

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2719
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.03.2021

COVID-19 AND MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN

2719. SHRI BINOY VISWAM:

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

- (a) whether the Ministry has conducted any study on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic & lockdown on malnutrition and stunting in the country, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the steps taken by the Ministry to address the nutrition deficit amongst children created by COVID-19 pandemic;
- (c) whether Government is in the process of releasing National Guidelines for Community Based Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether the incidence of severe acute malnutrition has increased in 16 of the 22 States and UTs?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b) Government has been receiving regular reports from the States on the prevailing scenario and activities undertaken during COVID-19 pandemic, though no formal study on impact of CoVID 19 on malnutrition has been conducted.

During COVID-19, all Anganwadi Centres across the country were closed to limit the impact of the pandemic. However, to ensure continuous nutritional support to the beneficiaries, the Anganwadi Workers and Helpers distributed Supplementary Nutrition at the doorsteps of beneficiaries once in 15 days. In addition, they also assisted the local administration in community surveillance, creating awareness as well as other work assigned to them from time to time.

Government has taken measures to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes with focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition. Steps have also been taken to improve nutritional quality and testing, strengthen delivery and leverage technology to improve governance. Government has advised States/UTs to ensure that the quality of supplementary nutrition conforms to prescribed standards laid down under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and regulations made thereunder. States/UTs have also 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 centers to meet dietary diversity gap leveraging traditional knowledge in nutritional practices has also been taken up.

(c) & (d) Identification and management of Severe Acute Malnutrition is an on-going process. As per data made available by States/UTs, number of SAM children is less than 10 lakh now.
