

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1273
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27.07.2022

ACUTE LEVEL OF SEVERE MALNUTRITION IN DISTRICTS OF THE COUNTRY

1273. SHRI MUZIBULLA KHAN:

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

- (a) whether an analysis of district-level data titled 'Acute level of severe malnutrition in Indian districts' shows a steep rise in severe wasting in almost half of Indian districts between 2016 and 2021, severe wasting or severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in pre-school children i.e. aged 0-59 months increased in 341 districts out of 707 across 36 States and Union Territories;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether in 2015-2016, the level of SAM was 7.5 per cent, which increased to 7.7 per cent in 2019-2021; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government in the last three years to ensure food security?

ANSWER

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

(a) The estimated number of underweight, malnourished and severely malnourished children under 5 years of age is obtained under National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted by the 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%, Wasting has reduced from 21.0% to 19.3% and Underweight prevalence has reduced from 35.8% to 32.1%.

(b) 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, improper maternal infant and young child feeding and care practices, inequity and gender imbalances, poor sanitary and environmental conditions etc.

(c) As per the fifth round of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21, the percentage children under 5 years who are severely wasted (weight-for-height) was 7.7 percent as compared to 7.5 percent as per NFHS-4 (2015-16).

(d) Government has accorded high priority to the issue of malnutrition and is making serious efforts to address this issue. Government has enacted the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, which provides for food and nutritional security in human life

cycle approach by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices. The Act provides for coverage of up to 75% of rural and up to 50% of the urban population for receiving highly subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thus covering about two-thirds of the entire population.

NFSA also has special focus on the nutritional support to women and children. Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers and children up to 14 years of age are entitled to nutritious meals, free of cost, as per the prescribed nutritional standards. Accordingly, Supplementary Nutrition is provided at the Anganwadi Centers to children under 6 years of age, pregnant women, lactating mothers and out-of-school adolescent girls in the age group of 14-18 years.

Also, in order to address issue of micro nutrient deficiencies and anemia, the Government of India had approved the Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on "Fortification of Rice & its Distribution under Public Distribution System" on 14 February, 2019, for a period of 3 years beginning 2019-20. Further, Government has approved the supply of fortified rice throughout the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and in Other Welfare Schemes of Government of India in all States and Union Territories (UTs) in a phased manner by the year 2024.

Further, Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana was launched in 2020, during the Covid pandemic, as a food security welfare scheme for the poor. The program is operated by the Department of Food and Public Distribution under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. The additional foodgrains are distributed at the scale of 5 Kg per person per month, to around 80 Crore National Food Security Act (NFSA) beneficiaries in the country, over and above regular monthly NFSA foodgrains (i.e., monthly entitlement of respective NFSA ration cards) as a measure to ensure that no poor, vulnerable or needy beneficiary/ beneficiary household suffers due to non-availability of foodgrains during the pandemic induced economic crises.
