

## Business Outlook

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## National Nutrition Month “September 2020”

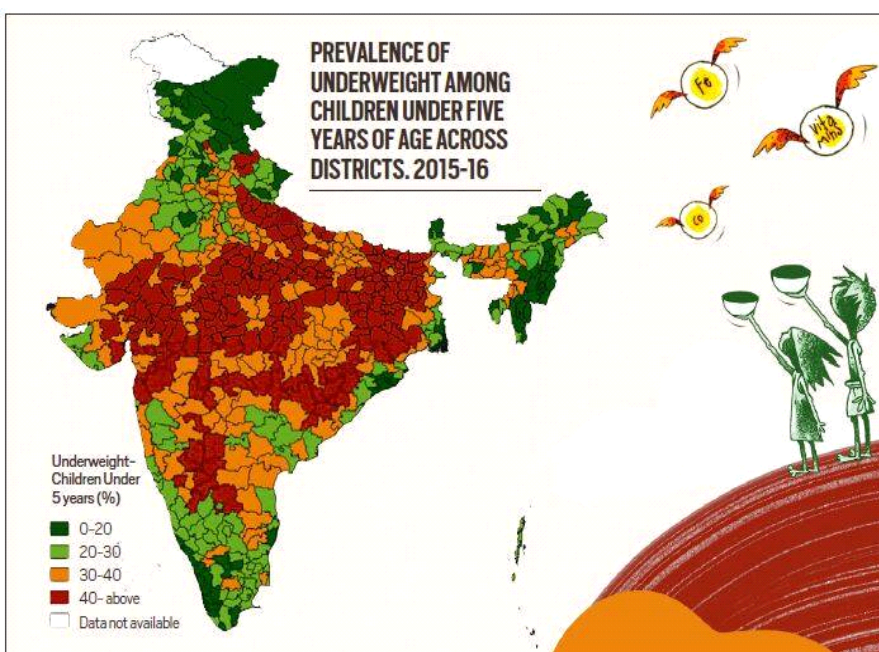


Nutrition month has created awareness through out India at School, Colleges level and immunity has been they key word in COVID days, so new vistas are seen. Create your opportunity yourself!

### Throwback

In India, the nutrition week was started in 1982 by the Central Government of India. The objective was to spread awareness regarding importance of nutrition, health, and sustainable lifestyle.

In our last issue, we defined malnutrition and its types and I think most of us are aware of the fact that India has almost one-third of the World's stunted children. And in the category of under-five in India, two-third of mortality rate in children is linked to malnutrition.



As per the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, several districts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and even Gujarat had more than 40% of underweight children.

## Initiatives to improve Nutritional status

Nutrition Month - Poshan Maah

"Yatha Annam Tatha Mannam."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed September month as Poshan Maah that is nutrition month in Mann ki Baat.

The theme for National Nutrition Week 2020 is  
'Eat Right, Bite by Bite'.

The above sentence means that "mental and intellectual development is directly related to the quality of our food intake."



"Nutrition"  
is  
More than Food  
More than HUNGER!  
- UNICEF India's Chief of  
Nutrition,  
Arjan De Wagt

### Role of nutrition in the first 1,000 days of Child birth

The first two years of child's age that counts 1000 days is the foundation of its life. This period is very crucial for the child's neurodevelopment and lifelong mental health. Health risks, like obesity, chronic degenerative diseases like hypertension, may be linked to the nutritional uptake in these 1000 days.

Thus, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recommend:

- To breastfeed baby within one hour of birth
- Exclusive dedicated breastfeeding for initial six months
- Adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods starting at six months, together with continued breastfeeding, up to two years of age or beyond.

Based on these recommendations, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Indian government has already taken efforts to spread this awareness through various initiatives aiming at making healthcare affordable and accessible to all, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

A POSHAN Abhiyaan- initiative launched in 2018 ensures holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.

