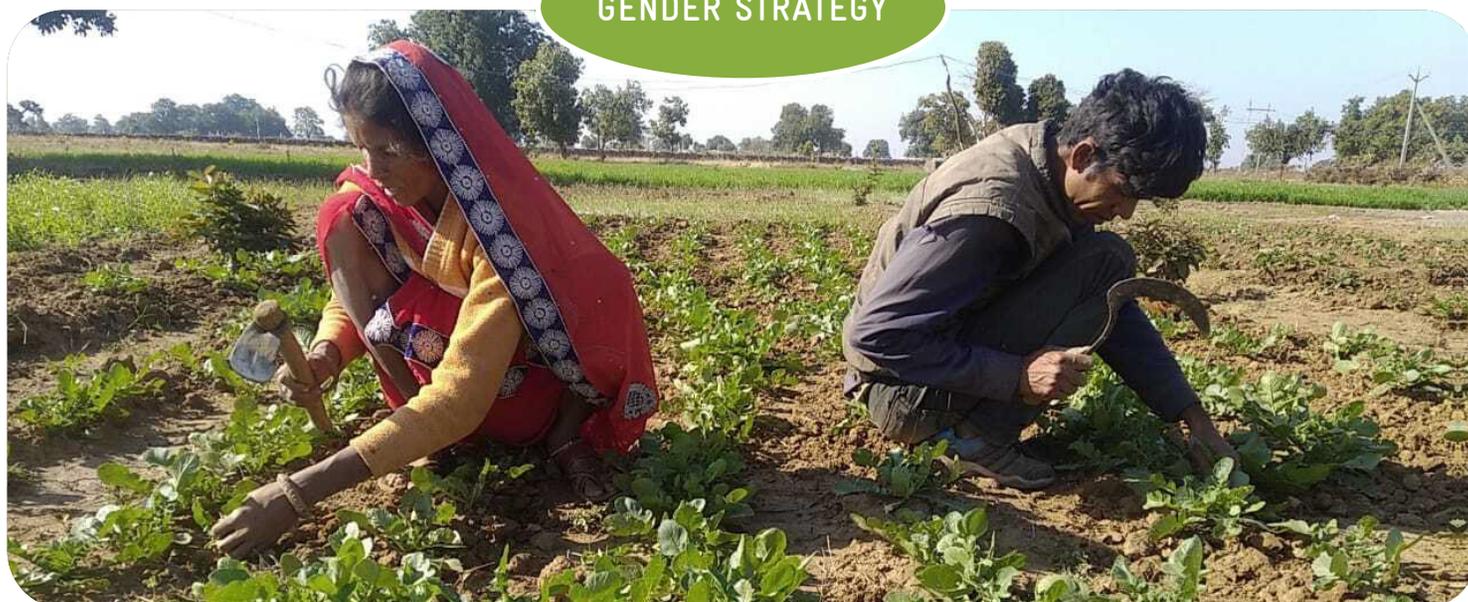
- Gender-equitable attitudes, women's self-confidence and joint-decision making between men and women are related to improved health outcomes (Muralidharan et al., 2015).
- Women's empowerment is linked to the quality of infant and young child feeding practices (Malapit and Quisumbing, 2015).
- Economic empowerment of women can enable mothers to improve the health and nutrition status of their children (Muralidharan et al., 2015).
- Women's empowerment can improve child wasting (Heckert et al., 2019).
- Men's involvement in transforming gender norms contributes to improved reproductive health and child nutrition (Bapolisi et al., 2020).

The Indo-German project 'Securing Nutrition, Enhancing Resilience (SENU) – India' implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is part of the global special initiative 'One World – No Hunger' by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). SENU implements a nutrition-sensitive integrated approach linking nutrition education with a multisectoral community nutrition garden (CNGs) initiative with the objective to improve the dietary diversity of women (15–49 years) and small children (6–23 months). SENU undertook several studies and workshops with partners to evaluate progress and understand gender-specific barriers towards better nutrition outcomes. As a result, SENU developed a gender strategy that provides a roadmap to promote gender transformative change.

