



BUDGET BRIEFS

Vol 13/Issue 4

POSHAN Abhiyaan Gol, 2021-22

POSHAN Abhiyaan is Government of India's (Gol's) flagship scheme that aims to holistically address the prevalence of malnutrition in India through the use of technology, convergence, behavioural change, training, and capacity building. In Budget 2021-22, the scheme has been combined with ICDS and re-launched as Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0.

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, this brief uses government data to report on the following:

- Past trends in Gol allocations, releases, and expenditures, and impact of the pandemic on programme finances;
- Types and nature of activities conducted under the erstwhile behaviour change component of the programme; and
- Progress on targets set for nutritional outcomes.

Cost share and implementation:

Cost sharing ratio between the Gol and state governments or Union Territories (UTs) with legislatures is 60:40. For North Eastern Region (NER) states and Himalayan states the cost sharing ratio is 90:10.

HIGHLIGHTS

₹ 24,435 cr

Gol allocations for Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in FY 2021-22

₹ 2,700 cr

Gol allocations for POSHAN Abhiyaan in FY 2021-22

SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

- POSHAN Abhiyaan has been restructured from Financial Year (FY) 2021-22 onwards and combined with the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to form Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0.
- In FY 2021-22 Budget Estimates (BEs), Gol allocated ₹2,700 crore for the POSHAN Abhiyaan component of the programme – a 27 per cent decline from last year's BEs which stood at ₹3,700 crore.
- Release of funds were low. Till 31 October 2020, no state other than Nagaland had received any funds. This is also reflected in the Revised Estimates (REs) for FY 2020-21 which stood at ₹600 crore. Low releases and utilisation existed even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cumulatively, from FY 2017-18 till 31 October 2020, only 46 per cent of the Gol funds allocated had been released and 46 per cent of Gol releases had been spent by states.
- Information and Communications Technology enabled Real Time Monitoring (ICT-RTM) was the largest expenditure component accounting for 36 per cent of total expenditure till November 2019. It has, however, been suspended as of September 2020.
- There has been slow progress on nutritional outcome targets set under the programme. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the prevalence of anaemia in children aged six months to five years increased for 16 out of 17 states. Similarly, the prevalence of stunting and underweight increased in 11 out of 17 states.

POSHAN ABHIYAAN: TARGETS

- The Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN Abhiyaan), previously known as the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), was launched on 8 March 2018 to improve nutritional outcomes in a phased manner through a holistic life-cycle approach.
- The purpose of the programme is to serve as an apex body to assist a multi-ministerial convergence mission. Through this, it aims to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition among children aged under six years, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women within a three-year period. The scheme has the following targets:

Objective	Target
Prevent and reduce stunting in children (0- 6 years)	By 6 percentage points at a reduction rate of 2 per cent per annum by 2022
Prevent and reduce undernutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years)	By 6 percentage points at a reduction rate of 2 per cent per annum
Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among young children (6-59 months)	By 9 percentage points at a reduction rate of 3 per cent per annum
Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among women and adolescent girls in the age group of 15-49 years	By 9 percentage points at a reduction rate of 3 per cent per annum
Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW)	By 6 percentage points at a reduction rate of 2 per cent per annum

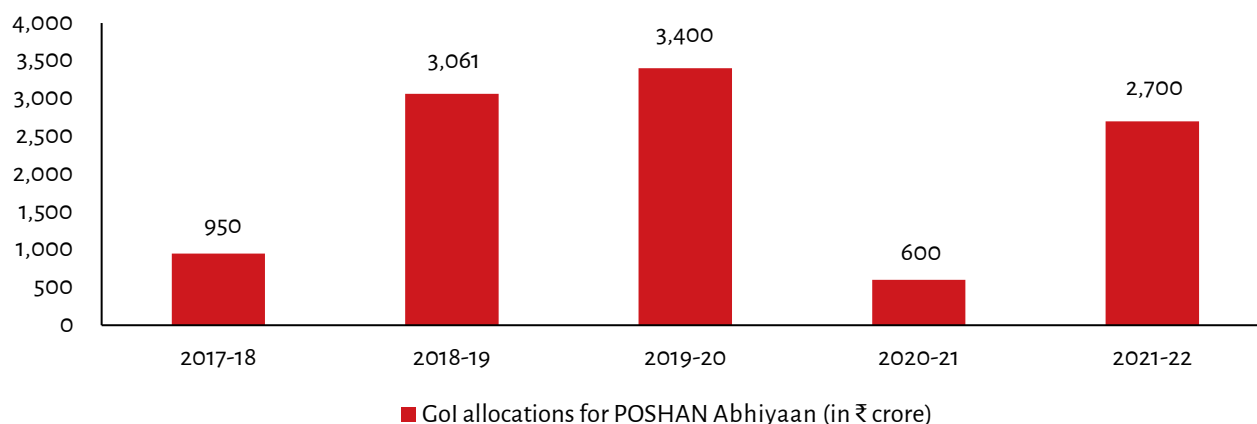
- The programme falls under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
- Financing for POSHAN Abhiyaan comes from Gol's Gross Budgetary Support (GBS), funds from Externally Aided Programmes (EAPs), including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)/ Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), and states and UTs with legislatures.
- All 36 states and UTs were to be covered in a phased manner.
- From FY 2021-22, POSHAN Abhiyaan has been restructured and combined with the Integrated Child Development Services to form Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0. Details of the scheme are still awaited. This brief, thus, looks at the past trends in POSHAN Abhiyaan.

