



## Curbing Malnutrition in India

**For Prelims:** NFHS-5, Malnutrition, Stunting, Wasting.

**For Mains:** Findings of NFHS-5, Health, Issues related to women, Population and associated issues.

### Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has released targets to curb [Malnutrition in India](#).

### What are the Targets released to Curb Malnutrition?

- **Aims at reducing stunting and under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) among children** below 6 years by 2% each year.
- **Aims to Reduce**, low birth weight by 2% per annum, [Anaemia](#) among children between six and 59 months, as well as women and adolescent girls (15 to 49 years), by 3% per annum.
  - Anaemia is a medical condition in which the blood doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells.
- **Highlighted the NFHS-5 Report**, which comprises of **detailed information on key domains of population**, such as:
  - health and family welfare, [fertility](#), family planning, infant and child mortality, maternal and child health, nutrition and anaemia, morbidity and healthcare, [women's empowerment](#) etc.

### What are the Findings of the NFHS-5?

- **Data on Stunted Children:**
  - Meghalaya has the **highest number of stunted children (46.5%)**, followed by Bihar (42.9%).
  - Maharashtra has **25.6% wasted children (weight for height)** — the highest — followed by Gujarat (25.1%).
  - Jharkhand has the highest percentage of women (26%), between 15 and 49 years, who have a below-normal [Body Mass Index \(BMI\)](#).
- **Other Findings:**
  - The **Total Fertility Rates (TFR)**, an average number of children per woman, has declined **from 2.2 to 2.0** at the national level between NFHS-4 & 5.
  - Overall [Contraceptive Prevalence Rate \(CPR\)](#) has increased substantially from **54% to 67%** in the country.
  - [Institutional Births](#) have increased substantially from 79% to 89% in India.
  - Stunting has reduced **from 38.4% to 35.5%**, **wasting from 21.0% to 19.3%** and underweight prevalence is down from 35.8% to 32.1%.
  - Women (15-49 years) whose **BMI (Body Mass Index) is below normal has reduced from 22.9% in NFHS-4 to 18.7% in NFHS-5.**

## What are Malnutrition and Related Initiatives?

### ▪ About:

- Malnutrition is the **condition that develops when the body is deprived of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients** it needs to maintain healthy tissues and organ function.
- Malnutrition occurs in **people who are either undernourished or over nourished.**

### ▪ Initiatives:

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a “Malnutrition Free India” by 2022.
- **Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.

## Way Forward

### ▪ Increase Financial Commitments:

- There is a **greater need to increase investment in women and children’s health** and nutrition to ensure their sustainable development and improved quality of life.

### ▪ Outcome-oriented Approach:

- India must **adopt an outcome-oriented approach on nutrition programmes.**
- There has to be **direct engagement with nutritionally vulnerable groups** (this includes the elderly, pregnant women, those with special needs and young children), and contribute toward ensuring last-mile delivery of key nutrition services and interventions.

### ▪ Basic Education and General Awareness:

- Various studies highlight a **strong link between mothers’ education and improved access and compliance with nutrition interventions** among children.
- We must ensure the young population a competitive advantage, nutrition and health are foundational to that outcome.

### ▪ Programmes’ Monitoring and Evaluation:

- There should be a **process to monitor and evaluate programmes** and address systemic and on the ground challenges.
- There is a need to deliberate over effective policy decisions, monitor the implementation of schemes, and **review nutritional status across States.**

**Source: IE**