1. a) Comment on the statement “Public nutrition: The need for cross disciplinary approach in understanding nutritional problems”

Ans: Nutritional status is important as a determinants and correlate of health status and as a marker of individual welfare, in addition to being an outcome in its own right. A consequence of emphasizing nutrition as the focus of a programme and policy specialization may be that solutions then are too often linked to food, failing to integrate health concerns such as immunization, environmental sanitation, disease prevention and treatment, on the one hand, and poverty alleviation, entitlement and empowerment, on the other. Even in the area of food, many of the region’s major food distribution programmes are not viewed primarily as nutrition programmes by those who run them, but as welfare or entitlement programmes.

This raises the question of whether the appropriate field of concentration is one of nutrition policies and programmes (public nutrition), or whether it would be better simply to add a nutrition focus to professional training in public health, economics, political science, or other relevant fields. The field of public nutrition is unique in requiring at least some understanding of the entire range of determinants of nutritional outcomes.

The study of these basic determinants extends into areas of economics, agricultural policy, health science, and policy, and the social sciences, as well as, public policy and management. We need a multidisciplinary approach to solve nutrition problems. Figure 1.1 shows that we need to improve agriculture, education, community development and health to solve nutrition problems. However, we all tend to stay in our own boxes and thus confined to our area of specialty.

Agriculturalists assume the solution lies in the food supply, medical professionals assume the solution lies in health care or supplementation, nutritionists may assume the solution lies in nutrition education or in food supplements. In any given case, any of these might be appropriate solutions, but the field requires an empirical outlook to assess the entire range of possible interventions’ and policy responses. A basic but thorough understanding of human nutrition and of the nutritional aspects of food, is also viewed as germane to address nutrition policies and programme.

We should have a systematic introduction to the range of programmes and policies that have affected nutrition in various settings. This introduction should cover design and implementation issues, specific resource needs, and the conditions under which various programmes have been found to be more or less effective. Included in this introduction must not be only nutrition programmes, such as maternal and child health supplementation, school meals, and nutrition education, but also areas outside nutrition, such as public health and environmental sanitation, household food and livelihood security, and food marketing. These programmes should be presented for their direct relevance and to illustrate forcefully the point that nutrition solutions range well beyond the areas Concept of Public typically defined as nutrition. A great deal of knowledge has been developed through Nutrition problem analysis, programme evaluations and cost-effectiveness studies; this is clearly an important knowledge base of the public nutrition.

The two areas most commonly identified as important to public nutrition were economics and behavioural science. Public nutrition as an applied field, need not focus on econometric analysis or broad economic theory, but on some principles of economics as it applies to households (the household as a production and consumption unit, determinants of intra-household allocation, the value of time, the role of incomes, income sources, and local prices in determining household food security). Some concepts of political economy - the political forces underlying the economic and social conditions that relate to the nutritional situation - are generally held to be central to effectiveness in the field. Understanding the social context of nutrition problems implies knowing the behavioural and cultural factors that can, directly and indirectly, affect the nutritional situation of a community (and, more broadly, the country).

Thus, we realize that public nutrition is a very wide field. As a public nutritionist, we require an understanding of inany non nutritional determinants of nutritional outcomes, in order to solve nutritional problems of population. We also need to have a knowledge and understanding of programmes and policies which influence nutritional outcomes. These programmes are both nutritional and non nutritional i.e. education, economics etc. in focus.

b) List the essential components of primary health care.

Ans: Primary health care includes the following essential components:

- Providing education concerning prevailing health problems and methods of preventing and controlling them.
- Provision of food supply and proper nutrition.
- Adequate supply of safe and clean drinking water and basic sanitation.
- Provision of maternal and child health care.
- Immunisation against major infectious diseases.
- Prevention and control of local epidemic diseases.
- Appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries.
- Provision of essential drugs.
- Promoting health education in schools and colleges.

C) What are the health facilities available for the population at the following levels:

(i) Village

Ans: (i) Village

Rural areas in India have a shortage of medical professionals. of doctors are in urban areas that serve the other 28% of the population. This is a major issue for rural access to healthcare. The lack of human resources causes citizens to resort to fraudulent or ignorant providers. Doctors tend not to work in rural areas due to insufficient housing, healthcare, education for children, drinking water,