

Diet and Nutritional Situation of the Population in the Severely Drought Affected Areas of Gujarat

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ABSTRACT A cross-sectional survey was undertaken in three severely affected districts of Gujarat, to assess the impact of drought on diet and nutritional status of the population, household (HH) food security, the coping strategies adopted by the community and the extent of HH participation in relief works were also assessed. Food insecurity was reported by about half of the HHs and almost all the HHs reported scarcity of fodder and water, community opted for cheaper foods and reduced the food consumption. Participation of the community in relief programmes was minimal. The consumption of cereals and millets was adequate but the diets were deficient in energy, vitamin A, riboflavin, niacin and vitamin C. About half of the preschool children were underweight (< 75% of standard weight for age). Stunting and wasting was about 49% and 30% respectively. About half of the adult males and a third of females suffered chronic energy deficiency (BMI<18.5). Drop in rainfall, cultivated area, failure of crops and a marginal increase of cattle deaths were reported. It was observed that during the current drought, though the food intakes reduced marginally, the adverse affects on nutritional status was perhaps prevented by the efficient food for work programme and PDS. Strengthening of health care, PDS, creation of subsidiary employment on permanent basis, maintaining adequate food stocks, forecasting drought, Nutritional surveillance of the community will go a long way in controlling the adverse affects of natural calamities.