TRENDS IN ALLOCATIONS AND EXPENDITURES

Allocations

- Total allocations for the newly launched Mission Poshan 2.0 stood at ₹20,105 crore in FY 2021-22 Budget Estimates (BEs). For the POSHAN Abhiyaan component of the new scheme, allocations stood at ₹2,700 crore, a 27 per cent decrease over last year's BEs.
- In FY 2018-19 Revised Estimates (REs), the first full year of implementation, ₹3,061 crore was allocated to the programme, a threefold increase from the ₹950 crore allocated in the previous year. Allocations saw an 11 per cent increase in the following year i.e. FY 2019-20.
- However, in FY 2020-21 REs, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the allocation for the programme declined by 82 per cent over the previous year to ₹600 crore over the previous year's REs.

₹2,700 CRORE ALLOCATED BY GOI FOR POSHAN ABHIYAAN IN 2021-22



Source: Union Expenditure Budget, Volume 2, MWCD, FY 2018-19 to FY 2021-22. Available online at: <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in>. Last accessed on 1 February 2021.

Note: Figures are in crores of Rupees and are Revised Estimates (REs), except for FY 2021-22 which are Budget Estimates (BEs).

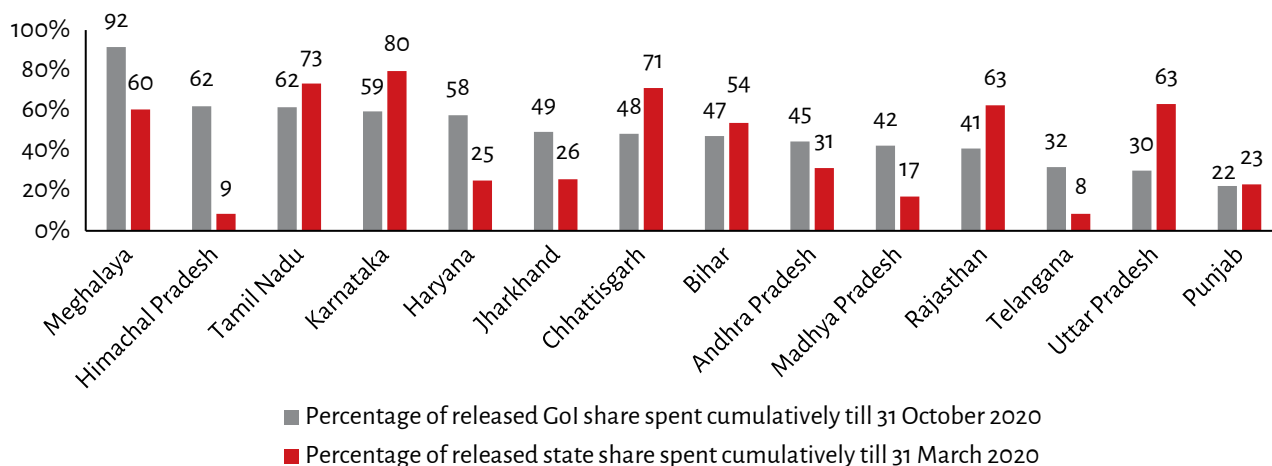
Gol Releases

- Release of funds by Gol, however, had been low. Since the start of the programme till 31 October 2020, cumulatively only 46 per cent of funds allocated by Gol had been released.
- Year-on-year releases also showed a declining trend. In FY 2018-19, Gol released 83 per cent of its allocations. This decreased to 54 per cent in FY 2019-20. In fact, as per an Right To Information (RTI) response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020, as many as 15 states and UTs reported receiving no funds in FY 2019-20.
- In FY 2020-21, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, less than 1 per cent of Gol allocations had been released till 31 October 2020. The only state to receive any funds was Nagaland.

Expenditures

- Analysis of expenditures has been undertaken using two metrics. First, funds utilised as a share of those received from Gol; and second, as a proportion of state share released.
- Using either metric, utilisation of funds has been low. Cumulatively, since the start of the programme till 31 October 2020, only ₹2,336 crore (or 46 per cent) out of the ₹5,056 crore received from Gol was spent.
- State releases and utilisation of state funds have been provided only till FY 2019-20 through an RTI response by MWCD on 1 December 2020. It is unclear if any state funds were released or spent in FY 2020-21.
- A look at the data even till FY 2019-20 finds that utilisation of state funds was even lower. Of the ₹791 crore released by states, ₹323 crore or 41 per cent was spent.
- There are, however, differences among states with respect to utilisation of both sources of funds. Meghalaya had the highest rate of utilisation of Gol funds released at 92 per cent, but spent only 60 per cent of the state share released. On the other hand, Karnataka (80 per cent), Tamil Nadu (73 per cent), and Chhattisgarh (71 per cent) spent a higher proportion from the state share released than from Gol funds released.

CHHATTISGARH AND UTTAR PRADESH HAD FAR HIGHER UTILISATION RATES OF STATE FUNDS RELEASED COMPARED TO UTILISATION OF GOI FUNDS



Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020. Excludes *Poshan Awards* to states.

Note: *Poshan Awards* were additional funds allocated to states for exemplary performance under the different components of the programme.

