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FOOD UTILIZATION PRACTICES, BELIEFS AND TABOOS IN NEPAL ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. **“Challenges for the 21st Century: A Gender Perspective on Nutrition Through the Life Cycle.” ACC/SCN Report, November 1998.**

This is a collection of papers presented in the symposium held at the 25th session of the ACC/SCN held on March 30, 1998. The symposium was inspired by a debate during the 24th session of ACC/SCN held in Kathmandu in 1997. The symposium focused on the notion that in order to accelerate action in nutrition, malnutrition needs to be tackled throughout the life cycle by ensuring adequate food, health, and care. The report presents the proceedings of the symposium.

2. **UNICEF/NPC. Draft National Plan of Action 2007.**

New Era, a research organization, was contracted to facilitate the process of developing a national plan of action on nutrition by the National Planning Commission (NPC) with financial assistance from UNICEF. The draft National Action Plan was submitted to NPC in January 2007, with a goal of improving the nutritional status of Nepalese with a focus on women and children. In order to achieve these objectives, short and long-term strategies were identified, including specific activities to achieve these strategies.

3. **“Ending Malnutrition by 2020: An agenda for change in the millennium: Final report of the ACC/SCN by the Commission on Nutrition Challenges of the 21st Century.” *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, Volume 21, Number 3, September 2000.**

This Food and Nutrition bulletin supplement contains the final report by the Commission on the Nutrition Challenges of the 21st century. Its main message is summarized as: *“To live a life without malnutrition is a fundamental human right. The persistence of malnutrition, especially among children and mothers, in this world of plenty is immoral. Nutrition improvement anywhere in the world is not a charity but a societal, household, and individual right. It is the world community’s responsibility to find effective ways and means to invest for better livelihood and to avoid future unnecessary social and economic burdens. With collective efforts at international, national, and community levels, ending malnutrition is both a credible and achievable goal”*.

4. **Fischler, C. Food, Self and Identity. *Social Science Information*. 27; 275, 1988.**

This paper presents a speculative survey of the ways in which food is related to human identity formation. The survey combines two dimensions of food to human beings including: (1) the transition from a biological to cultural or nutritional to symbolic function of food and (2) the move from humans from the individual level to the collective level or from the psychological to the social. The paper explores the division between the natural (biological, nutritional dimension) and social (psychological to social), leading to a failure to address some fundamental questions related to food and human identity.

5. **Gittelsohn, J. et al. “Child Feeding and Care Behaviors Are Associated with Xerophthalmia in Rural Nepalese Households.” *Social Science and Medicine*. Vol. 47, no. 4. pp 477-486, 1998.**

Observations on food servings, portion size, serving order, food sharing patterns, etc., were made for seven days to better understand if certain household behaviors are more or less associated with households that have a history of children with xerophthalmia. Results of the study show that certain behaviors are associated with increased risk of vitamin A deficiency. These behaviors include: how children are served (automatically for cases vs. serving

themselves for controls), harsh or negligent treatment (more for cases than controls), and increased attention to children's health needs (more for controls than cases). The study shows that intra-household behaviors are important determinants of child nutrition status and should be considered in nutrition programs.

6. **Gittelsohn, J. et al. "Accuracy of Estimating Food Intake by Observation." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, Vol. 94, No 11. 1994.**

This publication reports on a study that explores the accuracy of direct observation in estimating the food weight as measured under controlled conditions. Ten local Nepalese observers were trained in observational techniques during a three-month period, and for four months post-training. The study found that the observer estimates of food weights were highly correlated with actual weights for the entire testing period. The accuracy of the estimates was influenced by the characteristics of food weighed: small quantities (less than 20 g.), certain non-staple food, and foods of high volume but light weight, had less accurate estimates. The study concluded that it is feasible to train local observers to make visual estimates of food weight but the accuracy of their estimates varies by food and portion size.

7. **Gittelsohn, J. et al. "Cultural Factors, Caloric Intake and Micronutrient Sufficiency in Rural Nepali Households." *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 44. No. 11. pp. 1739–1749, 1997.**

This study examined the allocation of food within 105 Nepali households, using a combination of recall and observation methods. The study found a relationship between calorie intake and sufficiency of micronutrient intake (beta-carotene, Vitamin C, and iron). However, this relationship was weaker for adolescent girls and adult women. This gender differential seemed linked to certain food beliefs and practices—such as dietary restrictions during menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation—which tend to reduce women's consumption of micronutrient rich food. The study found an overall pattern of disadvantaging of females in the intra-household distribution of food. While staple food items (i.e., rice, lentil soup, bread, etc.) were distributed fairly equally, side dishes—usually containing a higher proportion of micronutrients—were preferentially allocated to valued household members, including adult males and small children of both sexes.

