



AT A GLANCE

District Report on Nutrition Services



Purnia, Bihar
2023

ACCOUNTABILITY
INITIATIVE



15
years

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RESEARCH

During Financial Year (FY) 2022-23, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Accountability Initiative (AI) at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) undertook a rapid assessment on the status of nutrition-related services under the Saksham Angwadi and Poshan 2.0 (previously Integrated Child Development Services) across two districts of Bihar, namely Purnia and Kishanganj. This factsheet presents the findings of the study for the Purnia District in Bihar.

Methodology

As per NFHS-5, Purnia has one of the highest malnutrition rates in the State—almost 68 per cent of children aged 6-59 months, and 75 per cent of pregnant women are anaemic. Within the district, the survey was undertaken in two blocks of Purnia district, Amour and Baisa.

The survey was conducted during May 2022 and was undertaken at two levels: a) Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) and b) households. Surveys were conducted on a tablet/smartphone by village-level volunteers who were trained for two days by the Accountability Initiative team. Data collected was then cleaned and analysed using STATA.

A total of 29 AWCs and 146 households were surveyed across the two blocks.

Number of Respondents for the survey

	Amour	Baisa	Total
Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)	16	13	29
Households	88	58	146

Respondent Groups

AWCs are the last-mile service-delivery points under the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 scheme, which integrate the delivery of services related to the provisioning of supplementary nutrition, monitoring of the growth of children, pre-school education for children, facilitating immunisations, counselling and health check-ups.

The households enrolled in an AWC and considered for the survey are of five categories: (a) Children aged 6 months to 3 years, (b) Children aged 3 to 6 years, (c) Adolescent girls, (d) Pregnant women, and (e) Lactating mothers.

Findings

The findings from the survey have been divided into 3 broad categories:

- a. Infrastructure Availability;
- b. Service Delivery, and;
- c. Specifics related to AWCs and AWWs.

INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABILITY IN ANGANWADI CENTERS

The availability of basic infrastructure was mapped by the survey team. Further, if the infrastructure was available, its functionality was measured.

Across most indicators, AWCs in Amour blocks had better and more functional infrastructure.

	Amour			Baisa		
	Available and Functional	Available and Non-Functional	Not Available	Available and Functional	Available and Non-Functional	Not Available
Basic Infrastructure						
Food Storage Facility	38%	0%	62%	15%	0%	85%
Toilet	57%	12%	31%	8%	15%	77%
Drinking Water	75%	6%	19%	38%	0%	62%
Electricity	25%	6%	69%	8%	0%	92%
Kitchen	38%	18%	44%	23%	15%	62%
Other Infrastructure						
Device Storage Facility	56%	0%	44%	30%	8%	62%
Cooking Utensils	81%	0%	19%	61%	8%	31%
Toys and Playthings	86%	8%	6%	77%	0%	23%
Pre-school Kit	81%	0%	19%	54%	0%	46%
Electric Fan	13%	6%	81%	0%	0%	100%
Handwashing Facility	38%	0%	62%	8%	0%	92%
Playing Space	32%	6%	62%	38%	0%	62%
Weighing Machine	32%	56%	12%	77%	0%	23%
Posters						
Child Development	81%	0%	19%	55%	7%	38%
Mothers' Health	94%	0%	6%	38%	8%	54%
Children's Health	88%	0%	12%	36%	18%	46%
Immunisation Poster	81%	0%	19%	46%	8%	46%

Source: Survey findings across 29 AWCs.

For basic infrastructure facilities in both districts, functionality of the kitchen space emerged as a concern, followed by toilets. Only 33 per cent of respondents in Baisa indicated that toilets were functional.

