

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3344
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.03.2023

SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION IN PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN

3344. SHRI AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) whether an analysis of district-level data on Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in pre-school children (aged 0-59 months) titled 'Acute level of severe malnutrition in Indian districts' shows a steep rise in severe wasting in almost half of Indian districts between 2016-2021;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether in 2015-2016, level of SAM was 7.5 per cent, which increased to 7.7 per cent in 2019-2021; and
- (d) whether according to the current estimates, over 1 crore children in the country are severely malnourished and case mortality rate of 35 per cent means that around 35 lakh children in country are at a high-risk mortality and if so, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) The article titled 'Acute level of severe malnutrition in Indian districts', is an open access article available on the internet. The methodology followed by the authors to arrive at conclusions has not been analysed. However, estimations of number of underweight, malnourished and severely malnourished children under 5 years of age is obtained under the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. As per the recent report of NFHS-5 (2019-21), the nutrition indicators for children under 5 years have improved as compared with NFHS-4 (2015-16). Stunting has reduced from 38.4% to 35.5%, Wasting has reduced from 21.0% to 19.3% and Underweight prevalence has reduced from 35.8% to 32.1%.

(b) Malnutrition is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, affected mainly by a number of generic factors including inadequate food consumption due to economic and social factors, inequity and gender imbalances, poor sanitary and environmental conditions, etc.

(c) As per the fifth round of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21, the percentage children under 5 years who are severely wasted (weight-for-height) was 7.7 percent.

(d) Malnutrition is not a direct cause of mortality. There is no such verified data to indicate that one crore children are severely malnourished. The data on nutrition indicators is captured under the National Family Health Surveys. As per the latest report of the NFHS-5 (2019-21), prevalence of severe malnutrition among children under 5 years of age is as follows: severe stunting 15.1%, severe wasting 7.7% and severe underweight is 10.6%.

Further, under Poshan Tracker, the ICT application for monitoring service delivery under Mission Poshan 2.0, out of approximately 5.6 crore children measured in the month of February 2023, the percentage of severely malnourished children is 2.6%.
