

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2008
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.12.2024

CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION

2008. SHRI AMARSING TISSO:
SHRI E T MOHAMMED BASHEER:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the steps taken/proposed by the Government to address child malnutrition and healthcare needs for children in underserved areas including Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao district of Assam;
- (b) whether the Government is ensuring that child protection laws are being strengthened and enforced, to prevent abuse, trafficking and child labour especially in Karbi Anglong in Assam;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the details of the steps being taken to improve access to quality education for girls, especially in rural areas?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) Under the 15th Finance Commission, various components like Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent girls (of 14-18 years in Aspirational Districts and North-Eastern region) have been subsumed under the umbrella Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0) to address the challenge of malnutrition. This is a self-selecting (no entry barriers) scheme available to all the eligible beneficiaries who enroll at the Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) and is being implemented in all States/UTs including Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts of Assam.

Under Mission Poshan 2.0 a new strategy has been made for reduction in malnutrition and for improved health, wellness and immunity through activities like community engagement, outreach, behavioral change, and advocacy. It focuses

on Maternal Nutrition, Infant and Young Child Feeding Norms, treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)/ Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and wellness through AYUSH practices to reduce prevalence of wasting, stunting, anaemia and being underweight.

Under this scheme, Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls to beat the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition by adopting a life cycle approach. Supplementary nutrition is provided in accordance with the nutrition norms contained in Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act. These norms have been revised and upgraded last year. The old norms were largely calorie-specific; however, the revised norms are more comprehensive and balanced in terms of both quantity and quality of supplementary nutrition based on the principles of diet diversity that provides quality protein, healthy fats and micronutrients.

Fortified rice is being supplied to AWCs to meet the requirement of micro-nutrients and to control anaemia among women and children. Greater emphasis is being laid on the use of millets for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal at least once a week and Take Home ration at Anganwadi centers.

Ministries of Women & Child Development and Health & Family Welfare have jointly released the protocol for Community Management of Malnutrition (CMAM) to prevent and treat severely acute malnutrition in children and for reducing associated morbidity and mortality.

Nutrition goes beyond mere eating of food; it requires proper digestion, absorption, and metabolism which are influenced by factors like sanitation, education and access to safe drinking water etc. The challenges of malnutrition is being addressed under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 by establishing cross cutting convergence amongst 18 Ministries/Departments.

Under Mission Poshan 2.0, one of the major activities undertaken is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy leading to Jan Andolan to educate people on nutritional aspects. State and UTs are conducting and reporting regular sensitisation activities under community engagement programmes during Poshan Maahs and Poshan Pakhwadas celebrated in the months of September and March-April respectively. Community Based Events (CBEs) have served as a significant strategy in changing nutritional practices and all Anganwadi workers are required to conduct two Community Based Events every month.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of Women and Child Development is administering the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (as amended in 2021) which is the primary legislation for ensuring the safety, security, dignity and wellbeing of children.

Further, this Ministry is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely 'Mission Vatsalya' to support the State Governments and UT Administrations for

delivering services for Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) and Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) under Institutional and Non-Institutional Care.

Also, the Ministry in collaboration with Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie has developed an online training module on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection for Children) Act, 2015 for capacity building of multiple stakeholders such as State Governments/ UT Administrations, district authorities and others.

Further details on the initiatives by the Ministry are at **Annexure**.

(d) The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education is implementing an integrated centrally sponsored scheme for School education-Samagra Shiksha. The scheme treats school education holistically, without segmentation from pre-primary to class XII and is in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG-4). The scheme provides support for the implementation of the RTE Act. The scheme of Samagra Shiksha has been aligned with National Education Policy, 2020 with focus on improving the quality of education through various measures such as introduction of new pedagogical and curricular structure, Early Childhood Care and Education, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy and Transforming Assessment for Student Development, Experiential and Competency based Learning, etc.

Under Samagra Shiksha, financial assistance is provided to States and UTs for providing various facilities to the children for implementing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Bridging gender and social category gaps at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of Samagra Shiksha. The scheme reaches out to girls, and children belonging to SC, ST, minority communities and transgender. In order to ensure greater participation of girls in school education, various interventions have been targeted, which include opening of schools for girls, free uniform and text-books to girls up to Class VIII, additional teachers and residential quarters for teachers in remote/hilly areas, appointment of additional teachers including women teachers, stipend to CWSN girls from class I to class XII, separate toilets for girls, menstrual hygiene (incinerator etc.), teachers sensitization programmes to promote girls participation, gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including text books, self-defense training. In addition, to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education and ensure access and quality education to girls, under Samagra Shiksha, there is a provision of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) which are residential schools for girls from class VI to XII from age 10-18 years belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line (BPL).

Also, under the Scheme financial assistance is provided to the State and UTs for Universalization of School Education including opening/strengthening of new schools up to senior secondary level, construction of school buildings & additional classrooms, development/strengthening of school infrastructure in northern border

areas under Vibrant Village Program, setting up, up-gradation and running of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, construction of hostels for PVTGs under PM-JANMAN, setting up of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Avasiya Vidyalayas, construction of hostels under Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan for unsaturated ST population, reimbursement under RTE Act, various qualitative components, strengthening of teacher education and strengthening of DIETs/BRCs/CRCs, provision of ICT, Smart Class and digital interventions.