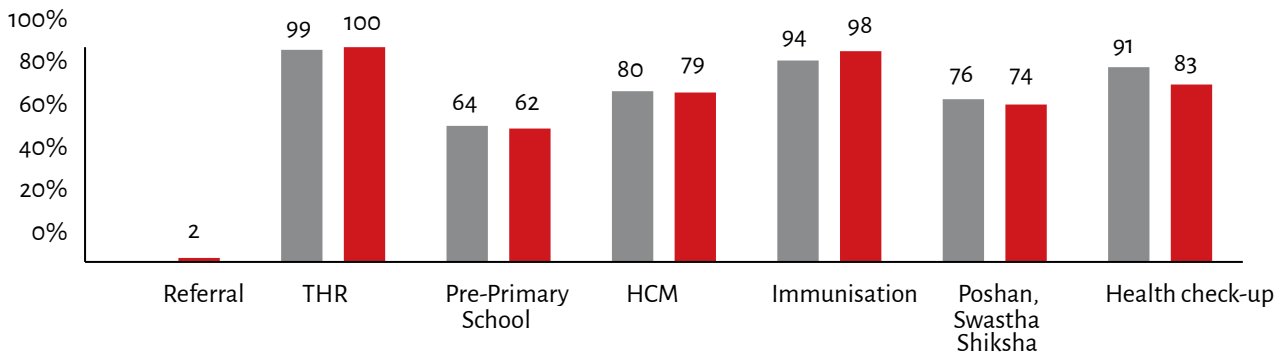
For other infrastructure facilities, especially equipment such as electric fans, weighing machines, education kits, device storage, playing spaces, etc., availability was a major concern in Baisa. For instance, across all AWCs surveyed, electric fans were not present in Baisa and the district also had less than 40 per cent availability of playing space, device storage facility, and handwashing facility. The major gaps in Amour in terms of non-functional materials included electric fan (19 per cent) and playing space (38 per cent).

Each AWC should have posters related to child development, mothers' health, childrens' health, and immunisation for display. Here too, Baisa indicated low availability of all posters as compared to Amour.

SERVICE DELIVERY TO HOUSEHOLDS

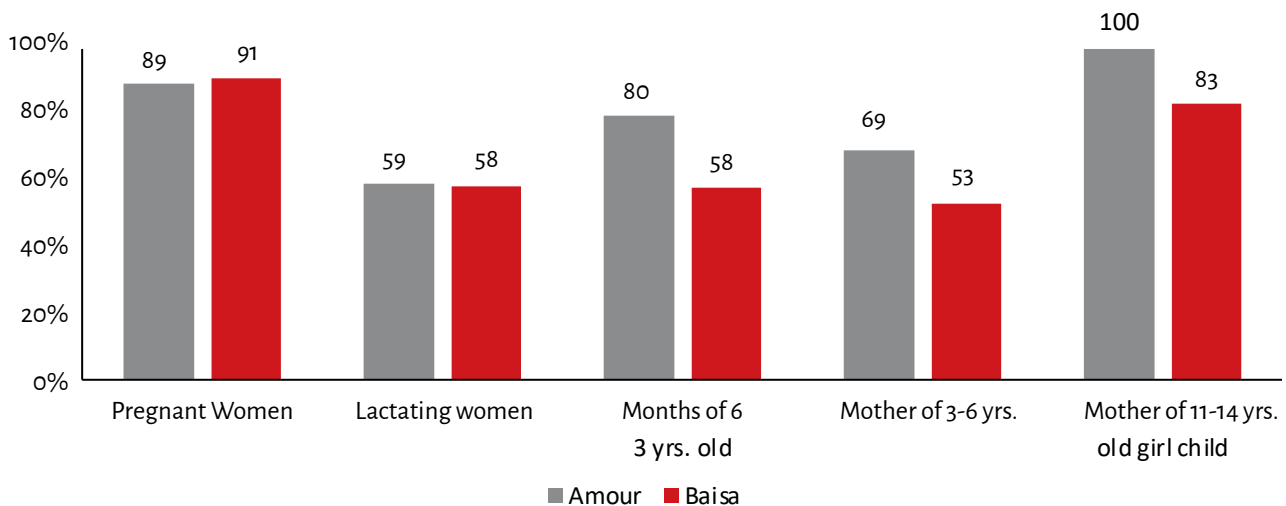
Households were asked about the services they are receiving from the AWCs, depending on their eligibility for the particular service. As can be seen in the graph below, THR and immunisation were most taken services.

The service least undertaken by households is Referral, and Pre Primary School



Given that different households are eligible for different services, the responses were further segregated based on the respondent categories. Two trends were observed. First, more people avail services than they are eligible for in Amour compared to Baisa. Moreover, out of all the eligible households, mothers of 3-6 year-old children, and lactating women availed lesser services as compared to other groups. This trend was observed in both Amour and Baisa.

More people avail services that they are eligible for in Amour than Baisa



Nutrition Service Delivery

As per the state guidelines and notifications issued, in FY 2021-22 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, children availing Take Home Ration (THR) and Hot Cooked Meal (HCM) were given money directly into their accounts through Direct Benefit Transfers. It was stated that the AWCs will remain closed but the services provided at the AWCs will not be blocked. However, some challenges were observed in this with regards to transfers as several children indicated not having a bank account.

