

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2080
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2023

MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN

2080 SHRI C. VE. SHANMUGAM:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that a large number of children in the country are suffering from malnutrition;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of the initiatives taken by Government to tackle malnutrition; and
- (d) whether Government proposes to organize any programme to sensitize people about malnutrition and the ways to tackle malnutrition, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) No sir, the indicators for malnutrition like underweight, stunting and wasting have shown a steady improvement in National Health Family Survey (NHFS) conducted by Ministry of Health & 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%, while Wasting has reduced from 21.0% to 19.3% and Underweight prevalence has reduced from 35.8% to 32.1%.

As per the data of Poshan Tracker for the month of November 2023, around 7.44 crore children under 6 years were measured, out of whom 37.51% were found to be stunted, 17.43% were found to be underweight and 6% children under 5 years were found to be wasted. The levels of underweight and wasting are much less than that projected by NFHS 5.

(c) & (d) The Government has accorded high priority to the issue of malnutrition and is implementing several schemes/programmes of different Ministries/Departments through States/UTs to address various aspects related to nutrition. In the 15th FC, components of nutritional support for children below the age of 6 years, pregnant women and lactating mother, Adolescent Girls (14 – 18 years); Early Childhood Care and Education [3-6 years]; Anganwadi infrastructure including modern, upgraded Saksham Anganwadi, POSHAN Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent Girls have been reorganised under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0).

Mission Poshan 2.0 focuses on Maternal Nutrition, Infant and Young Child Feeding Norms, Treatment of MAM/SAM and Wellness through Ayush practices to reduce wasting and under-weight prevalence besides stunting and anaemia.

Under Mission Poshan 2.0, Supplementary nutrition is provided to beneficiaries 300 days in a year through the network of 13.97 lakh AWC located across the country for bridging the gap in the intake as compared to the recommended dietary intake. Only fortified rice is being supplied to AWCs to meet the requirement of micro-nutrient and control anemia among women and children. Greater emphasis is being given on the use of millets for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal and Take Home rations (THR-not raw ration) at Anganwadi centres for Children below 6 years of age, Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers.

The objectives of Poshan 2.0 are as follows:

- To contribute to human capital development of the country
- Address challenges of malnutrition
- Promote nutrition awareness and good eating habits for sustainable health and well-being; and
- Address nutrition related deficiencies through key strategies.

Steps have been taken to improve nutritional quality and testing in accredited labs, strengthen delivery and leverage technology under Poshan Tracker to improve governance. States/UTs have been advised to promote use of AYUSH systems for prevention of malnutrition and related diseases. A programme to support development of Poshan Vatikas at Anganwadi Centres to meet dietary diversity gap leveraging traditional knowledge in nutritional practices has also been taken up.

Government issued Streamlining Guidelines on 13th January, 2021 to ensure greater transparency and accountability and quality in nutrition service delivery under the 'Poshan Tracker', a robust ICT enabled platform to improve governance with regard to real time monitoring of provisioning of supplementary nutrition for prompt supervision and management of services.

Under Poshan 2.0, one of the major activities undertaken is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy leading to Jan Andolan to educate the people on nutritional aspects. IEC material in the form of videos, pamphlets, flyers etc., in regional languages have also been developed around critical themes. Social & Behavioural Changes have been inculcated through conducting Community Based Events, *Poshan Maah* and *Poshan Pakhwada* in convergence with various Ministries/ Departments and other stakeholders. So far, more than 90 crore sensitisation activities have been reported by States/ UTs under community engagements programmes through 11 *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 nutrition practices. CBEs help to celebrate critical milestones in the life of pregnant women and children below two years of age and to disseminate critical information on inter alia, right time to ensure appropriate complementary feeding with diet diversity. Close to 3.70 crore Community Based Events have been held so far.
