

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2264**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.12.2025

**INITIATIVES FOR THE WELFARE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

2264. SHRI SAUMITRA KHAN:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) the current status of malnutrition and anemia among women and children in the country along with the steps being taken to address these issues effectively including West Bengal;
- (b) whether any measures are being implemented to ensure safety and empowerment of women especially in rural and underserved areas of said State, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has introduced any new schemes/programmes to promote education and skill development of girls to enhance their participation in the workforce, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the details of the steps being taken to prevent child labour and ensure access to education and healthcare for all children; and
- (e) whether the Ministry is collaborating with State Government/NGOs to implement innovative approaches for the holistic development of women and children especially in the said State, if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

**(a):** The status of malnutrition among children in the country including in the State of West Bengal is available at: <https://www.poshantracker.in/statistics>

A total of 52.2% pregnant women are anaemic as per NFHS- 5 (2019-21). As per NFHS-5, 71% of women in West Bengal have anaemia, including 30 percent with mild anaemia, 39 percent with moderate anaemia, and 2 percent with severe anaemia. The information is available at: [https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR374/FR374\\_WestBengal.pdf](https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR374/FR374_WestBengal.pdf).

To address the challenge of malnutrition, Anganwadi services, Poshan Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent girls (14-18 years, in Aspirational Districts and North-Eastern region) have been subsumed under the umbrella Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0). It is a Centrally Sponsored Mission, where the responsibility for implementation of various activities lies with the States and UTs. This Mission is a universal self-selecting umbrella scheme open to all eligible beneficiaries, i.e., Children under 6 years of age, pregnant women, lactating mothers till 6 months after childbirth and adolescent girls (14-18 years of age) in Northeastern States and Aspirational Districts of the country. The Mission is being implemented across the country, including in the State of West Bengal.

To effectively address the issue of malnutrition, a multi-sectoral approach involving dimensions of food, health, water, sanitation and education is crucial. It is being addressed under the Mission by establishing cross cutting convergence amongst more than 18 Ministries/Departments.

Under this Mission, Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls (14-18 years) in accordance with nutrition norms contained in Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act, 2013. These norms have been revised in January 2023. The revised norms are more comprehensive and balanced in terms of both quantity and quality of supplementary nutrition based on the principles of diet diversity and recommend provision of quality protein, healthy fats and 7 essential micronutrients (Calcium, Zinc, Iron, Dietary Folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin-B6 and Vitamin B-12).

Fortified rice is being supplied under supplementary nutrition programme to meet the requirement of micro-nutrients among women and children. Greater emphasis is laid on the use of millets at least once a week for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal (HCM) and Take-Home Ration (THR) at Anganwadi Centers.

Ministries of Women & Child Development and Health & Family Welfare have jointly released the protocol for Protocol for Management of Malnutrition in Children to prevent and treat severely acute malnutrition in children and for reducing associated morbidity and mortality.

Poshan Tracker an ICT tool has been implemented for monitoring and tracking of all AWCs, AWWs and beneficiaries on defined indicators. Technology under Poshan Tracker is being leveraged for dynamic identification of stunting, wasting, under-weight prevalence among children in the whole country including tribal and remote areas. It has facilitated near real time data collection for Anganwadi Services such as, opening and closing of AWCs, daily attendance of children, ECCE activities, delivery of Hot Cooked Meal (HCM)/Take Home Ration (THR), Growth Measurement etc. The App also offers counselling videos on key behaviours and services which help disseminate messages on birth preparedness, delivery, post-natal care, breastfeeding, and complementary feeding.

Under this Mission, one of the major activities undertaken is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy to educate people on nutritional aspects as adoption of healthy eating habits requires sustained efforts for behavioural change. State and UTs are conducting and reporting regular sensitisation activities under Jan Andolans during Poshan Maahs and Poshan

Pakhwadas celebrated in the months of September and March-April respectively. Community Based Events (CBEs) have served as a significant strategy in changing nutritional practices and all Anganwadi workers are required to conduct two Community Based Events every month. Additionally, Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs) are observed by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in convergence with Ministry of Women and Child Development for creating mass awareness on maternal and child health services including nutrition.