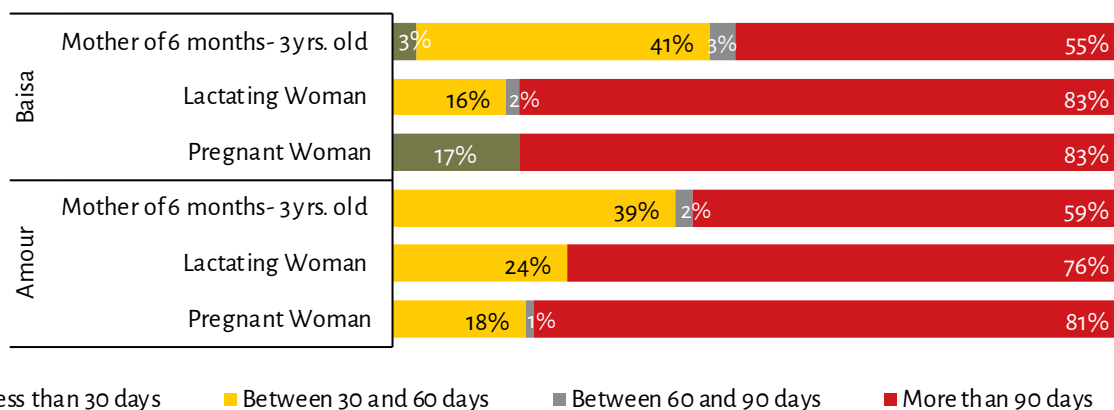
Take Home Ration (THR)

THR is meant to be given to children aged 6 months to 3 years, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. The survey tried to understand the receipt of services across the different types of groups.

The majority of the households from both districts (77 per cent in Baisa and 63 per cent in Amour) had received THR only. Money in lieu of THR was received by a higher number of eligible citizens in Baisa (23 per cent) compared to Amour (13 per cent). In Amour, another 25 per cent of AWCs reported receiving both THR and money.

At the household level, there were differences in the timing of receipt of THR. In both Baisa and Amour, the frequency of receipt of THR was highest for mothers of children from 6 months to 3 years old with around 40 per cent receiving the THR between 30 days to 60 days. In contrast, receipt of THR among lactating women and pregnant women was typically every 90 days.

Majority of Respondents indicated that they last received THR more than 90 days ago



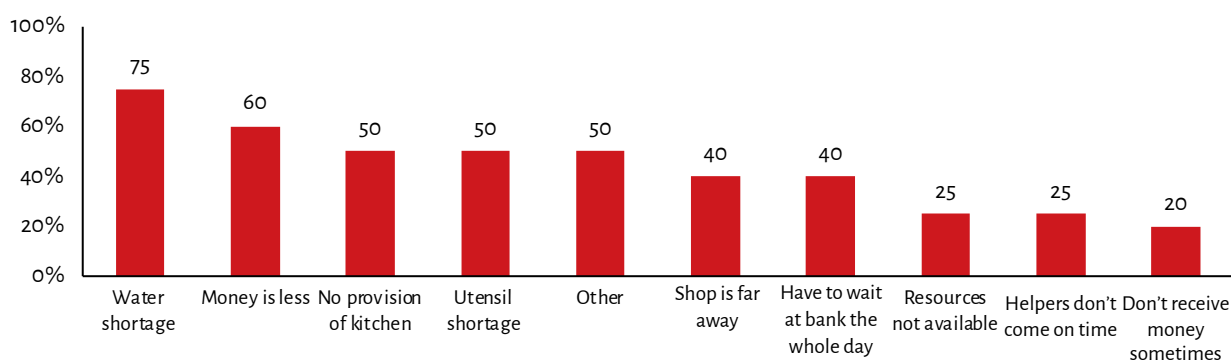
Hot Cooked Meals (HCM)

As per state-level norms, HCM is supposed to be prepared inside the AWCs by the Anganwadi Helper. The food is served to the children enrolled in the AWCs aged 3-6 years (up to 40 children) daily. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while the AWCs were closed for some time, the services provided at the AWC were not stopped. Our survey, however, found delays in the receipt of HCM across both blocks.

Most households in Amour and Baisa indicated that they last received HCM over 90 days prior. Questions on difficulties in preparing HCM asked to AWWs found that in Amour difficulties were faced in purchasing raw materials to prepare HCM (31 per cent) and cooking meals within the premises (25 per cent). In Baisa, on the other hand, no AWW reported any challenge in purchasing raw materials and only 8 per cent reported challenges in cooking food.

