

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2455
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.02.2026

MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCY AMONG CHILDREN

2455. SHRI P V MIDHUN REDDY:

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

- (a) whether micronutrient deficiency among school children can affect their memory, cognition and working memory;
- (b) if so, whether the Ministry has conducted any survey about micronutrient deficiency among children in the country;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the details of the steps taken by the Government to curb the issue of micronutrient deficiency?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): Malnutrition is a complex and multi-dimensional issue, affected mainly by a number of generic factors including poverty, inadequate food consumption due to access and availability issues, poor maternal infant and child feeding and care practices, poor sanitary and environmental conditions, etc. The consequences of malnutrition during childhood *inter alia* include weaker immune systems and a greater risk of infection and disease, poor cognitive and developmental outcomes. In 2021, the World Bank conducted a survey on Poshan Abhiyaan in 11 priority states. The aim of this survey was to assess the program's delivery of nutrition services, whether the nutritional knowledge of beneficiaries had improved and if they had adopted more appropriate nutrition and feeding practices. The findings demonstrated that the services delivered through the Poshan Abhiyaan i.e. the receipt of relevant messages, home visits by the Anganwadi Worker, and attendance at community-based events were associated with improved nutrition behaviors. The survey also found that the program's nutrition messages reached more than 80% of women, and that 81% of women practiced exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Further, a third-party evaluation and impact assessment of Poshan Abhiyaan was conducted by NITI Aayog in 2020 and also in 2025 and has found its relevance

to be satisfactory for tackling malnutrition in the country. Under Mission Poshan 2.0, various steps have been taken to curb the issue of micronutrient deficiency which are as below:

- Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls in accordance with the nutrition norms contained in Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act, 2013. These norms have been revised in January 2023. 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 for quality protein, healthy fats and micronutrients (Calcium, Zinc, Iron, Dietary Folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin-B6 and Vitamin B-12). Extra Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Severely Acutely Malnourished (SAM) children as per National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- 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 at least once a week for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal and Take-Home ration at Anganwadi Centers.
- Poshan Vatikas or Nutri-gardens have been set up across the country to provide easy and affordable access to fruits, vegetables, medicinal plants and herbs. To encourage diet-diversity and consumption of wholesome local produce, Poshan Vatikas have been developed at AWCs.
- One of the major activities undertaken in the Mission Poshan 2.0 is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy to educate people on nutritional aspects as adoption of good nutrition habit requires sustained efforts for behavioural change. Further, Community Based Events (CBEs) conducted at the Anganwadi Centers have served as a significant strategy in promoting healthy nutritional practices.
- The 'Poshan Tracker' application was rolled out as an important governance tool. The Poshan Tracker facilitates dynamic identification of malnutrition prevalence among children. It has facilitated near real time data collection for Anganwadi Services such as, opening of AWCs, daily attendance of children, ECCE activities, Growth Monitoring of children, Provision of Hot Cooked Meal (HCM)/Take Home Ration (THR), Growth Measurement etc.

Besides above, following interventions are implemented in the schemes of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Education to address nutritional deficiencies among children :

- **Mothers' Absolute Affection (MAA)** Programme is implemented to improve breastfeeding coverage which includes early initiation of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding for first six months followed by counselling on age-appropriate complementary feeding practices.
- **Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs)** are set up at public health facilities to provide in-patient medical and nutritional care to children under 5 years suffering from Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM) with medical complications with special focus

on improving the skills of mothers and caregivers on timely, adequate and appropriate feeding for children.

- **Under Anaemia Mukht Bharat (AMB)** strategy prophylactic Iron Folic Acid supplementation as biweekly IFA syrup is provided to children (6-59 months) across all States/UTs.
- **Lactation Management Centres:** Lactation Management Units (LMU) are facilities established to ensure the availability of Mother's Own Milk or Donor Human Milk for feeding of sick, preterm and low birth weight babies admitted in Intensive Care Units.
- Under **National Deworming Day (NDD)** Albendazole tablets are administered in a single fixed day approach via schools and Anganwadi centres in two rounds (February and August) to reduce the soil transmitted helminth (STH) infestation among all children (1-19 years).
- **Vitamin A Supplementation** programme is implemented to administer biannual Vitamin A supplementation to all children below five years of age (9-59 months).
- **Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs)** are observed for provision of maternal and child health services and creating awareness on maternal and childcare including nutrition in convergence with Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)** under Ministry of Education provides one hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools as per nutrition norms under Schedule II of NFSA Act, 2013 to school going children from Bal Vatikas (pre-school) to Class VIII. The nutrition norms for the scheme are specified under the Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act, 2013, which have undergone recent revision to give more emphasis on provision of quality protein and essential micronutrients.