It is a multi-ministerial convergence mission having a vision to free India from malnutrition by 2022. The objective of POSHAN Abhiyaan is to reduce stunting in the identified Districts of India. These districts are those having highest malnutrition load. The plan focuses on reducing malnutrition load by improving utilization of key anganwadi services and improving the quality of anganwadi services.

The monitoring and reviewing of all such schemes and utilizing available structural arrangements of line ministries wherever possible is also done. The largest component of the program involves gradual scaling-up of interventions supported by on-going World Bank assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Systems Strengthening, and Nutrition Improvement Project (SSNIP) to all districts in the country by 2022. Although the target to reduce stunting is at least 2% p.a., the mission would endeavor to achieve reduction in stunting from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

### Are the efforts fruitful?

In case of such big Nutrition programs, the coverage of area matters, which helps us in quantifying how many children are benefited. Unfortunately, many of them are not tapped and those are most vulnerable children.

Eg. On a road trip from New Delhi to Madhya Pradesh that is around 6,200 kms, there were various advertisements of fast food, instant noodles, pasta, cold drinks and one advertisement on breastfeeding. Well, there was a village which had a breastfeeding shelter and it had a message about the importance of breastfeeding.

So, on 2,600 km roadway – Only one message of good nutrition was advertised. Therefore, this is what needs to be tackled and the intensity of our initiatives should be triggered.

### Pandemic hit

COVID19 overall impact yet is not measured, but it is noticeable that it has led to health, economic and socio-economic crisis. Further, in addition to poverty, food insecurity and lack of nutritious food has worsened the situation.



A Lancet study, which was published in September 2019, indicated that in all children under the age of 5, that are dying in India, about two-thirds of those have malnutrition as an underlying cause.

And now because of COVID-19, the only concern is that these figures will increase and even the progress so far made due to Poshan Abhiyaan may dissolve.

Well, after the lockdown the Poshan Abhiyaan was halted and fortunately it has recently been resumed. The way the Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed nation to POSHAN Maah in his radio show was inspiring and it made us believe that nutrition is part of the conversation. Only program planning is not enough, but leadership to execute the initiative is equally important and that's the only way you can stop malnutrition.

### **Tracking and monitoring the initiatives**

In man ki baat, Modiji clearly stated the need of a monitoring tool that would track the progress of objectives.

#### **Monitoring tools like:**

- Providing anganwadi workers with mobile phones that will digitize the process, saving hard copies won't be required, files can be shared easily, and maintaining records will be easier.
- They can be even trained digitally, their issues can be resolved quickly and knowledge can be provided through video conferences.
- It has been noted that some states are already in digitization and there are few workers at anganwadi centers.
- Counseling in terms of making available food more nutritious for children is provided. Thus creatively providing resources make things possible and impact is visible.



**Lets work  
towards  
bringing their  
SMILE back!**

### **Regulations towards betterment:**

A clear guideline regarding food supplements has been released by DCGI that are directing towards ethical business practices. The committee headed by Prof. Kokate, since 2018, has declared 2131 Fixed Dose Combinations FDCs related to Multi-vitamins, minerals and micronutrients.

Those FDCs were categorized under four categories; irrational, require further deliberations, rational and require additional data generation. Recently, they have added more 471 FDCs that belong to rational category and the report of the committee has been accepted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). Thus, DCGI has also approved them and allowed the state licensing authorities (SLAs) to grant product licenses without the DCGI's no-objection certificate (NOC). Henceforth, the drug makers will have to get manufacturing licenses for those FDCs from the state Drug Controllers (DCS).

**Way ahead:**

- The three things that can help in ensuring Nutritional program to achieve its goals are coverage, continuity and intensity.
- The intent of messaging, educating people about the importance of health and nutrition.
- Join continued efforts to rebuild some of the lost ground of the last six months.
- Prevention of maternal malnutrition, will prevent a huge part of child malnutrition.
- Address anemia, provision of iron-rich foods and iron folic tablets to ensure women are healthy.
- Most importantly, create awareness that nutrition is more than foods, nutrition is more than hunger.

**Reference:**

- <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/poshan-abhiyaan-pms-overarching-scheme-holistic-nourishment>
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