CORE PILLARS OF POSHAN ABHIYAAN

- The implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan was based on the following pillars:

I) Use of technology (ICT) for real-time growth monitoring (RTM) and tracking of health status of women and children: The development of the Common Application Software (CAS) has been suspended from September 2020. It involved the development of a mobile phone application that frontline workers used as a job aid and a six-tier, real-time monitoring dashboard. Both Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Lady Supervisors (LSs) were trained on the application to digitise information that was previously manually recorded and were given reminders, through the application, on conducting their daily tasks.

II) Convergence: The programme sought to ensure the convergence of all nutrition-related schemes (such as ICDS, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, etc.) for beneficiaries by setting achievable targets and joint monitoring visits.

III) Training and capacity building: The programme provided training to personnel through the Incremental Learning Approach (ILA) to plan and execute tasks consistently and methodically.

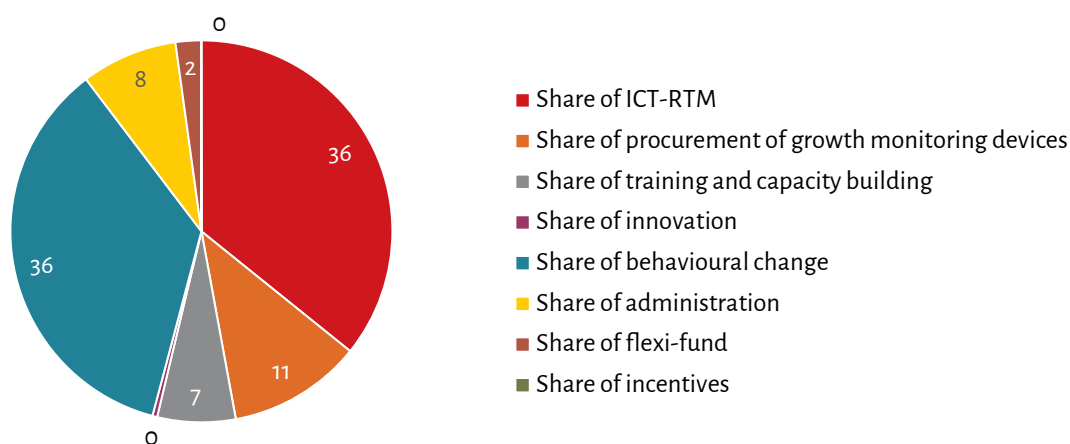
IV) Behavioural change: A critical part of the programme was the mobilisation of grassroots communities to combat misinformed or uninformed practices that lead to persistent malnutrition through generations. Some of the ways in which the programme sought to bring about behaviour change included: Community-Based Events (CBE); Information, Education and Communication (IEC); advocacy and converting activities and agendas into a *Jan Andolan* (people's mission).

V) Innovation: The programme prioritised innovation by identifying local pilot projects that showed improvement in service delivery for better nutritional outcomes. The Abhiyaan has earmarked funds for every state to identify such projects with a vision to scale them up to district or state level.

- From FY 2017-18 till November 2019 (latest data available), a total of ₹1,787 crore was spent on these components. The two largest expenditure components were: a) ICT-RTM, which included the procurement of phones, maintenance, and network costs of devices; and b) activities related to behaviour change, including *Jan Andolans*, IEC, etc. Each accounted for 36 per cent of the total spending under POSHAN Abhiyaan till November 2019.

- Procurement of growth monitoring devices constituted 11 per cent of the total amount spent, while administration costs (8 per cent), and training and capacity building (7 per cent) made up the rest of the component shares. In addition, 2 per cent of the total funds were also spent for flexi-funds or untied funds given to states to enable them to meet local needs, and less than 1 per cent for 'awards' and the 'innovation' grant.

36% OF POSHAN ABHIYAAN'S FUNDS SPENT TILL NOVEMBER 2019 WERE ON ICT-RTM AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE EACH



Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 6 January 2020.

- In FY 2020-21, due to the pandemic, several of these components saw limited activity. As per an RTI response received from MWCD dated 2 December 2020, some funds were spent on training cost of ICT-RTM, ILA, and virtual events under *Jan Andolan*.

