

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1435
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.02.2023

LACK OF NUTRITIOUS MEAL

1435. SHRI BALUBHAU ALIAS SURESH NARAYAN DHANORKAR:
SHRI S. VENKATESAN:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether as per a recent report by the Centre for Science and Environment and Down to Earth magazine, 71 per cent of Indians cannot afford a nutritious meal and more than 17 lakh people die annually because of diseases attributable to poor diet;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether as per NFHS-5, 67.1 percent of children aged 6-59 months were anaemic in 2021 against 58.6 percent in 2016 highlighting a high increase in anaemia;
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the corrective measures taken/being taken by the Government in this regard

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) Ministry is not aware of any such report. No data of deaths related to poor diet is reported by any States/UTs However, the issue of food security at the household level has been addressed by Government by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality foodgrains at subsidised rates. During the COVID Pandemic, free ration was provided to 80 crore people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. Further, under the new integrated food security Scheme launched on 1 January 2023, free food grains would be provided to 81.35 crore beneficiaries under NFSA, for the year 2023, targeting the most vulnerable 67% of population.

Further, the Government of India has taken initiative of rice fortification to achieve nutrition security in the country. As per the Scheme Guidelines for Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, local dietary inputs and fresh produce (green vegetables, fruits, medicinal plants and herbs), fortified rice and millets have to be actively encouraged in prescription of meals under Supplementary Nutrition to be served to different categories of beneficiaries to promote health, wellness and immunity and to manage anaemia. In FY 2021-22, 7.34 lakh MT of fortified rice was allocated to States. This year onwards only fortified rice is being allocated.

(c) & (d) As per NFHS-5, 67.1% children aged 6-59 months were anaemic. Anaemia is a multifaceted problem. There are various causes for anaemia in children, which inter alia include low iron stores at birth due to maternal anaemia, non-exclusive breastfeeding, insufficient quantity of iron and iron enhancers in diet such as foods rich in Vitamin-C, increased iron requirements related to rapid growth and development during infancy and childhood, iron losses due to parasite load (e.g. malaria, intestinal worms), unsafe drinking water and inadequate personal hygiene and poor environmental sanitation, etc.

(e) POSHAN Abhiyaan is a programmatic approach in addressing the life cycle issues of malnutrition. Reduction of anemia is one of the important objectives of the POSHAN Abhiyaan in convergence with key Ministries/ Departments, mainly Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW). A range of efforts are underway to improve the integration of nutrition interventions into the existing health platforms through various strategic measures. As part of its comprehensive strategy to tackle anemia, Government of India has included staple food fortification from central ministries for schemes/programs in multiple States.

Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, efforts are also being made to strengthen processes for community engagement, empowerment of beneficiaries and behavioural change towards better nutrition for which the Abhiyaan provides a platform for organizing Community Based Events (CBEs) in Anganwadi Centres. Under Community Based Events, messages related to public health for improvement of nutrition and to reduce illness, prevention of anemia, importance of nutritious food, diet diversity etc. are being conducted. Many States/UTs have developed indigenous best practices like use of iron utensils for cooking to reduce iron deficiency, integrating Ayurveda products and formulations with supplementary nutrition etc.

Further, the Government of India has launched Anemia Mukht Bharat (AMB) strategy with the target to reduce anemia in women, children and adolescents in life cycle approach. The 6x6x6 strategy under AMB implies six age groups, six interventions and six institutional mechanisms. The six interventions under Anemia Mukht Bharat strategy include, Prophylactic Iron Folic Acid Supplementation, Periodic de-worming, Intensified year-round Behaviour Change Communication Campaign, Testing and treatment of anemia, using digital methods and point of care treatment, Convergence and coordination with other line departments and ministries for strengthening implementation etc