8. **Gopalan, C. *Nutrition Research in South East Asia*. WHO, New Delhi, 1994.**

This book, prepared by C. Gopalan, deals with some of the major nutrition and nutrition-related research issues in the South East Asia Region. Its introductory section presents an overview of the nutritional problems in the region and subsequent sections outline areas for nutrition research.

9. **GoN/MoHP/Department of Health Services: *Tracking progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition in Nepal: A survival and development priority 2010*.**

This publication is an easy to read and use. Developed by the Nepal Ministry of Health and Population, it summarizes the current nutritional situation, interventions in the field of nutrition, and future strategies. It is a compulsory read for anybody embarking in the field of nutrition in Nepal.

10. **GoN/MoHP/Nutrition Section, DHS. *Nutrition Situation and National Priorities 2008-2011*.**

This is an internal document used by the Nutrition Section, Department of Child Health, Department of Health Services of the Government of Nepal. It summarizes the current situation, analyses the determinants of the current nutrition context, and suggests strategies and programs for the future.

- 11. Graves, P. “Nutrition and Infant Behavior: A Replication Study in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 1978, pp. 541–55.**

The study made behavioral observations in the Kathmandu valley of 36 well-nourished and 36 undernourished children, seven to 18 months old, and their mothers. Undernourished children showed lowered levels of exploratory activity and attachment behavior, especially distance interaction, and a heightened need for physical closeness to their mothers. The findings support the hypothesis of “—fictional isolation” as a mechanism between undernutrition and environmental stimulation to produce long-term behavioral changes.

- 12. International Nutrition Foundation: *Food and Nutrition Bulletin Supplement: “Linkages between agriculture and health science policy and practice.”* June 2007.**

This publication is a special issue on agriculture and health linkages. It summarizes the evolution of global thinking and understanding of linkages among agriculture, nutrition, and health. Many articles published in this supplement were presented to a workshop hosted by International Food Research Institute in June 2005.

- 13. Jenny, A. and Egal, F. “Household Food Security and Nutrition in Mountain Areas: An Often Forgotten Story.” *Nutrition Programmes Service, FAO-ESNP*, 2002.**

This literature review was supported by FAO in order to better understand the nutritional context in mountain areas of Nepal, which are often overlooked in the literature. The paper provides additional insight into the specificities of mountain areas and the need to improve or scale up positive local practices in order to better support these communities. Food insecurity is another often overlooked area in the mountains—and local practices could help inform any programs which plan to increase food production. The involvement of mountain communities in identifying needs and programs is essential in responding to the specific needs of these areas.

- 14. Krantz, M. and Nalini Shakya. “The Economics of Infant Feeding.” *Community Health Program, UMN*, 1981.**

In this article, published in the Proceedings of the Pre-Congress Workshop of Nepal Pediatric Society, Krantz and Shakya consider the economic aspects of infant feeding. The paper is a good source of information on the types of milk available for infant feeding in Nepal, their comparative costs, and the additional costs of purchasing the equipment and preparation. The advantages of breast-feeding have been discussed in comparison to the costs of artificial feeding.

- 15. Krantz, M. “Nutrition and Culture in Nepal,” 1975.**

In one of the initial papers originating from the Nutrition Program of United Mission to Nepal, Krantz described the cultural groups, particularly within Kathmandu valley, and beliefs and food practices. Despite the time elapsed since its publication, many of the observations ring true even today. The information provided will be of help to any organization working in nutrition within Kathmandu valley.

- 16. Krantz, M. “Reduction of Malnutrition in Mother and Child.” *Nutrition Association of Nepal* 1990.**

In this paper, Miriam Krantz outlines suggestions to improve maternal and childhood nutritional status. In making these suggestions, she has drawn from her vast experiences of running community-based nutrition programs.

- 17. Krantz, M. "Feeding Your Child in Nepal." *United Nations Women's Organization Newsletter, Third Quarter 1977.***

This paper is educational material for young mothers. Krantz provides nutritional advice applicable in different situations.