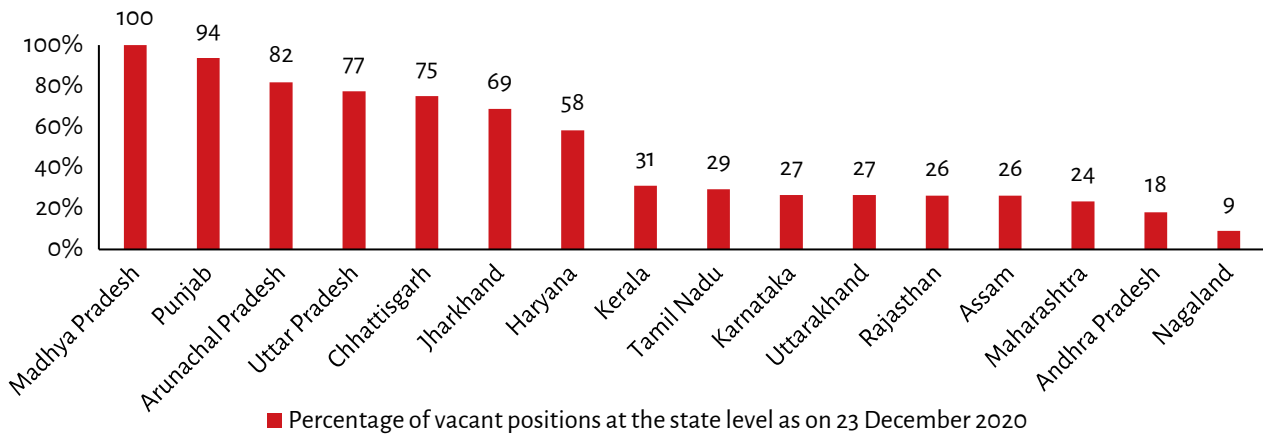
ICT-RTM

- ICT-RTM was one of the largest activities within POSHAN Abhiyaan. The programme involved the provision of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets to AWWs and LSs to ensure daily measuring, updating, and digitisation of records, and training of frontline workers on how to fill the CAS forms and use the data. In addition, incentives were provided to frontline workers directly for the implementation of ICT-RTM.
- Till November 2019 (latest data available, including through RTI), GoI had spent ₹640 crore on the programme. In addition, funding was also provided through EAPs. However, as per an RTI response received from MWCD dated 23 December 2020, CAS was officially suspended from September 2020.
- Since the start of the programme and prior to its suspension, a total of 6.42 lakh AWWs had registered and were trained on the CAS platform at a cost of ₹6.7 crore, accounting for 62 per cent of the total sanctioned AWWs. In FY 2020-21, between April and August 2020, a total of 11,077 AWWs had received training on the platform.
- States which had the lowest number of AWWs registered on CAS as on 31 August 2020 included Uttar Pradesh (27 per cent), Chhattisgarh (20 per cent), and Manipur (8 per cent).

Vacancies in State Programme Units (SPUs) at the State, District, and Block Levels

- Under CAS, SPUs were set up at the state level and help desks were set up at the district and block levels. These were nodal offices which were responsible for the roll out of the programme.
- There were several vacancies across both levels. At the state level, more than 50 per cent of SPU posts were vacant in 12 out of 27 states as on 23 December 2020. States with the highest vacancies included Madhya Pradesh (100 per cent), Punjab (94 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (82 per cent), and Uttar Pradesh (77 per cent). On the other hand, Assam (26 per cent), Maharashtra (24 per cent), and Andhra Pradesh (18 per cent) had lower vacancy rates.

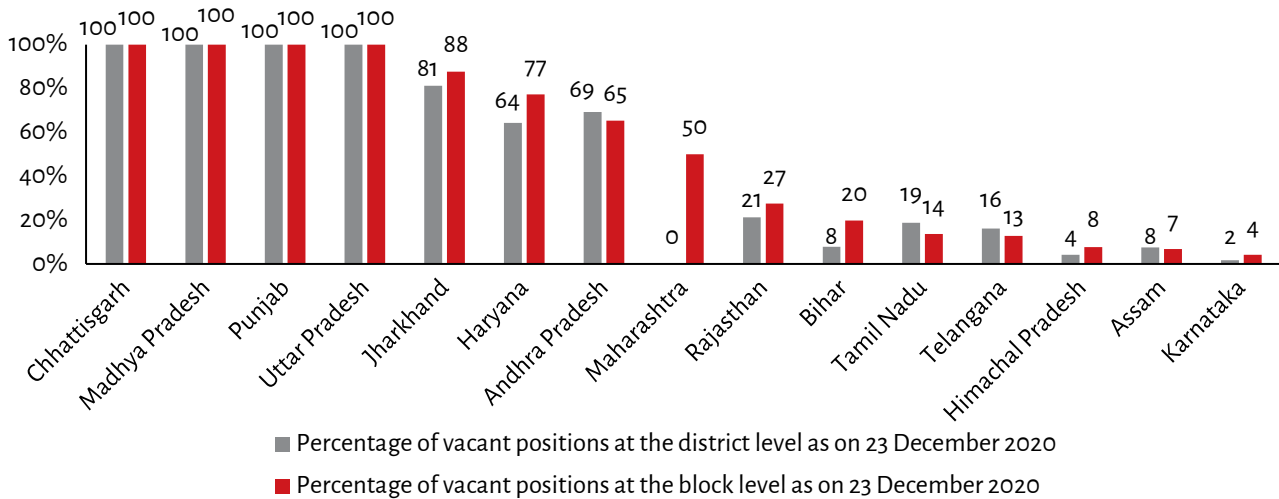
12 OUT OF 27 STATES HAD MORE THAN 50% VACANCIES AT THE STATE LEVEL



Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 23 December 2020.

- The situation was similar at the district and block levels with eight out of 27 states having all sanctioned posts vacant, including Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland had filled all their posts at the district and block levels, and there were relatively fewer state-level vacancies.
- With the suspension of CAS, it is unclear whether SPUs will focus on filling these vacancies.

8 OUT OF 27 STATES HAD 100% VACANCIES AT THE DISTRICT AND BLOCK LEVELS



Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 23 December 2020.

