

Name of Project/Proposal: Improving Nutrition Outcomes of Young Children with a focus on Diet Quality, Quantity and Diversity in Sheikhpura District of Bihar (JIWAN Project)

Project Beneficiaries: Children under 06 years of age, Pregnant and lactating women in the intervention areas.

The project will work for improving nutrition outcomes of young children with a focus on diet quality, quantity and diversity. The overall goal of the Project is to ensure that the children and pregnant & lactating women achieve sustainable improvement in their food and nutrition intake. Combating child malnutrition requires a focus on both food diversity and food sufficiency as these two factors play a vital role in ensuring children receive adequate nutrients essentials for growth, development and long -term health. Focus on dietary indicators as an outcome has twin implications, first dietary intake assessments can offer direct inferences on gaps in food intake; and two actions and strategies can be devised to support food supplementation to promote dietary diversity and dietary adequacy. Project proposes prioritizing age -appropriate Feeding practices as the focal point. This is the first initiative of its kind where feeding practices take a CenterStage across all levels of interventions and engagement. This includes training of Frontline Workers (AWWs, ASHAs) on providing detailed, actionable feeding counselling. Incorporating feeding practices into social and behaviour change communication strategies, grassroots mobilisation efforts, and discussions at the sub centre, block and district level is also part of the strategies. Moreover, Panchayati Raj Institutions would be engaged to ensure that local governance structures actively support and promote targeted nutrition interventions. Project would leverage VHSNDs as dual platform for both growth monitoring as well as Diet Monitoring as focusing on both aspects of nutrition and growth failure is crucial. Growth monitoring identifies the progress on growth curves whereas diet monitoring identifies the current deprivations and assess dietary intake patterns. Assessing Diet Diversity would be done using the simple tools to evaluate the diversity and quality of a child's diet such as whether key food groups like energy, protein and micronutrients are included. By demonstrating a pilot of milk supplementation through ICDS system project envisages to improve both diet and growth outcomes of children.

Project will lay special emphasis on High-risk, underserved populations and promote improving dietary intake, complementing the ICDS supplementary nutrition programme and convergence at the grass roots at community health social welfare systems. In the beginning, Project will go for a dietary and social assessment with a view to review child's diet, food availability, eating habits and family support system. It would help in devising area specific key implementation strategies and focus.

Project Goal: Children achieve sustainable improvement in their food and nutrition intake status with a special focus on most vulnerable populations and families

Objectives:

- Building capacities of Front line workers and mothers/caregivers on Infant and young child feeding practices for improving dietary intake in children under 6 years
- Sensitizing and training Panchayati Raj Institutions to prioritise child nutrition into Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs)

- Conducting routine diet monitoring and promotion through Home visit and using Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Days
- Strengthening and complementing the Supplementary Nutrition programme(SNP) by inclusion of dairy and setting up of Nutri gardens.

Different SBCC interventions would be organised to encourage community participation, engagement and facilitate behaviour change. IPC and personalised counselling by Frontline workers would ensure pursuance of adequate and diverse food intake and promotion of local available nutritious food options. It would also help in demonstrating feeding practices to mothers/caregivers. Project will organise practical feeding sessions at the community level for promoting good nutrition especially for infant and children. Community based sessions can help educate people on proper feeding habits, improve awareness on nutrition and combat malnutrition among children and women. These sessions would prove fruitful in both educating and demonstrating practical skills that caregivers can implement in their daily routine. Orientation of the community members has been planned to equip them on importance of introducing appropriate feeding practices early to set the foundation for healthy growth, dietary adequacy and Recommended Dietary Allowances in respect of infant and young Child feeding practices, family interventions for ensuring micronutrient density of children's meal.

Provision of Milk to identified undernourished children and at- risk children of malnourishment would be facilitated through the network of AWC which complement efforts of ICDS to replenish daily nutritional intake of those children to ensure and sustain growth, development and recovery from under nutrition. Milk has growth hormones which can help in reversing stunting. Nutri Gardens at the household and AWC level is an important step to combat malnutrition. By setting up Nutri Gardens to grow vegetables and fruits, we will ensure improving dietary diversity and supplementing nutrition needs of families. It will empower community with the knowledge and tools to grow their nutritious foods sustainably. Demonstration would also motivate other people in the vicinity to set up small orchards in their backyards to cater vegetable and fruits for households' requirement.

Capacity building/enhancement of frontline workers on MIYCN would be an important strategy to strengthen delivery of Health and Nutrition services. Joint household visit and monitoring by ASHA & AWW, and ANM (AAA) will play instrumental in counselling of caregivers on age-appropriate feeding practices, micronutrient density and monitoring of daily dietary intake of children. These workers will also perform follow up assessments to monitor weight gain, catch up growth and general well- being of children. Project will also promote periodic screening in Anganwadi Centres to ensure timely detection of under nutrition cases among children.

Project will focus on data-driven approach to inform the implementation of program, monitoring of progress and improve outcomes. Evidences from the fields and case studies would provide us the valuable insights into effective strategies, optimizing processes and foster continuous learning and innovations in community-based management of acute malnutrition.