

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4443
ANSWERED ON:07.12.2010
REDUCTION IN MALNUTRITION
Acharia Shri Basudeb;Biju Shri P. K.

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the national commitment to reduce malnutrition has been achieved;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the basis for making the said commitment in the presence of the system of above Poverty Line and Below Poverty Line categorisation; and
- (d) the reasons for not adopting the universal Public Distribution System in order to reduce malnutrition effectively?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) and (b): A National Nutrition Policy has been adopted in 1993 and a National Plan of Action for Nutrition (1995) is being implemented through various Departments of Government. A National Nutrition Mission has been set up. Government has accorded priority to the issue of malnutrition particularly in respect of children, adolescent girls and women and has been implementing several schemes/ programmes of different Ministries/ Departments through State Governments/ Union Territories which impact directly or indirectly on the nutritional status. These schemes, inter-alia, include Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Mid Day Meals Scheme, Drinking Water & Total Sanitation Campaign, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Public Distribution System, etc. The recently introduced Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG), namely SABLA would provide a package of services including health and nutrition to adolescent girls in the age group of 11-14 years for out of school girls and 15-18 years for all girls for nutrition in 200 districts as a pilot. Several of the schemes namely, ICDS, NRHM and Mid Day meal (MDM) have been expanded to provide for increased coverage and improved services to the people.

As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), the prevalence of underweight children below three years of age has declined from 42.7 percent in 1988-99 (NFHS-II) to 40.4 percent in 2005-06 (NFHS-III)

(c) and (d): Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) focused on the poor was introduced in June, 1997. Under TPDS, foodgrains @ 35 kg per family per month are allocated to States/UTs for 6.52 crore accepted number of BPL/Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families for distribution at highly subsidized prices. Depending upon their availability in central pool and past offtake, foodgrains are also allocated to Above Poverty Line (APL) families at subsidized prices. Presently, the allocations for APL category range between 15 and 35 kg foodgrains per family per month.

Government is not considering to adopt Universal Public Distribution System as the focus on poor will get diluted. It would require procurement of huge quantities of wheat and rice which would result in less availability of foodgrains in the market, leading to rise in open market prices. If the same quantity of foodgrains is distributed equally among all, then the scale of issue will have to be reduced. Further, in order to manage the level of food subsidy, the issue prices of rice and wheat may have to be increased substantially from the present Central Issue Prices (CIPs) which have not been revised during the last eight to ten years. This may result in BPL and AAY families getting reduced scale of foodgrains and paying higher prices.