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Zinc Nutrition and Tribal Health in India

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ABSTRACT Tribal populations in India are affected by various social, economic and developmental constraints that potentially expose them to high rates of malnutrition and infections. The high intake of cereal-based diets with relatively poor intake of animal source foods makes deficiencies of micronutrients such as zinc a potentially pressing problem in these communities. Such potential deficiencies require urgent attention in terms of assessing the relative prevalence, identifying possible causes and implementation of programs to block the potential causal routes. The first step should therefore involve performing prevalence studies to establish whether zinc and other micronutrient deficiencies are common, and based on these results, enhancing awareness among the indigenous population about their current micronutrient status, its negative implications on overall well being, and the steps that can be taken to tackle the problem. On the program implementation front, a mixture of strategies should be employed in addressing zinc and other micronutrient deficiency problems in tribal areas.