



## India's Progress in Tackling IMR, MMR and Malnutrition

**For Prelims:** Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, Malnutrition, Undernutrition, NFHS 5, Registrar General of India, Poshan Abhiyan, National Health Mission, ICDS Scheme, Anaemia, Hidden Hunger, Initiatives to tackle Malnutrition

**For Mains:** Challenges to tackling Malnutrition, IMR and MMR and India's related initiatives

### Why in News?

The data presented by the [Registrar General of India \(RGI\)](#) presents a gain in momentum of the pace of decline in India's **maternal and infant mortality rates (MMR and IMR)** post-2005.

- Unfortunately, nutrition is one key area that has **remained oblivious to any major progress.**

### What is the Registrar General of India?

- Founded in 1961 under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, the RGI **arranges, conducts and analyses the results of the demographic surveys of India** ([Census of India](#) and [Linguistic Survey of India](#)).
- The **position of Registrar is usually held by a civil servant** holding the rank of Joint Secretary.
- The Office of RGI is primarily responsible for conducting:
  - Housing & Population Census
  - [Civil Registration System \(CRS\)](#)
  - Sample Registration System (SRS)
  - [National Population Register \(NPR\)](#)
  - Mother Tongue Survey

### What Progress has been Made in Reducing MMRs and IMRs?

- **Declining Trends:**
  - According to a special bulletin released by the office of the RGI, **India's MMR was 97 during 2018-2020** compared to **301 during 2001-03.**
  - The **IMR has also been reduced to 27 (as of 2021)** compared to **58 in 2005.**
    - The Rural-Urban difference in this context has also been narrowed.
- **Role of NHM and NRHM:** As observed, for the last few years the **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** and the [National Health Mission \(NHM\)](#) has been a game changer for the country in terms of mortality reductions for infants and mothers.
  - The NRHM was launched in 2005 to provide accessible and affordable healthcare through a public system of primary health care.
  - NHM was launched by the government of India in 2013 subsuming the National Rural

Health Mission (Launched in 2005) and the National Urban Health Mission (Launched in 2013).

## What is the Scenario of Tackling Malnutrition?

- **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**.
- **Findings of NFHS 5:**
  - The **5<sup>th</sup> National Family Health Survey 2019-21** reports **35.5% of children under 5 are stunted, 19.3% are wasted, and 32.1% are underweight**.
    - **Meghalaya** has the **highest number of stunted children** (46.5%), followed by Bihar (42.9%).
    - **Maharashtra** (25.6%) has the **highest percentage of wasted children** followed by Gujarat (25.1%).
  - Compared with NFHS-4, the **prevalence of overweight or obesity has increased** in most States/UTs in NFHS-5.
    - At the national level, it increased from 21% to 24% among women and 19% to 23% among men.
  - The **incidence of anaemia** in under-5 children (from 58.6 to 67%), women (53.1 to 57%) and men (22.7 to 25%) has **worsened in all States of India**.
- **Inefficiency of Govt. Initiatives:**
  - The **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, though innovative, is still not addressing the institutional **decentralised public action challenge** yet.
  - The initiatives for nutrition have remained **compartmentalised and fragmented**; the institutional role of local panchayats and communities with **untied financial resources is still lagging**.
- **Other Issues:**
  - The **vicious cycle of poverty, undernutrition**, diminished work capacity, low earnings and poverty.
  - **Infections like malaria and measles** precipitate acute malnutrition and **aggravate the existing nutritional deficit**.
  - Arbitrariness and inter-state-variation in determining a household's BPL status results in **arbitrary identification of hunger**.
  - **Negligence towards micro-nutrient deficiency (hidden hunger)** and **inadequate knowledge among mothers** regarding nutrition and breast-feeding.

## What Initiatives have been launched to Tackle Malnutrition?

- **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.
- **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, immunisation, health check-up and referral services** to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.
- **Eat Right India** and **Fit India Movement** are some other initiatives to **promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyle**.

## What Should be the Reorganisation Principles for Nutrition Success?

- Vesting in **grassroot level administration** (Gram Panchayat, Gram Sabha and other community organisations), the **responsibility of education, health, nutrition, skills and diversified livelihoods**.
- Operationalising **village-specific planning process with decentralised financial resources**.
- Assessing (and accordingly increasing) (a) the **need for additional caregivers** with capacity development to **ensure household visits** and (b) the **intensity of monitoring** needed for outcomes in nutrition.
- Encouraging **diversity of local food including millets**, served hot.
- Intensifying **behaviour change communication**.
- Institutionalising monthly health days at every Anganwadi centre with **community connection and parental involvement**.
- Creating a **platform for adolescent girls in every village for empowerment** and for diversified livelihoods through skills.

## Conclusion

Nutrition as a subject calls for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Technology can at best be a means and monitoring too has to become local. Panchayats and community organisations are the best way forward.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

#### Q. Which of the following are the objectives of 'National Nutrition Mission'? (2017)

1. To create awareness relating to malnutrition among pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2. To reduce the incidence of anaemia among young children, adolescent girls and women.
3. To promote the consumption of millets, coarse cereals and unpolished rice.
4. To promote the consumption of poultry eggs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 3 and 4 only

Ans: (a)

### Mains

Q. Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples. (2021)

[Source: IE](#)

PDF Referenece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/india-s-progress-in-tackling-imr-mmr-and-malnutrition>