A total of 2 lakh Anganwadi Centres have been approved to be upgraded as Saksham Anganwadis for improved nutrition delivery and for imparting early childhood care and development. Saksham Anganwadis are provided with better infrastructure than the conventional Anganwadi Centres which includes internet/Wi-Fi connectivity, LED screens, water purifier/installation of RO Machine and smart learning equipments.

Besides above efforts by Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is implementing Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) strategy in a life cycle approach under National Health Mission (NHM), which includes interventions to address malnutrition and anaemia across all States/UTs in the country. One of the interventions is Anaemia Mukh Bharat. To address nutritional deficiencies among children across the country, following interventions are implemented:

- Mothers' Absolute Affection (MAA) Programme is implemented to improve breastfeeding coverage which includes early initiation of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding for first six months followed by counselling on age-appropriate complementary feeding practices.
- Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers (NRCs) are set up at public health facilities to provide in-patient medical and nutritional care to children under 5 years suffering from Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM) with medical complications with special focus on improving the skills of mothers and caregivers on timely, adequate and appropriate feeding for children.
- Under Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB) strategy prophylactic Iron Folic Acid supplementation as biweekly IFA syrup is provided to children (6-59 months) across all States/UTs.
- Lactation Management Centres: Lactation Management Units (LMU) are facilities established to ensure the availability of Mother's Own Milk or Donor Human Milk for feeding of sick, preterm and low birth weight babies admitted in Intensive Care Units.
- Under National Deworming Day (NDD) albendazole tablets are administered in a single fixed day approach via schools and Anganwadi centres in two rounds (February and August) to reduce the soil transmitted helminth (STH) infestation among all children (1-19 years).
- Vitamin A Supplementation programme is implemented to administer biannual Vitamin A supplementation to all children below five years of age (9-59 months).
- Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs) are observed for provision of maternal and child health services and creating awareness on maternal and childcare including nutrition in convergence with Ministry of Women and Child Development.

**(b):** Measures being implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to ensure safety and empowerment of women especially in rural and underserved areas of West Bengal are as follows:

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) has been enacted to prevent and curb child marriages and to take punitive action against those associated with the solemnisation of child marriages. Since, the enactment of The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) 2006, the prevalence of child marriage in the country has reduced to almost half from 47 % in National Family Health Survey (NFHS)- 3 (2005- 06) to 23.3% in NFHS-5 (2019-21). This shows that the law has a strong effect in prevention of child marriages in the country.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) implements the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) component under the umbrella scheme of 'Mission Shakti', wherein creation of awareness on matters pertaining to gender equality and discouraging child marriage is an important focus area.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) under the Ministry also undertakes awareness programs and consultations with stakeholders from time to time in this regard. The National Legal Services Authority with its States and District arms also creates awareness about the ill- effects of child marriage.

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to its functionaries for effective prevention of child marriages in coordination with the statutory officers and other authorities. It also has a dedicated helpline 15100 which provides free legal aid to the specified sections of citizens including women and children.

The Ministry launched 'Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat' campaign on last year which focuses on making India child marriage free. It is one of the most important imperatives to promote education, skilling, enterprise and entrepreneurship among girls and women to realise the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' through 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach, including the civil society organisations. Under the campaign, a portal '<https://stopchildmarriage.wcd.gov.in>' has been launched to support the States and UTs in raising awareness against child marriage and for effective reporting and prevention of incidences of child marriage. The portal also has facility to provide information to citizens about Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) of all States/ UTs. The portal has information of more than 38,000 CMPOs which is accessible by the public.

In addition, the Ministry has introduced Child Helpline with short code 1098, a toll-free 24\*7\*365 telephone emergency outreach service for children in crisis.

Shakti Sadan Scheme under the overarching Mission Shakti, erstwhile Schemes of Swadhar Greh for women in difficult circumstances and Ujjawala Home for Prevention of Trafficking have been merged and known as Shakti Sadan which is an Integrated Relief and Rehabilitation Home for women in distress situations including trafficked women. The Scheme is a demand driven Centrally Sponsored Scheme, under which funds are released directly to the States/UTs for implementation of the scheme. It aims at creating a safe and enabling environment for the

women in distress situations, to enable them to overcome the difficult circumstances. Presently, 407 Shakti Sadans are functional across the country.

