

Child deaths due to malnutrition

637. SHRI NARAIN DASS GUPTA: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry is aware that as per India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative's Report, 68 per cent of child deaths in India are due to malnutrition;

(b) whether according to researchers from International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), women with low education and the poorest households are relatively more excluded from accessing benefits of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); and

(c) if so, what steps has the Ministry taken to specifically target the weakest sections of the society, the findings and results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI): (a) Malnutrition is not a direct cause of death among children under five years of age. It can increase morbidity and mortality by reducing resistance to infections. Malnourished children are more vulnerable to any infection than normal children. The overall under five child mortality rate has reduced from 74.3 (NFHS-3) to 49.7 (NFHS-4) deaths per thousand live births.

(b) and (c) Anganwadi Services under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme, aims to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers and reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity and malnutrition. Under the scheme, a package of six services is provided through a network of 13.77 lakh Anganwadi centres in the country. These services include Supplementary Nutrition, Pre-school non-formal education, Nutrition and Health Education, Immunization, Health check-up and Referral Services. While opening the AWCs, States/UTs are advised to open these centres in the areas inhabited by SC, ST and weaker sections of the society. The scheme is universal, open to all the covered beneficiaries but is self selecting. There is no economic, social, educational or any other condition attached to the scheme. The services are provided to those covered beneficiaries who access the same.

Vegetable cultivation in Anganwadi centres

638. SHRI T. G. VENKATESH: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is also planning to introduce vegetable cultivation in Anganwadi centres with an aim to provide healthy food for children; and