

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3416
ANSWERED ON:31.08.2012
UNDERWEIGHT INFANTS
Baske Shri Pulin Bihar

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the number of underweight infants born in India is the highest in comparison to the neighbouring countries such as China;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the steps taken to educate the expectant mothers for improving their nutrition?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY)

(a): No. The incidence of low birth weight babies in India is the same as in neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. As per the NFHS 3 data, 22 per cent babies are born with low weight (birth weight less than 2500 grams). In comparison, the incidence of low birth weight in Bangladesh is 22 per cent, Nepal 21 per cent, Pakistan 32 per cent and China 3 per cent as per the data reported by UNICEF for the period 2005-2010.

(b): The condition of low birth weight at birth is chiefly because of under nutrition of the mother prior to and during pregnancy, micronutrient deficiency especially Iron. Others reasons are infections, physical exertion, educational level of mother and environment at home.

(c): Steps taken to educate expectant mothers under the National rural Health Mission as are:

Nutrition Education on VHNDs (Village Health and Nutrition Days) to increase the awareness and bring about desired changes in the dietary practices.

Information and counselling for adolescent girls and boys through the adolescent health programme under RCH.

Inter personal communication and counselling of expectant mother by the Accredited Social health Activist (ASHA) worker regarding diet and Iron & Folic Acid Supplementation.