The reasons for the challenges were further analysed in Amour. As can be seen in the graph below, receiving less money to purchase ration was the most common reason for difficulties, and food and water shortage was the most common reason for difficulties in cooking food.

Among the problems faced, Water Shortage and Lack of Money to purchase Ration were reported as major challenges

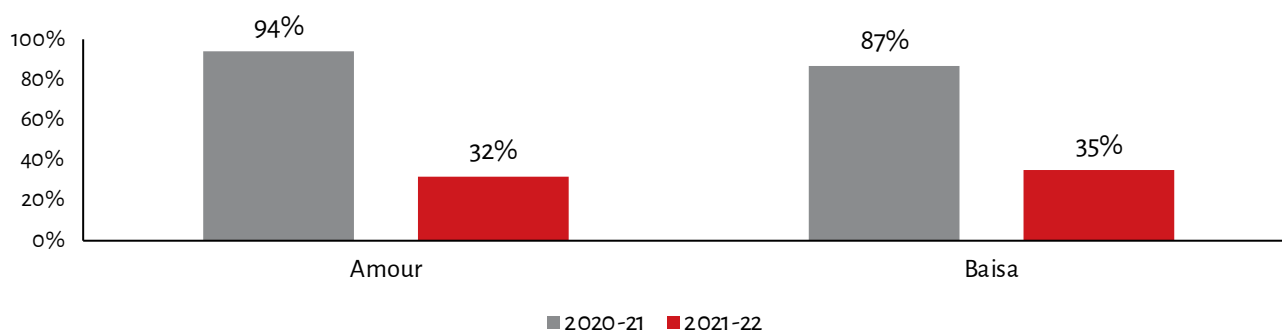


Pre-school Education

Children in the age group of 3-6 years undergoing Pre-School Education (PSE) at AWCs are given ₹400 to purchase uniforms. This amount is given by Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) and payment is made directly in the bank accounts of the children. Information on grants was sought for a period of two financial years namely FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22.

Households reported that most of the children out of the total registered, received a grant for uniforms in FY 2020-21, but the same was not observed in FY 2021-22. A small proportion (5 per cent to 10 per cent) also reported receiving less money than the guidelines required, particularly in FY 2020-21.

More than 85% of children out of total registered had received grants for uniform in 2020-21



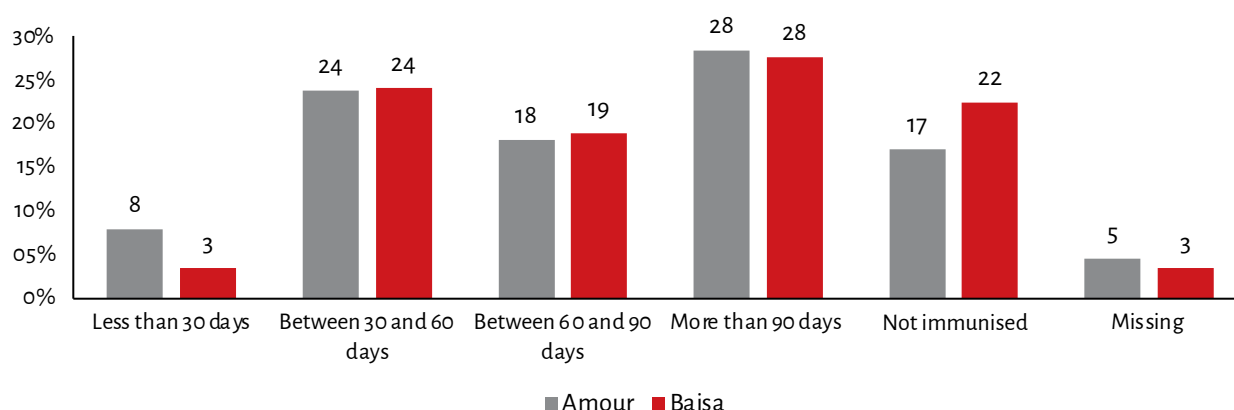
Further, in terms of educational support, AWCs are usually provided with education-kit/ materials. As was indicated above under the Infrastructure availability section, 81 per cent AWCs in Amour and 54 per cent AWCs in Baisa had PSE kits available with them. While a majority of AWCs reported receiving PSE kits/ materials in FY 2020-21, only 75 per cent reported receiving them in FY 2021-22 in Amour.