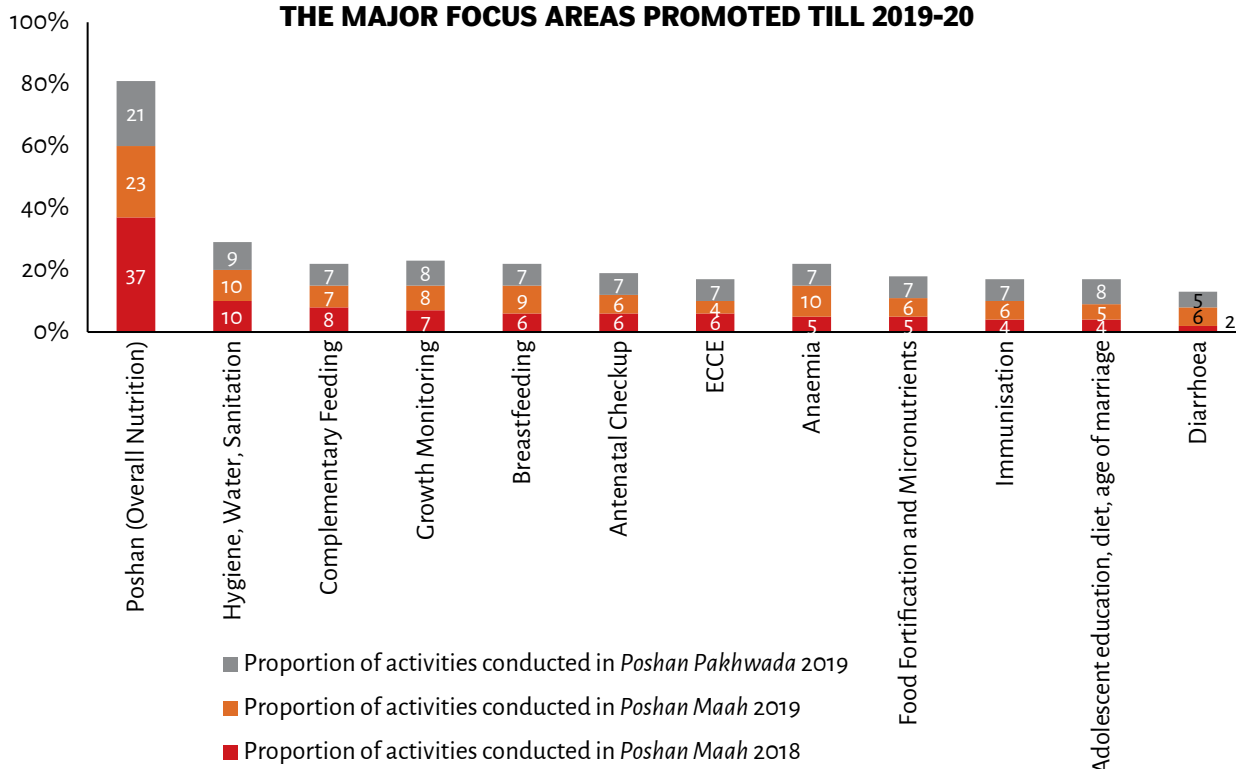
ILA Trainings

- Training of frontline workers is a crucial element of improving service delivery under the programme. The ILA is used on thematic modules. These modules include the following information: i) the importance of monthly meetings; ii) updating home visit planners; iii) observing breastfeeding in newborn babies; iv) what constitutes complementary feeding; and v) how to prevent malnutrition and other important aspects of care.
- Spending on ILA increased by 37 per cent from ₹117 crore in December 2019 to ₹161 crore in October 2020.
- Despite this increase in expenditure on ILA training, the total number of AWWs who were trained on a minimum of three ILA modules remained similar to November 2019, indicating that their training and capacity building in 2020 was negligible.

Behaviour Change

- A key component of POSHAN Abhiyaan is inducing behaviour change by increasing awareness of malnutrition through both convergence across ministries and community engagement. Specifically, the objectives include:
 - o Building awareness across sectors on the impact of malnutrition;
 - o Mobilising communities to create intent to consume nutrient rich food; and
 - o Building knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural changes to ensure optimal breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and maternal and adolescent nutrition practices to prevent malnutrition, including severe acute malnutrition (SAM), and anaemia.
- The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decrease in the number of behaviour change activities conducted on the ground, but digital platforms were mobilised during this time. For instance, the *Rashtriya Poshan Maah* is a month-long campaign under the *Jan Andolan* and is one of the major outreach and behaviour change drives that are held annually under POSHAN Abhiyaan. Like before, *Poshan Maah* continued to be held in September 2020 and 13.9 crore 'digitally backed-up activities' were held during this period. These included webinars on nutrient requirement for children and mothers during the first 1,000 days, digital mobilisation on identification and tracking of children with SAM, and plantation drives for promotion of kitchen/nutri-gardens.
- *Poshan Pakhwada* is the other major outreach initiative held under the *Jan Andolan*. It is a fortnightly campaign that focusses on specific nutritional concerns and helps create awareness through *Poshan Rallies*, *Poshan Melas*, etc. The *Pakhwada* also continued to be held in March in FY 2020-21.
- Analysis of the themes and activities conducted under behaviour change from 2017-2019 (prior to the pandemic) shows that overall nutrition (*poshan*) has been the priority for both *Poshan Maah* and *Poshan Pakhwada*, followed by hygiene, water supply, and sanitation.
- In 2019, the three other focus areas during the *Poshan Maah* included anaemia (10 per cent of total activities conducted); breastfeeding (9 per cent of total activities); and adolescent education, diet, and age of marriage (5 per cent of all themes promoted during *Poshan Maah* 2019, and 8 per cent of all themes promoted during *Poshan Pakhwada* in 2019).

