

MERA BACCHA ABHIYAN: AN INITIATIVE TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION THROUGH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (MADHYA PRADESH)

In a nutshell: An initiative where government officials, NGOs and members of public can 'adopt' a malnourished child as their own, to ensure the child's speedy and time bound recovery in the district of Datia, Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh.

Nodal agency: District administration, Datia

Datia district in Bundelkhand, where malnutrition is an inherent issue and has historically affected the growth and development of children, ultimately affecting the development of the region.

Following intensive brainstorming, the idea of having officials and other capable influencers utilize their personal capacity to adopt a malnourished child as their own 'Mera Baccha' to ensure the child's speedy and time bound recovery was developed. To enable planned execution of this idea, an initiative 'Mera Baccha Abhiyan' was started in Datia district under Poshan Abhiyan as an approach based initiative in which a capable person ensures the speedy recovery of the adopted malnourished (SAM or MAM) child by establishing an emotional connect with the child and the child's family.

The execution of the initiative began with detailed discussions in the DCG followed by preparation of a list of potential adopters. Thereafter, the identified potential adopters were invited for orientation. Following the orientation, an awareness campaign was undertaken to inform other stakeholders such as public, PRIs, doctors etc. about 'Mera Baccha Abhiyan' and to further motivate them to take part in the initiative.

The adopters must maintain regular contact through weekly telephonic conversations and by visiting the child once in fifteen days. The adopters address the capacity gap by counselling the parents of the child and providing required support such as medical, nutritional as well as through knowledge sharing. The adopter is required to maintain the progress of the child using charts in the file of the child through regular follow-ups and update the file regularly.

To reach the target of exclusive breast feeding of infants up to six months of age, 100% exclusive breast-feeding program was also launched in hospitals. This is to ensure 100% breast feeding of the child within one hour of the birth and exclusive breastfeeding till six months after the birth.

Suposhan Mela, the first such activity, was organized once in three months in every block of the district. The adopters bring the child to the mela, where the health check-up of the child is conducted by paediatricians and a diet plan is prepared by a nutritionist. Suposhan & Swachhta kits are also provided.

Furthermore, strengthening of AWCs of the district was taken up through improvements in its infrastructure through public participation. Poshan Matka Karyakram has also been initiated in which a handful of grains were brought by women of AWCs each day and these grains are then cooked on Saturday for balbhoj. This increased the attendance of children in AWC and improved the regularity of women in AWC.

Poshan clubs were also established to provide training to the AWWs and counselling to the parents. The clubs are conceived as a one-stop centre to provide resources to the child under Mera Baccha Abhiyan. To further deepen community involvement local Bhajan Kirtan Mandli were used as community mobilizers to spread the message regarding the necessity to fight malnutrition through folk songs and to bring social change by generating awareness about nutrition. School teachers were also used as Poshan Gurus to generate awareness about nutrition among children of the school and among the people of the respective local area.

Convergence of various departments and their schemes such as PHE department for Jal Jeewan Mission, health department for health check-up of child, food and civil supplies for the availability of food grains to children, education department for awareness, ST welfare department for reducing malnutrition among Sahariya tribe ensures that the child receives all the necessary care to combat malnutrition among the tribals.

Outcome

A remarkable reduction of 17.5% in malnutrition rate has been achieved in NFHS-V data. As a result, current malnutrition rate stands at 4.99%, which is very low in comparison to the State average. Datia district has not only reduced stunting and wasting cases but has also seen improvement in other parameters such as increment in rate of immunization from 53.2% (NFHS-IV) to 79.6% (NFHS-V), reduction in diarrhoea from 12.9% (NFHS-IV) to 5.7% (NFHS-V), increase in breast feeding from 32% to 56.4% (as per recent NFHS-V data). In fact, Datia has achieved 100% breast feeding through Mera Baccha Abhiyan.



Poster for Mera Bachha Abhiyan, Datia



Poshan Club in action as part of Mera Bachha Abhiyan