

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3704
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.08.2023

INTERVENTIONAL FOCUS ON MALNUTRITION

3704. SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU:
SHRI RAHUL RAMESH SHEWALE:
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Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India's high prevalence of stunting, wasting and anaemia continues to pose public health risks for children and women;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the response of the Government thereon;
- (c) whether any need is felt to strengthen existing social sector schemes, such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), to tackle this problem particularly in Odisha and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether various studies including in Odisha have shown that interventions focusing on nutrition, education and health during early childhood can significantly improve human capital;
- (e) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (f) the remedial measures taken by the Government to address and tackle non-formal pre-school education and to break the cycle of malnutrition, morbidity and mortality situation in the country?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) The data on nutritional indicators is captured under the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) conducted periodically by the Ministry of Health and 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%. and the prevalence of underweight among women has improved from 22.9% (NFHS-4) to 18.7% (NFHS-5). The percentage of Anemia in women as per NFHS-5 is 57.0%

However, as per data recorded in Poshan Tracker, ICT application for Mission Poshan 2.0, close to 7 crore children were measured in the country in the June 2023, as per which, 7% were wasted and 19% underweight, which is significantly lower than NFHS indicators.

(c) In order to maximize nutritional outcomes, recently the Anganwadi Services (erstwhile ICDS Scheme), Scheme for Adolescent Girls and Poshan Abhiyaan have been re-aligned under 'Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0' (Mission Poshan 2.0). 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. The Mission is being implemented throughout the country, including the State of Odisha.

(d) & (e) Interventions focusing on nutrition, education and health throughout the lifecycle can have significant impact on improving human capital in the country. Government has accorded high priority to the issue of malnutrition and is implementing several schemes as direct targeted interventions to address the problem of malnutrition in a life cycle approach throughout the country. POSHAN Abhiyaan launched on 8th March 2018 aims to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers in a time bound manner by adopting a synergised and result oriented approach. The Abhiyaan has been rolled out across 36 States/UTs.

Under Poshan 2.0, focus is on diet diversity, food fortification, leveraging traditional systems of knowledge and popularizing use of millets. Nutrition awareness strategies under Poshan 2.0 aim to develop sustainable health and well-being through regional meal plans to bridge dietary gaps. Further, greater emphasis is being given on the use of millets (coarse grains) for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal and Take Home rations (not raw ration) at Anganwadi centres for Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Children below 6 years of age, as millets have high nutrient content that can address anemia and other micro-nutrient deficiencies in women and children. Under Supplementary Nutrition Programme of Mission Poshan 2.0, only fortified rice is being allocated to States/UTs.

Development Monitoring & Evaluation Office (DMEO) under NITI Aayog has conducted Sectoral Evaluation of schemes including POSHAN Abhiyaan, wherein performance of the scheme was found satisfactory in criteria of Relevance, Sustainability and Equity. NITI Aayog assessed the implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan since its inception and came out with the following key findings:

- Poshan Abhiyaan has helped to bring a strong focus on improving nutrition outcomes during the first 1,000 days.
- It has enabled a nation-wide Jan-andolan catalysing nutrition related behaviour change at scale for positive impact on feeding and healthcare practices.
- The Abhiyaan has demonstrated that the processes for inter-sectoral convergence are effectively operationalized through in place institutional mechanisms at multiple levels.
- Poshan Abhiyaan showed that technology can be leveraged for real-time monitoring of large scale health and nutrition programmes.
- Poshan Abhiyaan supported the resilience of health and nutrition systems during Covid-19 pandemic.

(f) Government aims to ensure holistic development of all children under the age of 6 years, and has launched the “Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi” (PBPB) programme, which is a path breaking Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program to help India develop world’s largest, universal, high-quality pre-school network at Anganwadi Centers in alignment with the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Under the programme, steps have been taken to bolster early childhood care and education and good nutrition practices through development and use of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) and locally available toys for learning at AWCs. In order to achieve this objective, under PBPB focus is on building capacities of ICDS functionaries for (i) promoting early stimulation in the first 1000 days and ECCE for children 3-6 years of age, (ii) developing ECCE understanding of Anganwadi Workers, (iii) nurturing developmental domains (socio-emotional-ethical, physical and motor, cognitive, etc.) and the development of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), and (iv) reinforcing nutrition knowledge of Anganwadi Workers.