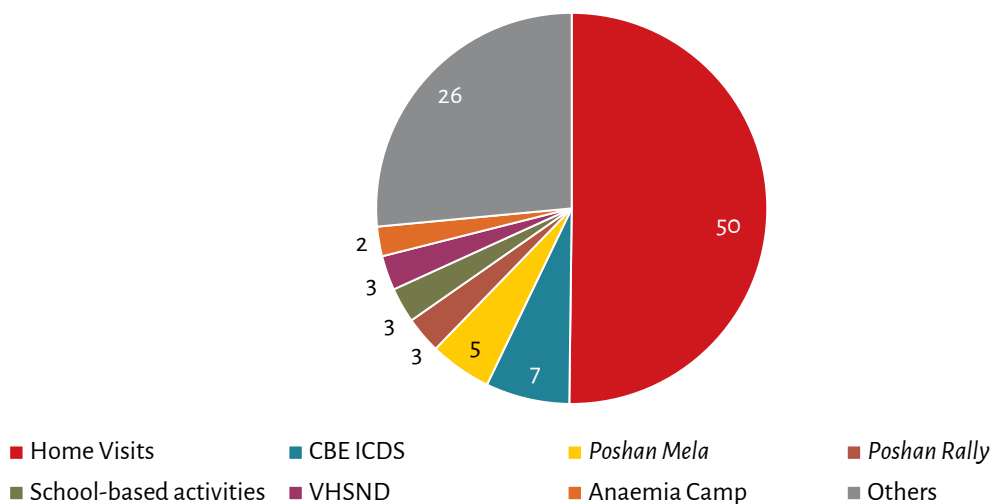
OVERALL NUTRITION AND HYGIENE, WATER, AND SANITATION HAD BEEN THE MAJOR FOCUS AREAS PROMOTED TILL 2019-20



Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020.

- The means of conducting the activities had focussed more on home visits. Cumulatively, till FY 2019-20, under *Poshan Maah* and *Poshan Pakhwada*, 50 per cent of all activities were focussed on home visits.
- CBE under ICDS made up 7 per cent of all activities, followed by *Poshan Mela* (5 per cent), *Poshan Rally* (3 per cent), school-based activities (3 per cent), village health sanitation and nutrition day (VHSND, 3 per cent), and anaemia camps (2 per cent).

HOME VISITS AND CBE UNDER ICDS HAD BEEN THE PRIMARY ACTIVITIES THROUGH THESE OUTREACH INITIATIVES TILL 2019-20

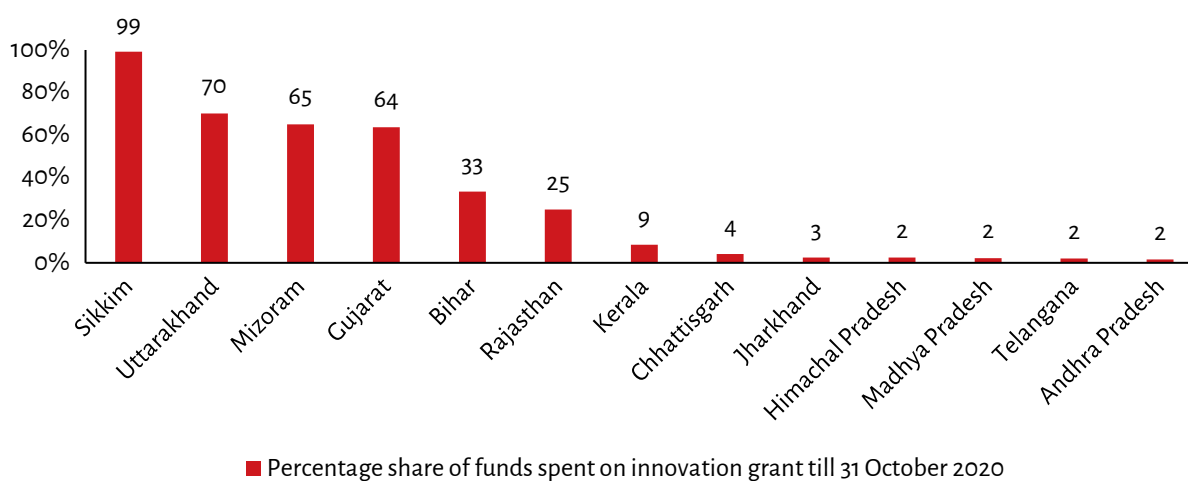


Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020.

INNOVATION

- POSHAN Abhiyaan provided funds to states, also known as innovation grants, earmarked solely for the development and implementation of pilot programmes that had been identified as successful programmes of innovation and have achieved desirable nutritional outcomes.
- The norms for allocation of funds to states/UTs under innovation activities was ₹27.85 lakh per district for the entire duration of the project up to March 2020. The funds were allocated at the state level while the distribution to districts was up to the discretion of the states.
- Utilisation of the one-time innovation grants has been low. In FY 2018-19, ₹168 crore had been allocated to 35 states and UTs. Cumulatively, till 31 October 2020, only 15 per cent of this allocation had been spent.
- There were, however, state differences. Nagaland (109 per cent), Meghalaya (105 per cent), and Tripura (105 per cent) showed an excess of funds spent under innovation as compared to the one-time release received by the respective states. Utilisation was also relatively high for Sikkim (99 per cent), Uttarakhand (70 per cent), Mizoram (65 per cent), and Gujarat (64 per cent).
- On the other hand, 14 states and UTs did not utilise any of their innovation funds, including Assam, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. Other states that spent only 2 per cent of their respective releases included Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana.

