

Context

Despite being a mineral-rich state, Jharkhand is among the top Indian states with malnourished – including stunted, wasted, and underweight – children. According to NFHS 4 (2015-16), 45.3 percent, 29 percent and 47.8 percent of children are stunted, wasted and underweight, respectively. Only 30% of mothers are covered by regular ANC check-ups and approximately 65% of women across age brackets suffer from anaemia. A nutritional challenge of this kind and magnitude requires a multi-sectoral approach, and hence, the need for an initiative like SAAMAR (Strategic Action for Alleviation of Malnutrition and Anaemia Reduction project) was felt.

Highlights of the Initiative

SAAMAR is an ambitious programme focused on eradicating an evil that has deep roots in the state of Jharkhand. Its key components establish it as a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, housed in a rather under-developed state and gives Jharkhand the opportunity to lead by example.

The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) under ICMR emphasised on the need for a Nutrition Surveillance System to initiate response and act as an Early Warning System (EWS) back in 1993, however, progress was limited due to lack of appropriate technology.

In 2017, Niti Ayog proposed setting up of a National Nutrition Surveillance System including an EWS to track multiple vulnerabilities which promote malnutrition. However, the proposal was unable to be actualised. With SAAMAR, the idea is to achieve what has been proposed time and again as the solution to tackle the prevalence of malnutrition in India. SAAMAR seeks to establish the required Proof of Concept (PoC) for evidence-based policy making vis-à-vis malnutrition in the country.

Approach



Implemented through a life-cycle approach wherein all pregnant women, lactating mothers, children between 6 months and 10 years, adolescent girls between 10 to 18 years, and other women in the reproductive age group of 18 to 35 years will be targeted



Progress would be tracked across key indicators of malnutrition and anaemia through monthly digital surveys for a period of 1000 days eventually brought together on a unified platform - the Intergrated Chief Minister Dashboard



Dashboard will enable the tracking of individual beneficiaries and their nutritional status thus helping to build a holistic and comprehensive picture of nutrition from an individual all the way up to the state



The system will also work as an Early Warning System (EWS) by identifying individuals or families showing signs of distress who would be linked to
a) social protection measures
b) food security measures

Partners

The Nodal Department for the initiative is the Department of Women and Child Development, Govt of Jharkhand. A Project Management Unit (PMU) was set up under the aegis of the State Nutrition Mission (SNM) comprising the following agencies:

1. Policy & Development Advisory Group (PDAG) - Advisory, programmatic and technical support
2. UNICEF India - Development of training modules, media and IEC plan
3. IPE Global - Tagging and training of sub Health Centres with community level officials
4. Jharkhand State Rural Livelihood Mission - Development of data collection app and training
5. Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security - Tagging growth monitoring devices

Our Involvement

PDAG has been instrumental in conceptualisation of the SAAMAR campaign for the Govt of Jharkhand. We have been crucially involved with the following

- > Advise on development of research tool for the data collection exercise with a focus to map all key metrics including access to social security schemes, vulnerabilities under the 7 point SECC deprivation index etc
- > Help develop the sampling plan for targeting beneficiaries not regularly covered under ICDS services but essential to the project like children between 6 to 10 years, adolescents between 12 to 18 years of age etc.
- > Help document best practices from across the country and knowledge documentation
- > Overall monitoring of the entire SAAMAR initiative as part of PDAG's larger mandate to provide advisory service to the Chief Minister's Office
- > Draft guidelines for the Integrated Chief Minister's Dashboard in line with the Nutrition Surveillance System -cum- Early Warning System

Current Progress

The planned roll out had to be delayed due to the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, but progress in the following areas have been made

- > Drafting of a media and communication plan
 - > Drafting of a detailed questionnaire, required data collection tools and development of a mobile application to collect the program data
 - > Development of training curriculum along with Block level training workshops plan
 - > Identification of 5 pilot districts namely Chatra, Latehar, Sahebganj, Simdega and West Singhbhum and virtual conference with respective district officials
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