

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3296
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.08.2026

HEALTHY DIETS FOR CHILDREN

3296. THIRU D M KATHIR ANAND:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the focus accorded to enhancing nutritional security for children through improved access to balanced diets, micronutrient-rich foods, protein supplementation and nutrition education under Government programmes;
- (b) the details of the approach adopted for encouraging informed dietary choices among parents, caregivers and educational institutions by promoting awareness of healthy eating habits, quality food ingredients and age-appropriate nutrition for children;
- (c) the details of the support extended for strengthening nutrition interventions through the Integrated Child Development Services, Poshan Abhiyaan/related schemes to States and Union Territories;
- (d) the details of the collaboration with healthcare professionals, nutrition experts, educational institutions and food industry stakeholders for promoting scientific nutrition awareness; and
- (e) the details of the measures being proposed for improving the availability, affordability/accessibility of nutritious foods to ensure better growth, health and cognitive development among children?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) to (e): Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Mission Poshan 2.0) has provisioned Supplementary Nutrition to all beneficiaries including Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls (14-18 years). It is provided in the form of Take-Home Ration (THR), Morning Snacks and Hot Cooked Meal (HCM).

Supplementary Nutrition is provided to the beneficiaries in accordance with the nutrition norms contained in Schedule-II of the National Food Security Act, 2013, revised in January 2023. The old norms were largely calorie-specific; however, the revised norms are more comprehensive and balanced in terms of both quantity and quality based on the principles of diet diversity that provides for quality protein, healthy fats and micronutrients (Calcium, Zinc, Iron, Dietary Folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin-B6 and Vitamin B-12). Additional Nutrition is also provided to Severely Acute Malnourished (SAM) children (6 months to 5 years) in the form of THR.

The Ministry has recently issued the Comprehensive Guidelines for Supplementary Nutrition which emphasize on improving the quality, diversity and acceptability of Supplementary Nutrition, adherence to prescribed nutritional norms and quality standards. Guidelines also focus on nutrition and health education for caregivers, promoting the use and benefits of THR including counselling on age-appropriate complementary feeding practices and to conduct targeted awareness programmes focusing on reducing consumption of edible oils, salt and sugars in daily diets in line with the Dietary Guidelines for Indians, 2024, released by the Indian Council of Medical Research – National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN). States and UTs are also advised to consult nutrition experts and technical institutes, like ICMR-NIN, Agricultural Universities, Home Science Colleges, etc., for formulating State-specific recipes for supplementary nutrition based on local palate/tastes using locally available foods.

To improve acceptability and consumption of Supplementary Nutrition, States and UTs have been given full flexibility to design menus and recipes based on local food habits, cultural preferences and availability of indigenous ingredients. Supplementary nutrition incorporates locally available cereals, millets, pulses, vegetables, nuts and other nutrient-rich foods, thereby promoting dietary diversity while ensuring greater acceptance among beneficiaries.

One of the major activities undertaken under Mission Poshan 2.0 is Community Mobilization and Awareness Advocacy to educate people on nutritional aspects as adoption of good nutrition habit requires sustained efforts for behavioural change. State and UTs are conducting and reporting regular sensitisation activities under Jan Andolans during Poshan Maah and Poshan Pakhwada, celebrated in the months of September and March-April, respectively. More than 150 crore Jan Andolan activities have been conducted since 2018 through 16 Jan Andolans, each helped sensitizing not only the target beneficiaries but communities at large.

Community Based Events (CBEs) have served as a significant strategy in changing nutritional practices and all Anganwadi workers (AWWs) are required to conduct two Community Based Events every month. So far, around 10.5 crore CBEs have been reported on Poshan Tracker from April 2022 to June 2026.