≡ EVIDENCE FROM RESEARCH



GENDER STRATEGY



KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the dietary diversity of women and children over the project period has increased. However, the following gender-specific findings were identified:

1. Cultural practices, social institutions in a patriarchal country such as India, contribute to current gender inequalities in nutrition security – hence it is established that ‘Women eat least and last’.
2. Women’s economic empowerment and decision-making authority in a family and community is positively associated with food and nutrition security status of women and the family.
3. Engagement of men and other family members in food and nutrition related activities at family and community level is a key enabler to ensure that nutrition becomes a family’s responsibility.

GENDER ROLES & INVOLVEMENT OF MEN

“We have more nutrition knowledge, but women are better at it.” (Men, FG)

- The gender role division, deeply rooted in culture and traditions was found to be very strong in the project’s target areas: Women are seen as responsible for household work, preparing food and childcare and men are seen as the head of the household and a sole earner within the family.
- Men are supportive to programme activities but find it difficult to see it as a “norm” that women would engage more in food production and that men would engage more in food preparation.
- Community members and peers have a negative opinion about men and women not following the existing gender norms, gender roles and responsibilities.
- Engagement of men in project activities is very low and they are not targeted by awareness- raising activities.

WORKLOAD AND LACK OF TIME FOR CHILD-CARE AFFECTING NUTRITION OUTCOMES

“Our workload has increased but we enjoy working in homestead nutrition gardens and Community Nutrition Gardens”.

- Participating in project activities in homestead nutrition gardens and/or Community Nutrition Gardens has increased the workload of women. To some extent, this is because women need to travel long distances to the CNGs.
- Women participating in agricultural activities seem to have a negative effect on dietary diversity of children. A reason could be lack of family support in child-care and child feeding.



AUTONOMY AND EMPOWERMENT

“Whosoever have the control of household economy, that person will have the power to decide”.

- Women report that women eat ‘last and least’. Mothers-in-law have more decision-making autonomy regarding food habits and eating practices in the households.
- Participation in project activities has changed women’s position in the household. They have more self-confidence to go to village meetings, whereas, before they would rarely leave the house for such meetings or community gatherings.
- Participation in project activities has increased their income and knowledge about nutritious foods.

≡ GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS

The promoted integrated approach of nutrition education and community nutrition gardens have been complemented and adjusted with the following activities:

1. SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) DRIVEN APPROACH TO OVERCOME HARMFUL CULTURAL PRACTICES AND PROMOTE LOCAL SOLUTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Nutrition-Participatory Learning Approach (N-PLA) modules and tools have been revised to include specific messages and participation opportunities for men and other household members.
- Identifying positive deviants and their repository of local knowledge and uncommon practices.
- Promoting parent counselling on what to purchase, cook, etc. to promote joint decision-making
- Cultural practices on food habits and specific concerns of the community with respect to uptake of nutritious produce is considered while engaging in CNGs.

2. MEN AS ALLIES AND CHAMPIONS ON NUTRITION

- N-PLA nutrition meetings and/or village meetings to take place at Community Nutrition Gardens so that men may be more likely to join nutrition sessions.
- Redesigning community meetings with innovative games for men to “be on stage”, ensuring the active role of men in the community meetings and promoting men as active participants in ensuring good family nutrition in the household.
- Promoting maternal and child nutrition in villages as a collective family responsibility and promoting parents as a unit through community nutrition-sensitive micro-planning or Poshan Yatra (Nutrition walks).
- Promoting Community Nutrition Gardens as Nutrition Field Schools where the community meets

to exchange, share and learn from each other.

- Sensitization of supervisors and Anganwadi workers, Panchayat Raj representatives, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Mother Support Group (MSG) for involvement of men and other household members.
- Involvement of volunteers (Krishi mitra/Farmers Friend, Rojgar sahayak/teachers, shaurya dal group/hygiene group).

3. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN TO BE PRIORITIZED

- CNG activities (selling/processing of surplus produce, promotion of seed banks etc.) support livelihood activities.
- Mobilizing women to be part of SHG/CNG – support alliances/peer to peer networks and business plan support.

4. DECISION-MAKING POWER IN HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY

- Reflecting on and raise awareness on division of workload as well as gendered access to and control over resources in N-PLA meetings.
- CNGs should not be too far away from the village, or if they are, a form of transport is provided to the women and men if they share the work.
- Creating an enabling environment through ensuring the use of gender-sensitive and inclusive language: family, parent's perspective, nutrition garden (not kitchen garden).
- Formation of breastfeeding friendly spaces for women and child-care support near CNGs.

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