Immunisation

In terms of immunisation, the Government of Bihar has indicated a specific schedule for children 0-6 years in the catchment area of AWC, and pregnant women.

In addition, during the survey, both AWWs and households were asked about the most-recent immunisation round that had been conducted. There were differences in responses between AWWs and households. While most AWWs (75 per cent) reported the recent immunisation round was held less than a month ago, most households reported the same as three months ago. A large proportion of households also indicated that no immunisation had taken place.

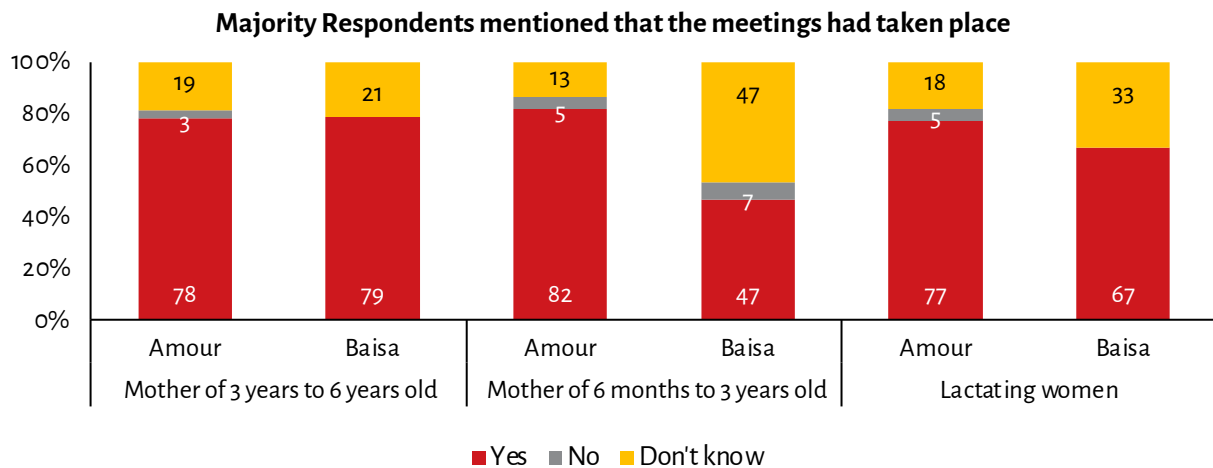
Majority of households indicated to have been immunised more than 90 days ago. Also, a considerable figure reported not being immunised



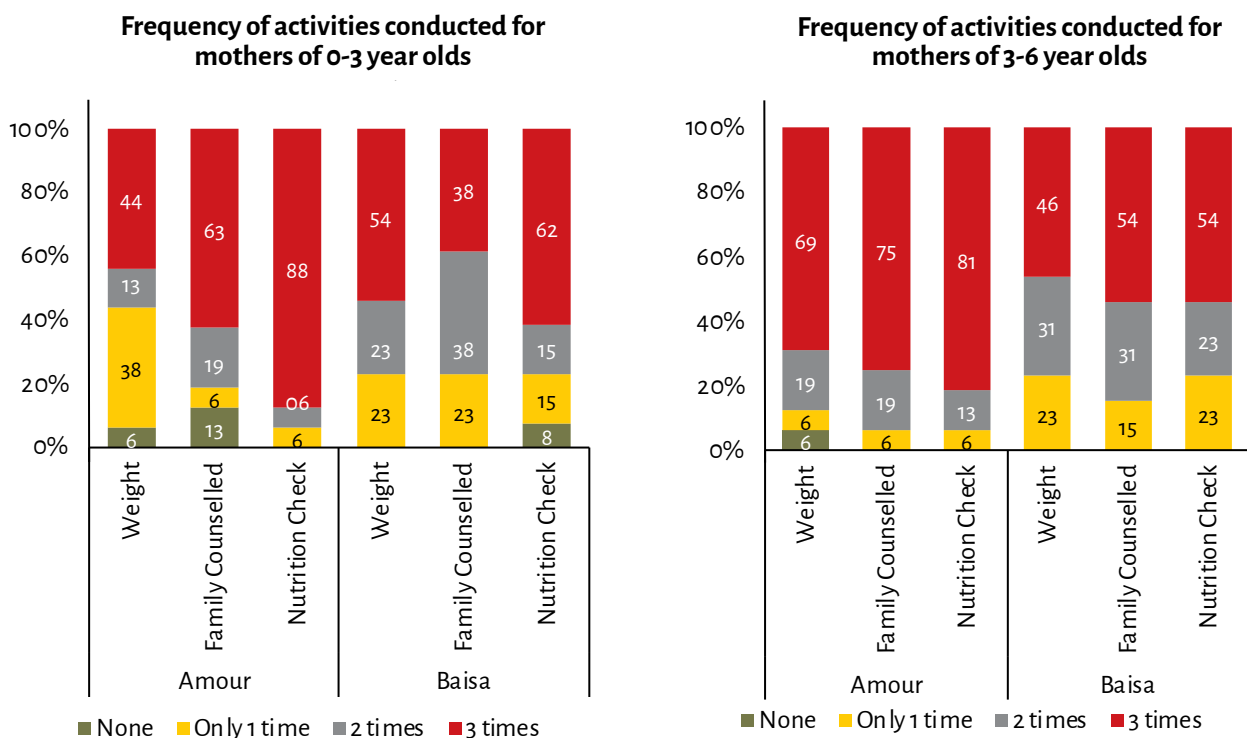
POSHAN Swastha Shiksha Meeting with Mothers for Guidance