Sakhi Niwas Scheme (Working Women Hostel) under the overarching Mission Shakti, is a demand driven Centrally Sponsored Scheme, under which funds are released directly to the States/UTs for implementation of the scheme. The scheme aims to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women in urban, semi-urban and in rural areas where employment opportunity for women exists. Under the Scheme, financial assistance is provided for running of Sakhi Niwas in rented premises for working women and for those women who are under training for job. Provision of Day Care Centre for children of the residents of the Sakhi Niwas is an important aspect of the scheme. Presently, 531 Sakhi Niwas are functional across the country.

**(c) to (e):** Government of India has taken proactive steps to improve employability of the women, through skill development. Under the Skill India Mission (SIM), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) delivers skill, re-skill and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres under various schemes, viz. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Sikhshan Sansthan (JSS), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), to all the sections of the society across the country, including women in rural areas. SIM aims at enabling youth, including women of India to get future ready and equipped with industry relevant skills.

Further, to encourage participation of women in skill development programs, special provisions have been made for meeting expenditure on conveyance and boarding & lodging as well as enhanced post placement support. PMKVY 4.0 prioritizes and provides special focus to projects that emphasize women as primary beneficiaries. Special Projects under PMKVY are designed to align with local skill demands, creating opportunities for rural women to participate and benefit from skill development schemes. This inclusive approach ensures significant representation and benefit for women in skill training programs across the country. Under NAPS, the introduction of trades in services sector (Optional Trade) has led to the significant improvement in the women participation in apprenticeship. Under JSS Scheme, focus is being given to women and other vulnerable sections. Women constitute more than 82% of beneficiaries under JSS. Also, there are 19 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) and more than 300 ITIs exclusively for women. Government of India approved 30% reservation of seats for women candidates in all ITIs (Govt. & Private) in all courses and these seats could be filled based on the general reservation policy of each respective State/UTs.

MSDE in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, has launched a joint initiative named NAVYA Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls. NAVYA is a pilot initiative aimed at equipping adolescent girls aged 16-18 years with a minimum qualification of class 10, with vocational training mainly in non-traditional job-roles.

Also, MSDE in collaboration with the Women Entrepreneurship Platform of NITI Aayog, launched the Swavalambini a Women Entrepreneurship Programme in February 2025 in the Northeastern States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and also in Uttar Pradesh and Telangana. The programme aims to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset among female students through Entrepreneurship Awareness Training (EAP) and Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP). National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Noida and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati are the implementing agencies under aegis of MSDE.

The Ministry of WCD is implementing a centrally sponsored scheme namely "Mission Vatsalya" under which support is provided to State and UT Governments to deliver various services for children in difficult circumstances including victims of child labour. The Child Care Institutions (CCIs) established under the scheme support, inter-alia, age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, health care, counselling etc. and covers both rural and urban children. Under Non-Institutional Care Services, support is provided to the children through Sponsorship, Foster Care, Adoption and After Care.

Further, The Ministry of women and Child Development is the nodal Ministry for the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act, 2015) which is the primary legislation for ensuring safety, security, dignity and well-being of children and is implemented by the States and UTs.

As per Section 2 (14) (ii) and (ix) of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) as amended in 2021, a child who is found working in contravention of labour laws for the time being in force or is found begging, or living on the street and who is found vulnerable and is likely to be inducted into drug abuse or trafficking is included as a “child in need of care and protection”, among others.

The JJ Act, 2015 mandates a security net of service delivery structures to provide Institutional and non-Institutional care to these children. The primary responsibility of execution of the Act, as such, lies with the State/UTs. Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing Mission Vatsalya Scheme for care, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in difficult circumstances. Under Mission Vatsalya, financial assistance is provided to State Governments/UT Administrations, for, inter-alia, undertaking a situational analysis of children in difficult circumstances, for setting up and maintenance of various types of Child Care Institutions (CCIs) for providing various rehabilitative services through institutional and non-institutional care.

Besides this, under Mission Poshan 2.0, Rs. 4 Lakh per district is provided annually to the districts in all States and UTs, to introduce best practices/ replicable innovation that contribute to addressing the challenge of malnutrition.

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