

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 446**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.02.2023

**STUDY ON MALNUTRITION**

446. SHRI BALUBHAU ALIAS SURESH NARAYAN DHANORKAR:  
SHRI SHRINIWAS PATIL:  
SHRI NATARAJAN P.R.:

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

- (a) whether an analysis of district-level data titled 'Acute level of severe malnutrition in Indian districts' shows a steep rise in severe wasting in almost half of Indian districts between 2016 and 2021, severe wasting or increase in Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in pre-school children (aged 0-59 months) in 341 districts out of 707 across 36 States and Union Territories;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether SAM level in 2015-2016, has increased to 7.7 per cent in 2019-2021 and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is aware that one crore children are severely malnourished and the case mortality rate of 35 percent means that around 35 lakh children in our country are at a high risk of mortality, if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken by Government during the last three years to ensure food security?

**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 analyzed. 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%.

(e) The Government has accorded high priority to the issue of malnutrition and is making serious efforts to address this issue. 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.

Also, in order to address issue of micro nutrient deficiencies and anemia, the Government of India had approved the Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on "Fortification of Rice & its Distribution under Public Distribution System" on 14 February, 2019, for a period of 3 years beginning 2019-20. To address malnutrition and anemia in women and children arising due to deficiency of micro nutrients like Iron, Folic Acid and Vitamin B-12, under Supplementary Nutrition Programme of Anganwadi Services, Fortified Rice was allocated to 21 States/UTs during the 2nd quarter of FY 2021-22. From the 3rd quarter of FY 2021-22 onwards only Fortified Rice is being allocated to all the State/UTs.

Further, the Government has approved the supply of fortified rice throughout the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and in Other Welfare Schemes of Government of India in all States and Union Territories (UTs) in a phased manner by the year 2024.

Further, even during the COVID Pandemic, free ration was provided to 80 crore people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana as a measure to ensure that no poor, vulnerable or needy beneficiary/ beneficiary household suffers due to non-availability of foodgrains during the pandemic induced crisis.

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