AWWs are meant to have monthly meetings with mothers for guidance. All AWWs in Amour and 91 per cent of AWWs in Baisa reported that these meetings did happen, with the frequency being reported as three times in as many months, i.e once a month.

There were gaps in awareness levels about these meetings, however, at the household level. A large proportion (47 per cent) of mothers of children aged 6 months to 3 years and 33 per cent of lactating mothers in Baisa reported not knowing about the meetings.



AWWs are also instructed to undertake other health-care activities such as weighing, nutrition checks, and counselling of families. These are usually for mothers and families with children in the age group between 0-3 years and 3-6 years, respectively. To investigate the same, AWCs were asked about the frequency of these activities in the last three months. Most of the respondents from both groups, i.e., mothers of children in 0-3 years old, and 3-6 years old mentioned that checkups were done at least 3 times in the last 3 months. However, the results indicate a more frequent health-care check in Amour as compared to Baisa.

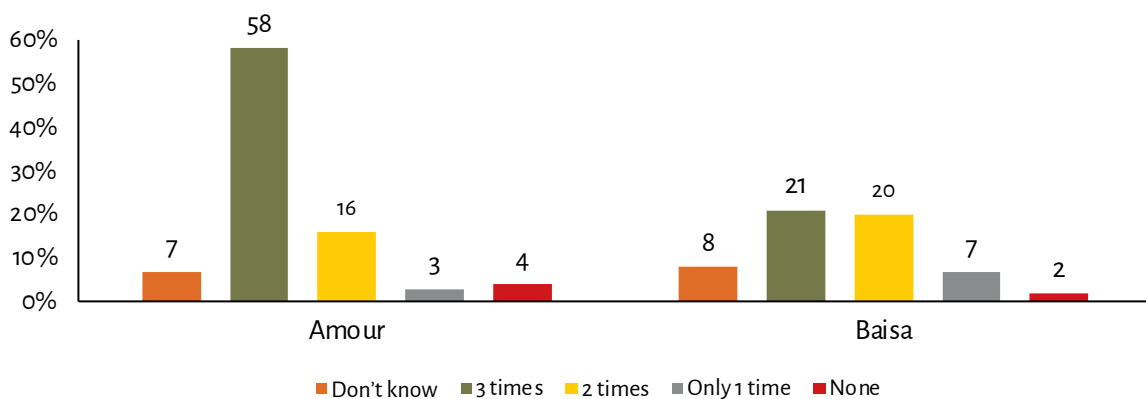


Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND)

VHSND is an important platform to provide services to the community through several flagship programmes introduced by the government. As per the mandate, VHSND is to be organised in every village once a month at the Anganwadi/identified centre. In our survey, AWWs were asked when the most-recent VHSND had been organised. Similarly, households were asked about the frequency of these in the previous three months.

While a majority of AWWs reported that the last VHSND was conducted less than a month ago, only 58 per cent households in Amour and 21 per cent in Baisa reported that a VHSND had been organised monthly.