- 18. Krantz, M. "Coordinated Approach in Nutrition Programs on Grassroots Level." *Working Paper for National Nutrition Strategic Workshop in Nepal. 1986.***

Developed for the National Nutrition Strategies Workshop in 1986, Miriam Krantz presents different causes of malnutrition and the need to identify community concerns when developing nutrition strategies. The paper draws attention to the fact that it is not only economic status and food availability that determines nutritional status. Identifying poverty, lack of food availability, and poor environmental sanitation as the main underlying causes of undernutrition, the paper recommends coordinated action between different sectors and an understanding of community needs and its involvement.

- 19. Krantz, M. "Public Awareness, Food and Health Education." *Paper presented at the National Seminar on Nutrition in Nepal, 1991.***

In this paper presented at the National Seminar on Nutrition in preparation for the International Conference on Nutrition held in December 1991, Miriam Krantz summarizes efforts made to improve public awareness about food and nutrition. The programs scheduled on radio and television are listed and some of the problems highlighted. The paper specifically points to the problems that can arise due to different messages from food products advertisements.

- 20. Krantz, M. "The Relationship of Children's Circumstances to Nutritional Problems as Observed in Lalitpur District, Nepal." In: Baral MR, ed. *The Child in Nepal*. Yetkha, Kathmandu, Nepal: Nepal Medical Association, Chamundra Press, 1979.**

This paper, published in 1979, describes the nutritional situation of children in the Lalitpur district. The illustrative description of the children's circumstances and their feeding patterns are very powerful instruments to draw the attention of doctors to the different dimensions of childhood nutrition.

- 21. Krantz, M. "Hot-Cold Food and Medicinal Categories in Nepal: General Food Beliefs." *United Mission to Nepal, Kathmandu, February 1990.***

This document is a very helpful resource to help better understand beliefs about the nature of food among different communities in Nepal. The paper lists some basic concepts around *hot* and *cold* foods, including types of *hot* and *cold* foods, which foods are associated with different illness types, and which foods can be eaten during different illnesses.

- 22. Krantz, M. "Cultural Beliefs and Practices: Pregnancy, Childbirth and Specific Childhood Diseases." *Undated.***

This paper is a consolidation of beliefs about pregnancy, childbirth, and diseases based on collected information by students in Central Nepal. The lists of beliefs highlight beliefs and practices that influence the diet of women and their children during critical periods in their development.

- 23. Krantz, M. "Nutrition Problems and Programmes in Nepal." *Paper presented at XI International Congress on Nutrition, 1978.***

This paper highlights the fact that nutrition interventions are replacing healthier traditional practices with modern substitutes (i.e. bottle feeding vs. breastfeeding). The paper provides some examples of programs that have integrated the use of local foods and locally-made

combinations (sarbottam pitho) that can improve the nutrition of women and children. It states that good nutrition needs to be the result of mothers better understanding the value and proper use of locally available foods and that this should be the focus of nutrition interventions.

- 24. Levine, N. "Women's Work and Infant Feeding: A Case from Rural Nepal." *Ethnology*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1988), pp. 231–251.**

Based on field research in Humla, the northwest mountains of Nepal, this paper describes the impacts of women's work responsibilities on infant and child feeding. The difficulties in balancing work and child care often lead to potentially poor child feeding practices, including the introduction of cereal foods within the first few months of a child's life and intermittent breastfeeding due to the mothers' other work responsibilities.

- 25. Moser, P. et al. "Calcium and Magnesium Dietary Intakes and Plasma and Milk Concentrations of Nepalese Lactating Women." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 1988; 47: 735–9.**

This paper reports on a study which estimated the calcium and magnesium dietary intakes of 26 Nepalese lactating women from analysis of 24-hour duplicate food and beverage composites. In addition, blood, urine and milk samples were also analyzed. The mean calcium intake was less than half of that of American women—yet the calcium concentration of milk was similar for the two groups of women. The Nepalese mothers appeared to maintain milk calcium concentration by an increase in bone resorption as demonstrated by an elevated excretion of hydroxyproline.

- 26. Pinstrup-Anderson, P., Pelletier, D. and Alderman, H. "Child Growth and Nutrition in Developing Countries: Priorities for Action," 1997.**

This book provides more general information on child nutrition, including examples of types of nutrition activities that are feasible in developing countries. It emphasizes the importance of looking at behaviors and community participation and the integral components of any nutrition-related interventions.

