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POSHAN ABHIYAAN: AN IMPACTFUL INITIATIVE FOR NUTRITIONAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

The POSHAN abhiyaan is launched on international women's day 8th March 2018 by Prime Minister Modi at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan. It was an important step in the battle against malnutrition in India. It was performed in a phased manner categorizing children aged 0-6yrs, pregnant women, adolescent girls and lactating females. For this purpose, different strategies are included like community engagement, ICT application, initiative to change behavior and efforts to enhance skills. Aim of this strategy is a significant step in improving nutritional status of people in a time-bound manner. Moreover, it is promoted as a Jan Andolan, rewarding achievements and supporting creative solutions along with accolades. This mission drew national attention to the malnutrition issue leading to a healthier future for India. This mission continues to focus on decreasing malnutrition rate and building the healthier future for the next generation. Yet, the battle against malnutrition is persistent.

KEYWORDS: POSHAN Abhiyaan, Malnutrition, Adolescent Girls, Lactating and Pregnant Women

INTRODUCTION

Poshan Abhiyaan is headed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with multiple ministries. The goal was to make India malnutrition-free by 2022 and also named as Suposhit Bharat. POSHAN mission (Prime Minister's overarching scheme for holistic nutrition) aimed to fight against stunting, particularly in the highest prevalence district of malnutrition. Primary objective is raising awareness about the importance of nutritious diet and enhancing availability to healthy food across the nation and strengthening nutritional services tailored to the needs of targeted groups. Through these efforts, this mission made a great effort to the foundation for healthier and nourished future for all Indians. ^{[1], [2]}

METHOD

NITI Aayog assessed the program's progress and real-world effects by regular monitoring and evaluation exercises.

Poshan Maah was combating malnutrition and promoting well-being. ^[3] However, challenges in convergence remain.

Result

Rashtriya Poshan Maah observed nationwide in September, which is a part of Poshan Abhiyaan, served as a catalyst for this mission. Different activities were organized during this one-month period engaging 30.6 crore individuals. These efforts impacted significant momentum into this mission with a main focus on promoting balanced diet, addressing low birth weight issues, preventing anemia and advocating for improved hygiene practices. ^[4]

The program targeted these key areas to fight against malnutrition and enhance overall health outcomes across the country.

Jan Andolan was a notable achievement

of Poshan maah, fostering widespread engagement and impactful implementation. By integrating the promotion of nutritious habits into daily life, the initiative started to instill a lasting change in public approach towards nutrition. Poshan maah success was emphasis on convergence at various levels. This concerted approach ensured that resources, efforts and expertise were integrated to maximize impact.

Some monitoring reports represents that many states have constituted convergence committed, quality and consistency of inter- sectoral coordination varies. In some districts, convergent action plan either absent or poorly implemented, limiting the effect of the scheme. The COVID 19 was further impacted program implementation as anganwadi centers were closed, leading to disturbance in supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring and health check-ups. Afterwards the mission resumed through innovations like doorstep delivery of dry rations, distribution of take home rations and virtual counseling sessions. ^[5]

DISCUSSION

Poshan Abhiyaan has become India's one of the comprehensive nutrition –focused initiatives, which deals with malnutrition with a life- cycle approach, technological integration, community participation and inter- sectoral convergence. The programmed has showed measurable improvements in nutritional indicators and also significantly increased awareness about nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices across the country.

This Poshan Abhiyaan benefited approximately 1.25 million children annually, by expansion of this abhiyaan into home based child care service. This is one of the major achievement. Child health outcomes improved by regular growth monitoring, promotion of breastfeeding, counselling of caregivers, timely complementary feeding and early identification of growth faltering. This assistance help prevents undernutrition during the first 1,000 days of life, a period which is pivotal for the physical growth and cognitive development. ^[6]

There is improvement in malnutrition indicators like wasting, stunting and underweight prevalence among children, it shows positive impact of well-coordinated nutritional interventions. The reduction in wasting

indicates enhancement in nutritional status, while decreased in stunting suggest improved long term nutritional adequacy and child development. This refinement is likely attributable for improvement of maternal nutrition, enhanced infant and young child feeding practices, strengthened health services and increased community awareness. Malnutrition rates dropped with wasting from 21% to 19.3%, stunting dropping from 38.4% to 35.5% and underweight prevalence from 35.8% to 32.1% among children. ^[7]

