

Enhancing Nutrition and Convergence: A Comprehensive Review of the POSHAN Abhiyaan Initiative in India

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Abstract: The Ministry of Women and Child Development in India has been diligently working towards addressing malnutrition through various initiatives, with the 6th Rashtriya Poshan Maah in September 2023 being the latest milestone. This article provides an in-depth review of the POSHAN (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) Abhiyaan, a multi-ministerial convergence mission aimed at ensuring a Malnutrition-Free India. The scheme's primary focus has been on improving nutritional outcomes for pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls, and children under 6 years of age. Additionally, this review explores the integration of millets into the PM POSHAN Scheme, emphasizing the numerous benefits of these nutri-cereals.

Keywords: POSHAN Abhiyaan, Malnutrition, Nutrition awareness, POSHAN tracker.

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been instrumental in launching and implementing various schemes and initiatives to combat malnutrition in India. One of the key initiatives in this regard is the POSHAN Abhiyaan, formerly known as the National Nutrition Mission, initiated on March 8, 2018. This comprehensive review article delves into the key features, objectives, and outcomes of the POSHAN Abhiyaan, shedding light on its impact on improving the nutritional status of vulnerable populations in India.[1]

A. POSHAN Abhiyaan: A Multi-Ministerial Convergence Mission

POSHAN Abhiyaan is a multi-ministerial convergence mission with a vision to create a Malnutrition-Free India. Its primary focus is on addressing the nutritional needs of pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls, and children under 6 years of age. The scheme aims to enhance content, delivery, outreach, and outcomes, with an emphasis on promoting practices that foster health, well-being, and immunity against diseases and malnutrition.

B. POSHAN Maah: A Month-Long Nutrition Awareness Campaign

One of the notable components of the POSHAN Abhiyaan is the annual POSHAN Maah, observed throughout September.

During this month, concerted nationwide efforts are made to enhance grassroots nutritional awareness through campaigns emphasizing key themes such as Exclusive Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding. Activities like the Swasth Balak Spardha (Healthy Child Competition) aim to promote nutrition and overall well-being through healthy competition.

C. Incorporating Millets into PM POSHAN Scheme

Recent developments have seen the central government urging state governments and union territory administrations to explore the incorporation of millets into the PM POSHAN Scheme, especially in regions where millet consumption is culturally ingrained. Millets, including Jowar, Bajra, and Ragi, offer multifaceted advantages, such as their richness in minerals, B-complex vitamins, proteins, and antioxidants. India's proposal to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets by the United Nations General Assembly further highlights the importance of these nutri-cereals.[2]

D. Overview of the PM Poshan Scheme

The article provides an overview of the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN) scheme, which aims to provide one hot cooked meal in government and government-aided schools. The scheme has replaced the National Programme for Mid-Day Meal in schools and spans from 2021-22 to 2025-26. Key features of the scheme, including coverage, nutritional gardens, supplementary nutrition, Tithi Bhojan concept, direct benefit transfer (DBT), nutrition expert appointments, and social audits, are discussed in detail.

E. The Need for Introducing Millets

The review article emphasizes the need to introduce millets into the diet to combat malnutrition and anaemia among children in India. It cites data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and the Global Nutrition Report to highlight the prevalence of these issues and their impact on India's Human Capital Index ranking. The integration of health and nutrition initiatives throughout pregnancy and a child's first five years of life is stressed as a crucial strategy for addressing these challenges.

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F. Inter-Sectoral Convergence: A Key Strategy

Recognizing the multi-sectoral nature of malnutrition, the POSHAN Abhiyaan has embraced the strategy of inter-sectoral convergence. This involves coordination between various government departments to ensure that multiple programs reach the same households, mothers, and children within the critical 1,000-day period from pre-conception to a child's second birthday. The article discusses the governance and impact levels of convergence, highlighting the need for clear coordination directives and core indicators to ensure effective collaboration.

G. Technology for Real-Time Monitoring

The article examines the role of technology in real-time monitoring of large-scale health and nutrition programs, particularly through the Integrated Child Development Services-Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) and POSHAN Tracker. It acknowledges the challenges faced in implementing these systems but emphasizes their potential in improving program management and service delivery. Recommendations are made to address network issues, minimize duplication of record-keeping, and promote data use

within and across systems.

2. Conclusion

The comprehensive review of the POSHAN Abhiyaan presented in this article underscores the significance of addressing malnutrition in India through multi-ministerial convergence missions, enhanced nutrition awareness campaigns, and the incorporation of nutrient-rich millets. It also highlights the importance of inter-sectoral coordination and the potential of technology in monitoring and improving nutrition programs. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to the vision of a Malnutrition-Free India, aligning with the theme of "Suposhit Bharat, Sakshar Bharat, Sashakt Bharat" (A Well-Nourished India, an Educated India, an Empowered India).

References

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