

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2639
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.08.2023

MALNUTRITION IN BIHAR

2639 SHRI CHANDESHWAR PRASAD:

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

- (a) whether there has been an increase in the number of malnourished women and children in the State of Bihar during the last three years and if so, the details thereof, along with the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether the cases of malnutrition are not detected due to faulty methods adopted for diagnosis of malnutrition and if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of the efforts made by the Government to reduce malnutrition among women and children in the State?

ANSWER

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

(a) Malnutrition is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, affected mainly by a number of factors including inadequate food consumption, improper feeding and care practices, inequity and gender imbalances, poor sanitary and environmental conditions etc.

The estimated number of underweight, malnourished and severely malnourished children under 5 years of age is obtained under National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. As per the recently released report of the National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS 5) the incidence of malnutrition among women in Bihar has improved from 30.4 % in NFHS 4 (2015-16) to 25.6 % in NFHS 5 (2019-20).

The prevalence of Stunting and Underweight among children under 5 years as per NFHS 5 (2019-20) when compared with NFHS 4 (2015-16) indicates an improvement of 5.4 (48.3% in NFHS-4 to 42.9% in NFHS-5) and 2.9 percentage points (43.9% in NFHS 4 to 41.0% in NFHS-5) respectively. However, prevalence of Wasting among children under 5 years has slightly increased in State of Bihar, as per NFHS-5, from 20.8% in NFHS-4 to 22.9% in NFHS-5.

Further, as per data recorded in Poshan Tracker, ICT application for Mission Poshan 2.0, close to 71.79 lakh children were measured in the country in the month of June itself, of which, 9.79% were wasted and 24.14% underweight, which is significantly lower than NFHS indicators.

(b) In order to accurately detect and monitor the cases of malnutrition, Government has launched the ICT application named as Poshan Tracker. Technology under Poshan Tracker is being leveraged for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, under-weight prevalence among children through automatic calculation based on WHO growth charts. The application is helping in generating data, providing feedback to Program Managers and documenting the impact of scheme on nutrition indicators. The Ministry/ States/ Districts can thus make effective timely interventions, based on the data from tracker and evaluate the progress of different components. Further, in cases of severe malnutrition or underlying health conditions, the child is immediately referred to the nearest Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre/ Primary Health Centre for suitable medical intervention

(c) Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0) announced in the budget 2021-22 is an Integrated Nutrition Support Programme. It seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers through a strategic shift in nutrition content and delivery and by creation of a convergent eco-system to develop and promote practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity. Poshan 2.0 focusses on Maternal Nutrition, Infant and Young Child Feeding Norms, Treatment Protocols for SAM/MAM and Wellness through AYUSH practices to reduce wasting and under-weight prevalence besides stunting and anaemia, supported by the 'Poshan Tracker', a robust ICT centralised data system. Under Mission Poshan 2.0, malnutrition through focus on life cycle approach is addressed through sustained behaviour change, convergence and use of technology for effective monitoring.

Moreover, steps have been taken to improve nutritional quality and testing in accredited labs, strengthen delivery and leverage technology under Poshan Tracker to improve governance. States/UTs including Bihar have been advised to promote use of AYUSH systems for prevention of malnutrition and related diseases. Further, the mission raises communities' awareness on good nutrition behaviours for themselves and their children. It promotes access to nutritious, affordable and locally available diets through the plantation of Poshan Vatikas or nutri-gardens at Anganwadi Centres and other interventions such as the promotion of kitchen gardens in AWCs and homes. To encourage diet-diversity and consumption of wholesome local produce, around 6.42 lakh Poshan Vatikas have been developed at AWCs. It helps meet gaps between average diets and required diets by providing Supplementary Nutrition to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children from 6 months to 6 years of age.

Under the revised nutrition norms, in addition to energy and protein recommendations have also been given for 7 essential micronutrients (calcium, zinc, iron, dietary folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin B6 and Vitamin B12. Further, considering the nutritional quality of Millets, MWCD has advised all States/UTs to incorporate millets in the recipes to enhance the nutritional quality of the meal provided under Supplementary Nutrition programme of Anganwadi Services. Further, under Supplementary Nutrition Programme of Anganwadi Services Scheme, Fortified Rice is allocated to States. Under Guidelines for Mission Poshan 2.0, it has been advised to mandatorily incorporate millets in Supplementary Nutrition at least once a week.
