

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1033
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.09.2020

DECLINE IN HEALTH OUTREACH SERVICES DUE TO COVID-19

1033. SHRI RAHUL RAMESH SHEWALE:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken cognizance of the UNICEF's report which has warned that over three lakh children could lose their lives over the next six months due to decline in health outreach services and increase in child wasting due to COVID-19 Pandemic;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted any study to assess the impact of disruption in health outreach services during COVID-19 induced lockdown on malnutrition status across the country;
- (d) if so, the details and outcome thereof, State/UT-wise and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to address the issue of access to nutrition in each State of the country?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (e): The Government has been regularly reviewing the situation in consultation with States/UTs. In order to improve the nutritional status of Women and Children, Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing Supplementary Nutrition Programme under Anganwadi Services and Scheme for Adolescent Girls under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme to children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and out-of-school Adolescent Girls (11-14 years). As per the directions issued by Ministry of Home Affairs, under Disaster Management Act, 2005, all the Anganwadi Centres across the country were closed to limit the impact of COVID-19. However, to ensure continuous nutritional support to Anganwadi beneficiaries, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers have been distributing supplementary Nutrition at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries. Further, this Ministry has issued necessary directions to the States/UTs to ensure distribution of food items and nutrition support by Anganwadi workers, once in 15 days, at the doorstep of beneficiaries. In addition, Anganwadi Workers and Anganwadi Helpers have been assisting the local administration in community surveillance, creating awareness or other works assigned to them from time to time.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued the guidance note on "Provision of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health Plus Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) services during & post COVID-19 Pandemic" with States and UTs which states that campaign mode services such as - mass Vitamin A prophylaxis, campaigns for Intensified Diarrhea Control Fortnight (IDCF), National Deworming Day (NDD) and Anemia can be provided on an alternative mechanism like through home delivery of essential services & commodities etc. based on local situations. The continuation of outreach services through modified VHSNDs and Home visits by health workers was recommended in area beyond buffer zone and green zone. The activities in the containment and buffer zone were recommended through the routine visits of COVID workers. Essential medicine like IFA, ORS, calcium and Zinc are home delivered in containment zones. Specific guidance notes on the provision of the outreach services with all States and UTs to ensure continuity of essential outreach services has been issued and Webinars on implementation of outreach services related to Anemia, Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs), Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs), Diarrhoea prevention, NDD and IYCF practices etc have been organized.