14 OUT OF 35 STATES AND UTs DID NOT UTILISE ANY INNOVATION FUNDS TILL 31 OCTOBER 2020

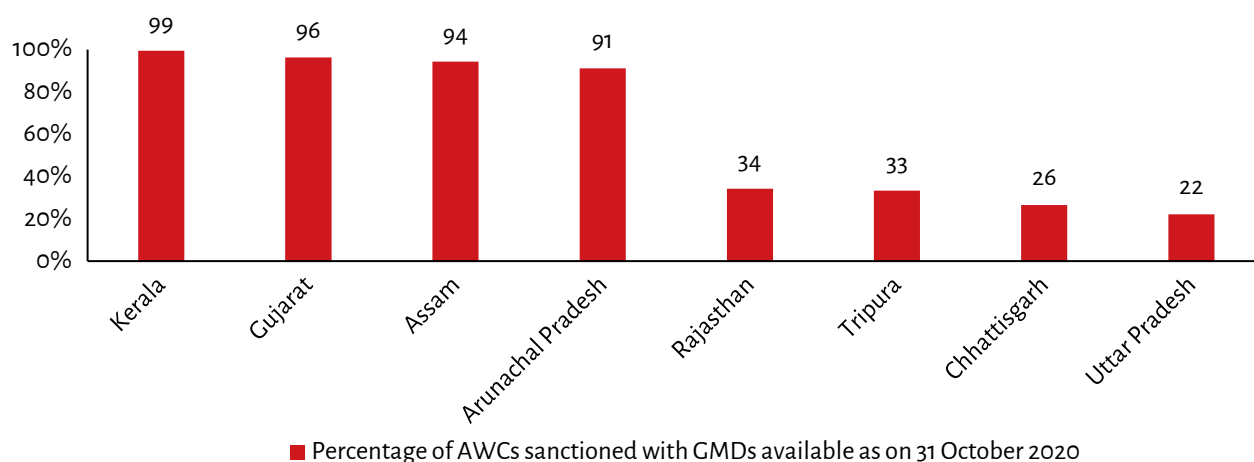


Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020.

Procurement of Growth Monitoring Devices (GMDs)

- All Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) are mandated to have one set of GMDs in place. The set includes an infantometer, a stadiometer, a weighing scale for infants, and a weighing scale for mother and child.
- As per data available from an RTI response by MWCD dated 2 December 2020, states had spent a total of ₹333 crore on procuring GMDs for 13.5 lakh AWCs sanctioned till 31 October 2020.
- Most sanctioned AWCs had GMDs available. In fact, 15 out of 25 states had GMDs in all their sanctioned AWCs. The states with relatively low proportion of sanctioned AWCs with GMDs included Rajasthan (34 per cent), Tripura (33 per cent), Chhattisgarh (26 per cent), and Uttar Pradesh (22 per cent).

RAJASTHAN, TRIPURA, AND UTTAR PRADESH HAD LOW AVAILABILITY OF GMDs AS ON 31 OCTOBER 2020

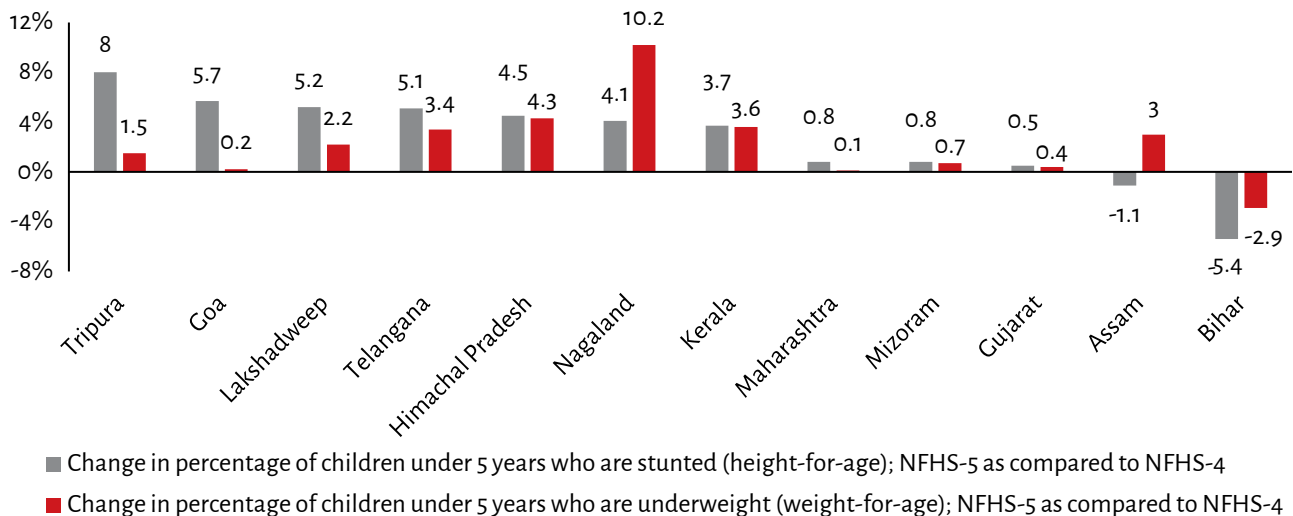


Source: RTI response by MWCD dated 1 December 2020.

