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TOPIC OF THE DAY (DATE: 07.09.2023)

MALNUTRITION IN INDIA

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, Bemetara, district in Chhattisgarh showed that the problem of Malnutrition can be tackled through the proper eating and feeding practices (Nutritional Counselling).

BEMETARA : CASE STUDY

- Bemetara in Chhattisgarh is a puzzling district in the context of its malnutrition status. Situated in the fertile plains of Chhattisgarh, it is unaffected by Naxalite activities and is agriculturally rich. Its inhabitants are also relatively affluent. **However, the number of Severe Acute Malnourished (SAM) children there was as high as 3,299 in December 2022.**
- Here, the problem is not about access but improper knowledge around when, how and what to eat. This is why nutrition counselling combined with robust monitoring was chosen as the modus operandi for this area
- **Potth Laika Abhiyaan** — which means “Healthy Child Mission” in the Chhattisgarhi language — is a nutrition counselling programme that is being implemented in 72 of the most affected AWCs in the Bemetara subdivision of Bemetara district. It has the technical support of UNICEF.
- As a result of the **simple mantra of nutrition counselling along with regular monitoring and evaluation, as many as 53.77% of targeted children were brought out of malnutrition** by the Potth Laika Abhiyaan, in a span of nine months, i.e., from December 2022 to July, 2023 — 599 out of 1,114 children. Further, 61.5% of MAM children and 14.67% of SAM children have been brought out of malnutrition.
- Study of Bemetara outlined that **Nutrition counselling is a simple but powerful strategy**

NFHS - 2019-20

Indicator	2019-20	2015-16	2005-06
Children aged six to 59 months who are anaemic	67.1	58.6	69.4
Children under five who are stunted	35.5	38.4	48
Children under five who are wasted	19.3	21	19.8
Children under five who are severely wasted	7.7	7.5	6.4
Children under five who are underweight	32.1	35.8	42.5
Children aged six to 23 months receiving an adequate diet	11.3	9.6	-
Institutional births	88.6	78.9	38.7

What is Malnutrition?

Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization.

The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases.

Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies.

- **Wasting** is defined as low weight for height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. It usually occurs when a person has not had food

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adequate quality and quantity and/or they have had frequent or prolonged illnesses. Wasting in children is associated with a higher risk of death if not treated properly.

- **Stunting** is defined as low height for age. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poverty, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness, and/or inappropriate feeding and care in early life. Stunting prevents children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential.
- **Underweight** is defined as low weight for age. An underweight child may be stunted, wasted, or both.
- **Micronutrient deficiencies** are a lack of vitamins and minerals that are essential for body functions such as producing enzymes, hormones, and other substances needed for growth and development.

Prevalence:

- India is ranked at the bottom of the **Global Hunger Index (2022)**, which is determined by factors such as child stunting, wasting, and death placing India in **107th rank of 121 Countries**.
- According to India's **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) from 2019-21** reported that in children below the age of five years, 35.5% were stunted, 19.3% showed wasting, and 32.1% were underweight.
- The most cases of SAM are in Uttar Pradesh (3,98,359) followed by Bihar (2,79,427). Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are also home to the highest number of children in the country.

Initiatives taken to address the problem of Malnutrition

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a "Malnutrition Free India" by 2022.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013: It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.
- **Anaemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.

STUNTING* AMONG CHILDREN (0-5 YEARS)
% INCREASE FROM 2015-16 TO 2019 - 20