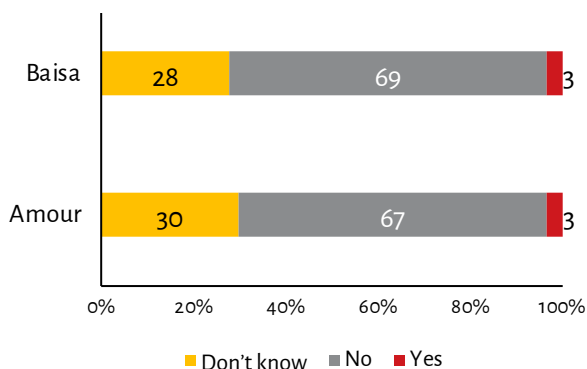
Around 58 per cent of households in Amour indicated to have 3 VHSND Meetings in the last 3 months; while, for Baisa, responses indicate an average of 2-3 meetings



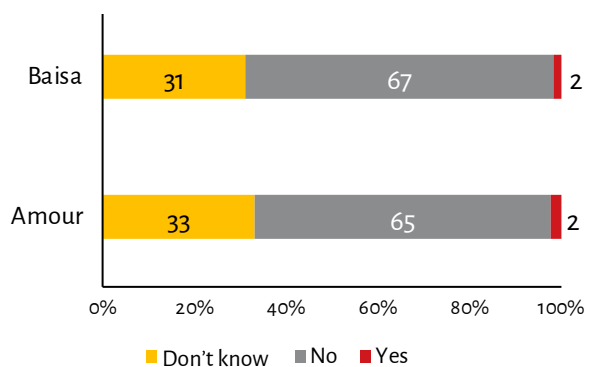
Referral Services

For children in the age group of 0-6 years, and pregnant and lactating women, referral services are mandated under the scheme wherein they are referred to the nearest hospital by the AWWs should they be suffering from any critical illness. In this context, both AWWs and households were asked if they were aware of referral cases in the village. The responses of both AWWs and households seemed to indicate that referral services have been limited.

More than 65% of AWWs unaware of any referrals for pregnant woman and lactating mothers



More than 65% of households unaware of referrals for children suffering from disease



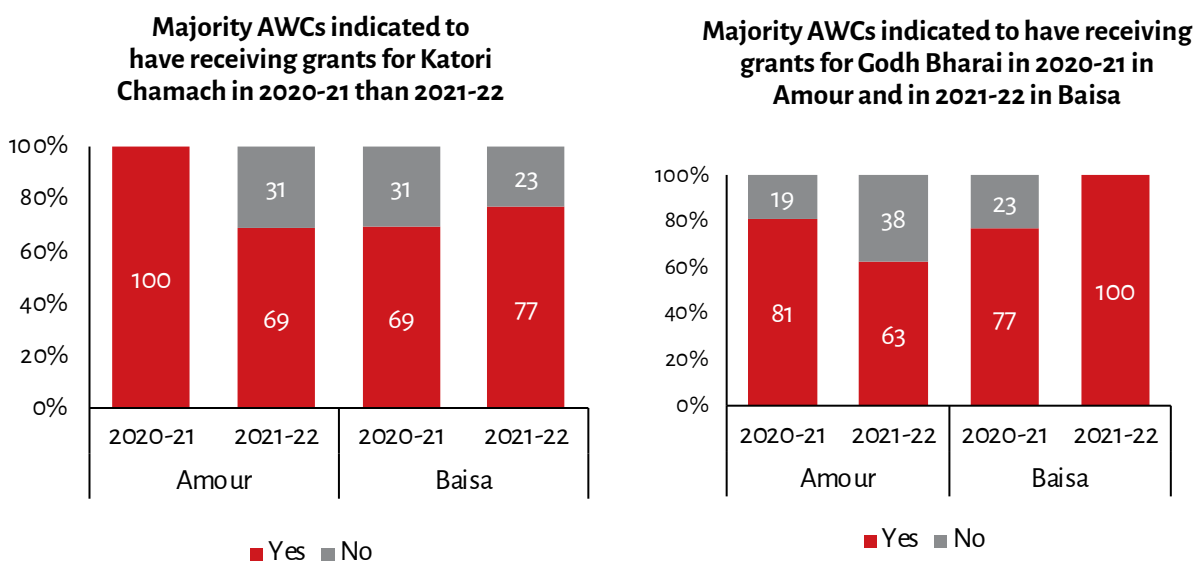
STATUS OF ANGANWADI CENTRES AND ANGANWADI WORKERS

All AWCs surveyed had operated for at least 25 days, which is the mandate as per the guidelines.