ANNEXURE REFERRED IN REPLY TO PART (b and c) OF LOK SABHA QUESTION NO. 2008 FOR 6.12.2024 REGARDING “CHILD WELFARE AND PROTECTION” ASKED BY SHRI AMARSING TISSO AND SHRI E T MOHAMMED BASHEER

(i) Mission Vatsalya

As per Mission Vatsalya Scheme guidelines, States and Districts are mandated to execute a 24x7 helpline service for children as defined under the JJ Act, 2015. The Child Helpline (CHL)-1098 has been integrated for synergies with Emergency Response Support System-112 (ERSS-112) Helpline of Ministry of Home Affairs through State/UT Control Rooms. It has also been integrated with Women Helpline 181.

The Ministry constantly engages with the States/ UTs from time to time as regards implementation of Mission Vatsalya Scheme. The Ministry has issued various advisories and held Zonal Conferences and Sensitization/ Dissemination Workshops under the Scheme for supporting on ground implementation.

The initiative taken under the Mission Vatsalya Scheme includes collaboration with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore under “SAMVAD” (Support Advocacy & Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Distress). SAMVAD works in areas of Mental Health, Care & Protection, Education and Policy & Law. Various training and capacity building programmes have been conducted for child protection functionaries and others stakeholders across the States/ UTs.

(ii) Initiatives undertaken by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) to combat trafficking are as follows:

1. Conducted a national level multi-stakeholder “E-Consultative Meeting to Combat Child Trafficking Post Lockdown Situation due to COVID-19” on 8th May, 2020 comprising of representative from the NITI Aayog, SCPCRs, Police, State CID, Anti Human Trafficking Units and experts in the field of Human Trafficking.
2. NCPCR has started to drive a periodic campaign on combating child trafficking viz., “बाल तस्करी से आज़ादी”. This campaign was started on 1st August 2022 in 75 bordering Districts of India, in commemoration of World Day against Human Trafficking observed on 30th July each year. As an extension of this campaign, this year the Commission is holding similar such campaigns in 100 bordering and adjoining districts of India.

3. The Commission has set up a Quick Response Cell (QRC) to deal with instances of children getting trafficked or missing as reported to the Commission from time to time.
4. A month-long pan-India rescue & rehabilitation of Child & Adolescent Labour Campaign was conducted from 20th November 2023 till 10th December 2023 wherein total 1464 children & Adolescents have been rescued.
5. Special Rescue Initiatives:
 - i. A significant rescue operation was conducted at International Agro Food, a slaughterhouse in Dasna, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh through which 57 children were rescued from exploitative conditions in May 2024.
 - ii. Another rescue mission was conducted at Som Distilleries in Sehatganj, Raisen, Madhya Pradesh through which 59 children were rescued from dire conditions out of which 43 were minor.
 - iii. The Go Home and Reunite (GHAR) portal has been developed to digitally monitor and track the restoration and repatriation of children according to the protocol.
 - iv. Additionally following monitoring portals have been developed to cater to different categories of children in India
 - a. MASI- Monitoring App for Seamless Inspection
 - b. Baal Swaraj Portal- Covid Care
 - c. Baal Swaraj Portal- CISS
 - d. Baal Swaraj Portal- Citizen Login (Portal)
 - e. Tracking Portal for out of School Children
 - f. POCSO Tracking Portal
 - g. NCPDR's Management Information System (MIS) Portal
 - h. POCSO E-Box
 - i. E-baalnidaan

(iii) Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:

The Government accords highest priority for ensuring safety and security of children and has undertaken various initiatives in this regard. To safeguard children against sexual abuse and sexual harassment, Government has enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years.

The Act was amended in 2019 to introduce more stringent punishment including death penalty for committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes.

For example in case of penetrative sexual assault, Section 4 prescribes a penalty of imprisonment for a minimum of 10 years which may extend to imprisonment for life and also liable to fine. If the penetrative sexual assault is on a child below 16 years, imprisonment for a minimum of 20 years which may extend to imprisonment for the remainder of natural life, shall also be liable to fine. In case of aggravated penetrative sexual assault, Section 6 prescribes imprisonment a minimum of 20 years which may extend to imprisonment for life for the remainder

of natural life, fine or with death. Section 8 provides for punishment for sexual assault, which is imprisonment for a minimum of 3 years which may extend to 5 years and fine while for aggravated sexual assault Section 10 increases this to a minimum of 5 years which may extend to 7 years. The Act also includes Section 14, which imposes up to 7 years of imprisonment for using children for pornographic purposes.

Additionally, the Act mandates special courts for speedy trials under Section 28; ensuring cases are handled with the utmost urgency and sensitivity, reflecting the law's zero-tolerance approach to crimes against children.

Further the POCSO Rules, 2020 were also notified by the Ministry to protect the children from exploitation/violence and sexual exploitation. POCSO Rules under Rule-3 provides that any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with children including schools, creches, sports academies or any other facility for children must ensure a police verification and background check on periodic basis, of every staff, teaching or non-teaching, regular or contractual, or any other person being an employee of such Institution coming in contact with the child. Such Institution shall also ensure that periodic training is organized for sensitizing them on child safety and protection.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) from the financial year 2023-2024, has also introduced a centrally funded scheme namely "Scheme for Care and Support to Victims under Section 4 & 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012" from NIRBHAYA Fund to address the challenges faced by the minor pregnant girl child victims for implementation by the State/UT Governments. The main objectives of this Scheme are:

- i. To provide integrated support and assistance to minor pregnant girl child victims under one roof;
- ii. To facilitate their immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services for long term rehabilitation in terms of:
 - access to education,
 - police assistance,
 - medical (also comprising maternity, neo-natal and infant care),
 - psychological, mental health counselling,
 - legal support,
 - non-institutional care support, place of stay in Child Care Institutions/Aftercare facilities, and health insurance cover for the girl child victim and her new-born baby under one roof to enable access to justice to such victimized girls.
