

## Addressing Nutritional Concerns

### What is the issue?

\n\n

The urgency to address poor nutrition in India especially among children, adolescent girls and women is compelling.

\n\n

### What is the status of under nutrition in India?

\n\n

\n

- According to the Global Nutrition Report 2016 and the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017, India ranks at 100 out of 119 countries with a low overall score of 31.4.

\n

- Among children less than 5 years, wasting (low weight for height), continues to be 21% in the 2017 index, it was 20% in 1992.

\n

- There has been a reduction in stunting (height for age) from 61.9% in 1992 to 38.4% in 2017.

\n

- Mortality among children less than 5 years old has declined to around 5% from 11% during the same period.

\n

- However, 25% of India's children less than 5 years old are still malnourished.

\n

- Added to this is the fact that 190.7 million people in India sleep hungry every night.

\n

- Over half of adolescent girls and women are anaemic.

\n

\n\n

### What measures were taken in this regard?

\n\n

\n

- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** has a network of 1.4 million Anganwadi Centres.  
\n
- It thus reaches almost 100 million beneficiaries who include pregnant and nursing mothers and children up to 6 years.  
\n
- **Mid-day meals (MDM)** reach almost 120 million children in schools.  
\n
- **Public Distribution System (PDS)** reaches over 800 million people under the National Food Security Act.  
\n
- **National Nutrition Strategy (NNS)** - Union government has announced this flagship program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.  
\n
- This will be anchored through the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) and has set very ambitious targets for 2022.  
\n
- The PoshanAbhiyaan has also specified three-year targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition and low birth weight by 2% each year, and to reduce anaemia by 3% each year.  
\n
- Additionally, NITI Aayog has worked on a National Nutrition Strategy (NNS).  
\n
- It isolated the 100 most backward districts for stunting and prioritised those for interventions.  
\n

\n\n

## **What are the concerns with government schemes?**

\n\n

- \n
- Both the NNS and the NNM have recognised the criticality of working collaboratively across Ministries.  
\n
- Yet both are silent on the constructive role of private sector, development agencies and civil society.  
\n
- There are no initiatives to exploring new models to address the structural and systemic issues on a priority basis.  
\n
- In the absence of coordination with industry to create an effective supply chain, this proposed intervention will be another missed opportunity.  
\n

\n\n

## **What are the measures to be taken?**

\n\n

\n

- An overhaul of capacity and capability of 3 existing programmes such as ICDS, MDM and NNM should be the first priority.

\n

\n\n

\n

- For purposeful action both union and state government need to have common goals and metrics for improving nutrition.

\n

- They should come up with metrics that are clear and measurable and a real-time tracking mechanism.

\n

- The approach, commitment and resources therefore have to be inter-generational, multi-sector, and multi-dimensional.

\n

- Government needs to mandate and scale staple food fortification comprising edible oil, wheat, rice and dairy products, in addition to salt.

\n

- Nutrition has to be “marketed” and made interesting, engaging, simple and personally relevant.

\n

- This is an expertise where the private sector can meaningfully contribute.

\n

- Well-structured public-private partnerships could thus be the catalyst.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n