STATUS OF MALNUTRITION IN INDIA

- FY 2020-21 marks the third year since the launch of the scheme. The programme had set itself a target of achieving progress on a set of five main malnutrition indicators for which the reference year was based on the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4).
- In FY 2020-21, the phase 1 results of NFHS-5 (2019-20) were published. It provided results for 17 states and five UTs. Looking at state-wise indicators from the latest survey, it is possible to partially assess scheme performance. The survey results provide data on four out of the five indicators of POSHAN Abhiyaan, except for prevalence of LBW.
- Malnutrition among children is usually measured using three indicators: a) stunting, which is the difference in the height-for-age less than two standard deviations from the average value; b) underweight measured as the difference between weight-for-age less than two standard deviations from the average value; and c) wasting or the difference between the height-for-weight less than two standard deviations from the average value.
- The NFHS-5 data showed that the prevalence of stunting among children aged under five years (height-for-age) increased for 11 states as compared to NFHS-4 results. Tripura showed the highest increase (8 per cent) followed by Goa (5.7 per cent), and Telangana (5.1 per cent).
- States that showed an improvement were Bihar (-5.4 per cent), Manipur (-5.5 per cent), and Sikkim (-7.3 per cent).
- The prevalence of children under five years who were underweight also increased for 11 states in 2019-20 as compared to 2015-16, as per results reported in NFHS-4. States with the highest percentage increase were Nagaland (10.2 per cent), Himachal Pradesh (4.3 per cent), and Kerala (3.6 per cent).
- States that witnessed an improvement were Andhra Pradesh (-2.3 per cent), Karnataka (-2.3 per cent), and Bihar (-2.9 per cent).

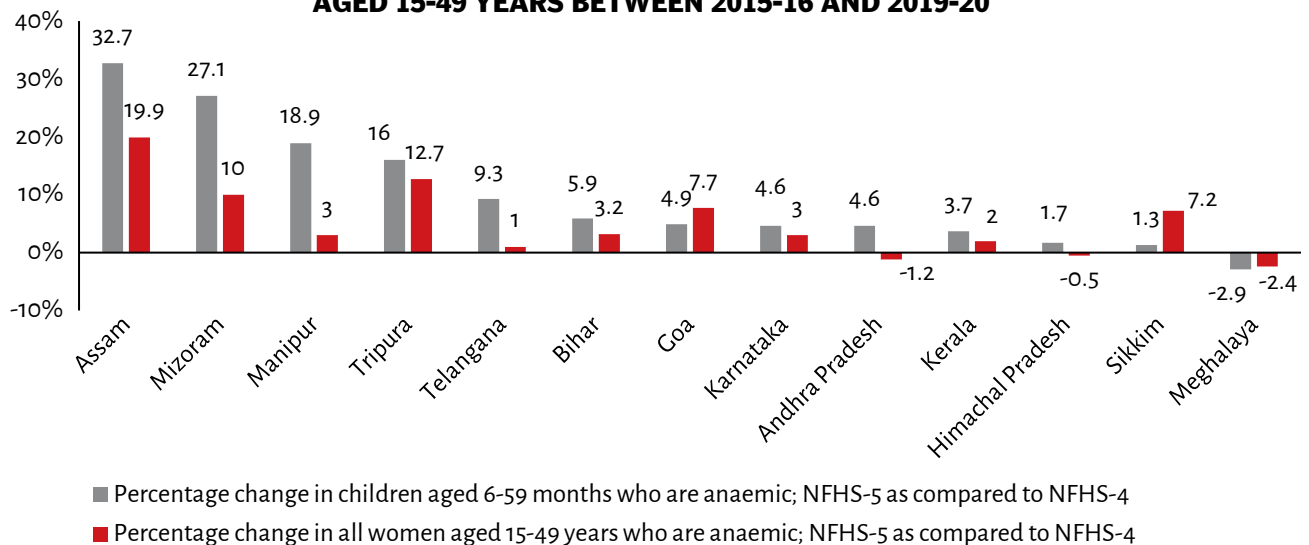
11 STATES SHOWED AN INCREASE IN BOTH CHILD STUNTING AND PREVALENCE OF UNDERWEIGHT CHILDREN AGED 0-5 YEARS BETWEEN 2015-16 AND 2019-20



Source: NFHS-5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2019-20. Available online at: http://rchiips.org/nfhs/factsheet_NFHS-5.shtml. Last accessed on 1 January 2021.

- Before the start of the programme, India had a high level of anaemia with 59 per cent of children (6-59 months) and 53 per cent of women (15-49 years) diagnosed as anaemic.
- Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the prevalence of anaemia in children aged six months to five years increased for 18 states and two UTs. Assam showed a steep rise (32.7 per cent), followed by Mizoram (27.1 per cent), and Manipur (18.9 per cent). Other states that worsened marginally during the same period included Himachal Pradesh (1.7 per cent) and Sikkim (1.3 per cent). Only Meghalaya showed an improvement (-2.9 per cent).
- Similarly, the proportion of all women aged 15-49 years who were anaemic saw an increase in 14 states and two UTs. Assam (19.9 per cent), Tripura (12.7 per cent), and Gujarat (10.1 per cent) showed the highest increase while the proportions declined in Meghalaya (-2.4 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (-1.2 per cent), and Himachal Pradesh (-0.5 per cent).

14 STATES SHOWED AN INCREASE IN PREVALENCE OF ANAEMIA AMONG WOMEN AGED 15-49 YEARS BETWEEN 2015-16 AND 2019-20



Source: NFHS-5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2019-20. Available online at: http://rchiips.org/nfhs/factsheet_NFHS-5.shtml. Last accessed on 1 January 2021.