The main reason behind Poshan Abhiyaan is behavior change communication. This nutrition programed is converted into Jan andolan (people's movement) by Poshan Maah and Poshan Pakhwada activities. This large community participation through 40 crore activities has improved awareness regarding balanced diets, hygiene, breastfeeding, anemia prevention, complementary feeding and sanitation. These changes are essential because malnutrition is governed not only by food availability but also by knowledge, cultural practices and caregiving behaviors. ^[8]

Attachment of technological innovation has further strengthened programme application. Over 11 lakhs smartphones and growth monitoring devices were distributed to anganwadi workers for better tracking of children's health. This monitoring improved accountability, facilitates evidence based decision making and ensures targeted implementation for vulnerable population. Technological advancements played a crucial role in real time monitoring, data collection and effectiveness of service delivery. ^[9] Poshan abhiyaan emphasized collaboration between various departments of Government to address nutrition comprehensively. Such convergence ensures that nutrition sensitive implementations complement nutrition specific services, thereby maximizing overall output.

It also advocated inclusion of millets, which is innovative and sustainable approach. Millet is a nutritious and climate resilient grain, which is a rich source of dietary fiber, protein, iron, calcium and micronutrients. Inclusion of this millets in meal plans supports nutritional security, prevention of nutrient deficiency among the targeted population. Poshan maah activities reached an extensive number

of individuals, including 12, 24, 81,234 women, over 13 crore children and 6, 15, 37,080 men.

During Poshan maah, inter-sectoral community based activities were conducted like prabhat pheris, Poshan mela, annaprashan diwas, saas bahu sammelan, God bhara, video session and discussion in school on nutrition, plantation of nutritious vegetables, hand washing demonstration have facilitated direct engagement of targeted population. These cultural interventions encourage community ownership and enhance the adoption of healthy nutritional practices at home.

All ministries were circulated specific instructions to their line departments in states and district to address malnutrition comprehensively. Many districts and state officials monitor progress regularly and pleaded to end malnutrition, making it a personal agenda. To facilitate the exchange of best practices in addressing malnutrition, innovative ideas were exchanged across the country through extensive media coverage. All these efforts strengthen programme visibility and accountability. This Poshan abhiyaan build an enabling environment for sustained improvement in nutritional status. As Poshan maah transformed into a Jan andolan given significant momentum to Poshan abhiyaan. This andolan gives effective outstretch and implementation transcending routine government schemes and becoming a substantial movement. This Poshan maah aimed to ensure lasting impact and progress in addressing nutrition.

Overall, this abhiyaan extend beyond reducing malnutrition rate as well as strengthens health system, improved awareness, enhance community engagement and provided a multisector approach to nutrition. This Poshan abhiyaan provide a framework for enhancing maternal and child nutrition and achieving long term public health befits.

WAY FORWARD

Despite its significant achievements, this mission continues to face challenge in convergence, fund utilization, data management and service delivery. To accelerate this progress towards malnutrition free India, the following strategies can be useful. Regular preparation and review of convergent action plans should be ensured by State, district and block

levels by improving functionality of convergence committees. Ensure efficient and timely release of funds and transparent reporting mechanism to maximize impact. Anganwadi workers better training should be done to strengthen ICDS-CAS and Poshan dashboard. Thereby enhancing monitoring and service delivery. For effective last mile delivery, recruit and build capacity of frontline workers (AWWs, ASHAs, ANMs). Also development of contingency plans to sustain nutrition services to avoid impact on service during crises like COVID 19. ^[10] further efforts should strengthen this Jan andolan with focus on anemia prevention, breast feeding, dietary diversity and millet promotion.

Special focus should be on interventions for pregnant and lactating mother, children under two years of age. This interventions during this crucial phase of life gives opportunity can yield the greatest long-term benefits in reducing malnutrition and improving health outcomes across generations. ^[10]

CONCLUSION

Poshan abhiyaan is a crucial initiative, which has good impact on improvement of nutrition situation in India. It plays a crucial role in ensuring prosperity and wellbeing of person. Hence, it contributes to healthier and prosperous future of the nation. To accelerate the process of this abhiyaan as well as to address prevailing gaps and for effective implementation, the program underwent a reconstruction under Poshan 2.0, launched in 2022. This initiative endorsed by our government from 2021-2022 to 2025-26 under 15th finance commission, to combat malnutrition among the target population. Poshan 2.0 has a strong emphasis on maternal health and the promotion of overall wellness and immunity. It also integrates wider variety of nutritious food into diets, including millet, a protein rich grain. ^[11]

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