

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION 3585
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.03.2026

ZERO FOOD CHILDREN

3585. SMT. BAG MITALI:

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

- (a) whether India has the highest zero food children in the world, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether India is part of 20 countries that account for almost two-thirds (65%) of the total number of children living in severe child food poverty, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether India has the second highest burden of deaths among children under the age of five years, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Uttar Pradesh has the highest zero food children, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) to (d) :There is neither any accepted concept nor any scientific definition of "Zero food children".

Further, as a whole of Government approach, high priority has been accorded by Government of India to the issues of food security and malnutrition in the country. Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) and Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L) are continuously undertaking targeted interventions to improve the health and nutritional status of children in the country.

To ensure food security of the bottom 67% (approximately) population of the country, including children, DFPD provides monthly free foodgrains under National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013. As on January 2026, a total of 81.34 crore beneficiaries have been benefitted. Under the Act, Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households are entitled to 35 kg food grains per household per month and Priority Households (PHH) to 5 kg of food grains per person per month. In 2025-26, foodgrain allocation under NFSA and other welfare scheme is 559.93 lakh metric tons.

Through the network of approximately 14.03 lakh Anganwadi Centres, the MoWCD provides Supplementary Nutrition to 7.1 crore Children (6 months to 6 years), 1.2 Crore Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers and 15 lakhs Adolescent Girls to address malnutrition by

adopting a life cycle approach under its umbrella Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. In 2025-26, foodgrain allocation under WBNP/ICDS is 23.63 lakh metric tons.

PM-POSHAN is a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme, implemented by Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSE&L). It covers all school children studying in Classes I-VIII in Government and Government-Aided Schools with the objective to provide one hot cooked meal every day. The scheme covers about 11.80 crore children studying in 11.20 lakh schools across the country. In 2025-26, foodgrain allocation under PM POSHAN is 22.31 lakh tons.

Also, National Health Mission (NHM) which is being implemented by MoHFW aims to provide universal access to equitable, affordable and quality health care services to people's needs in a lifecycle approach including interventions for addressing Infant Health and Child Nutrition. Also, over 1190 Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs) have been set up in public health facilities across India to provide in-patient medical and nutritional care to children under five years of age who are suffering from Moderate and Severe Acute Malnutrition (MAM & SAM).