- 27. "Practical Nutrition in Nepal." UMN Proceeding, Nepal Pediatric Society, Publication Division. 1998.**

This paper includes a set of locally available nutrient-rich foods and food formulations that can improve the nutrition of children and women in Nepal. It helps to stress that positive food practices, including the consumption of nutrient-rich foods, should be encouraged while any negative practices should be addressed in new nutrition programs. The paper also includes lists by type of food and recipes for superfoods, such as superflour or Sarbottam Pithu.

- 28. Prindle, P. "Peasant Society and Famine: A Nepalese Example." *Ethnology*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 49–60, January 1979.**

Prindle explores how communities in Nepal have been able to use their socio-economic and cultural traditions to adapt to famine. Findings support the idea that traditional socio-economic systems not only mitigate the consequences of famine but also provide room for economic growth. This is contrary to earlier theories on South Asian socio-economic systems.

- 29. Regmi, R. "Anthropological Insights in the Delivery of Health Services in Nepal." *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*. Vol. 7, 2001.**

This paper describes the need for anthropological research to complement health service delivery systems in Nepal. Additional information is needed to understand how services that

improve the quality of life are actually perceived by the population. If efforts are not made to engage communities and understand their beliefs and practices, it will be difficult to have significant impacts on health in Nepal.

- 30. Reynolds, R. et al. “Nutritional and Medical Status of Lactating Women and Their Infants in the Kathmandu Valley.” *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 47:722-8, 1988.**

This study looked at the relationship between maternal diets among lactating women in six villages of Kathmandu Valley and the impact on the nutritional status of their children. The results showed that women’s diets were sufficient to sustain the positive health and nutrition of their children—even though they had limited protein and energy reserves and micronutrient deficiencies.

- 31. SCN News: “Accelerating the Reduction of Maternal and Child Undernutrition,” No. 36, 2008.**

This publication is a compilation of papers deliberated in the 35th session of the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) of UN System held in Hanoi in March 2008. The session aimed at recommending strategies to accelerate the reduction of maternal and child undernutrition, drawing on the Lancet Nutrition Series. The recommendations of the meeting concerned actions needed to accelerate the reduction in maternal and child undernutrition. These recommendations will be a great help to groups and persons working to design and implement nutrition programs.

- 32. Shakya, N. *General Food Beliefs, United Mission to Nepal, Nutrition Section, Kathmandu, November 1983.*UMN.**

This paper provides some basic information on food beliefs in Nepal including cold, hot, and neutral foods as well as disease types, food to eat during certain types of illnesses, and beliefs behind how and why diseases are transmitted.

- 33. Shakya, N. “Relationship between Nutrition and Food Customs in Nepal.” October 1980.**

Traditional food practices are being discouraged and replaced by commercially available and advertized foods. Though some beliefs about child undernutrition can be harmful (i.e., delay in seeking care for children due to superstition), there are some healthy practices that incorporate locally available foods, which should be encouraged. This paper makes the case that the (re)introduction of these practices and traditional customs can have a positive impact on the nutrition of women and their children in Nepal.

- 34. Shankar, A. et al. “Home Gardening and Access to Animals in Households with Xerophthalmic Children in Rural Nepal.” *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, Vol. 19, No. 1, The United Nations University, 1998.**

This study looks at the relationship between vitamin A deficient children and household food production patterns in South Central Nepal. The results show that households with xerophthalmic children plant less carotenoid rich foods and consume less plant and animal vitamin A rich foods. Because all households had access to gardens and garden size, economic status did not have a significant effect on the vitamin A status of children.

- 35. Shankar, A. et al. “Nightblindness, Diet and Health in Nepalese Children: An Ethno-Epidemiological Investigation of Local Beliefs.” *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*. Vol. 39, pp 3–25. 2000.**

This study looks at perceptions of night blindness in households with children who have xerophthalmia (cases) and households without children with xerophthalmia (control). Both groups understood the symptoms of night blindness and vitamin A rich foods; and there was no significant difference in understanding of night blindness between the two groups. However, the relationship between food consumption and night blindness was not apparent to either group. This could be an area to consider for future nutrition-related programs.

- 36. “Traditional Health Beliefs and Healing Practices in Nepal.” Author Unknown.**

This document is a summary of basic beliefs about the causes and treatment options for diseases. The basic modes of treatment are also provided, including Nepalese belief systems and their potential influence on treatment through Western medicine—i.e. delayed care-seeking behavior due to first consulting with traditional healers, different descriptions of illnesses based on supernatural beliefs, etc.

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