Grants

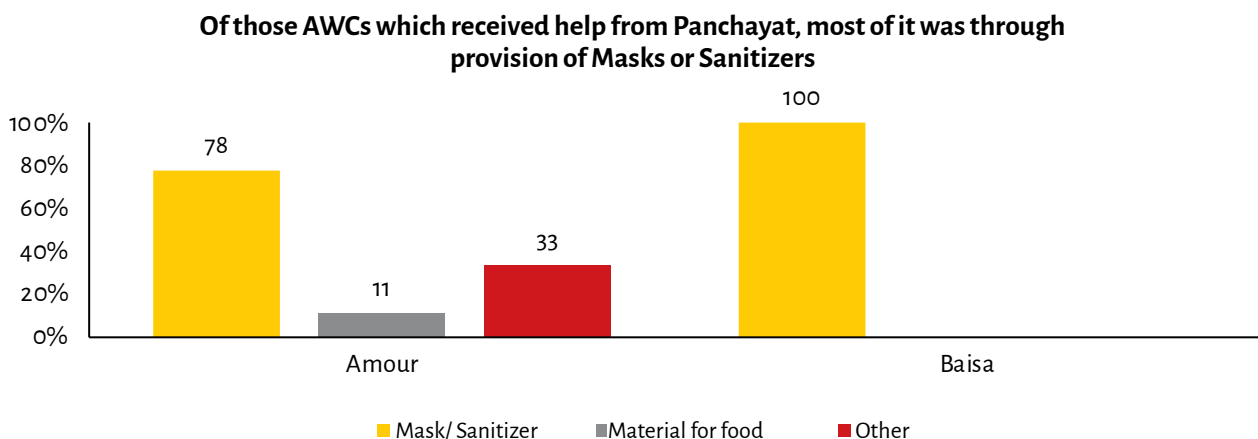
Presently, Annaprashan day is celebrated on the 19th of every month and AWCs receive ₹250 per month as grants for it. On that day, katori-chamach are given to the children and Annaprashan is done. Not all AWCs received grants for katori-chamach across both financial years. While all AWCs in Amour received such grants in FY 2020-21, only 69 per cent had received it in FY 2021-22. For Baisa, only 69 per cent reported receiving them in FY 2020-21 and 77 per cent in FY 2021-22.

Similarly, Godh Bharai is celebrated on the 7th of every month. Here too, AWCs receive ₹250 per month as grants, in which fruits, flowers, and other such materials are included. Here too, Godh Bharai grants were not received by all AWCs across both years.



Help from the community

No AWCs reported receiving any support from MLAs or MPs. However, 56 per cent of AWWs reported receiving support from Panchayats in Amour and 23 per cent in Baisa. This support, however, was primarily in the form of providing masks/ sanitiser given the COVID-19 pandemic.

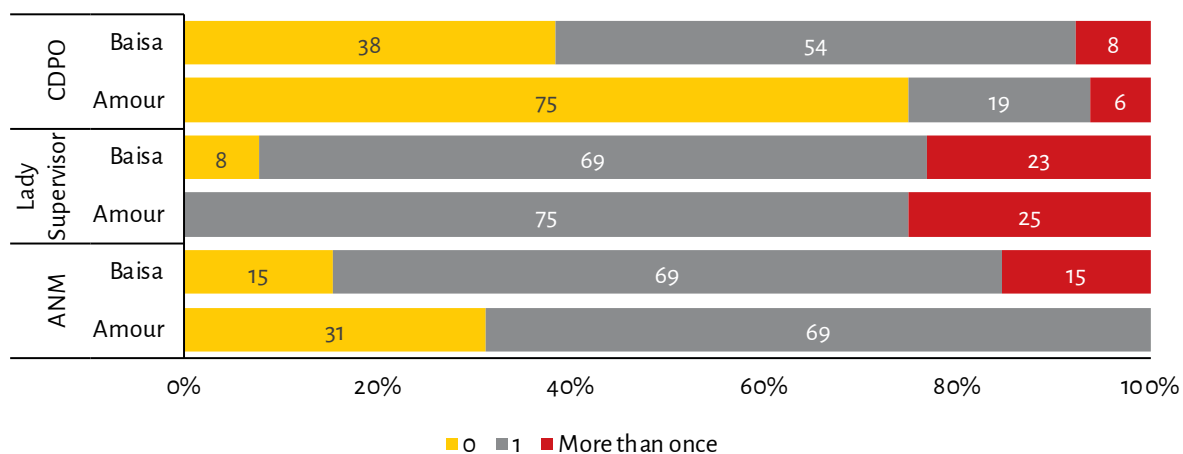


Supervision

AWW were asked about the frequency and regularity of the visits made by Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Lady Supervisors, and CDPOs in the last month.

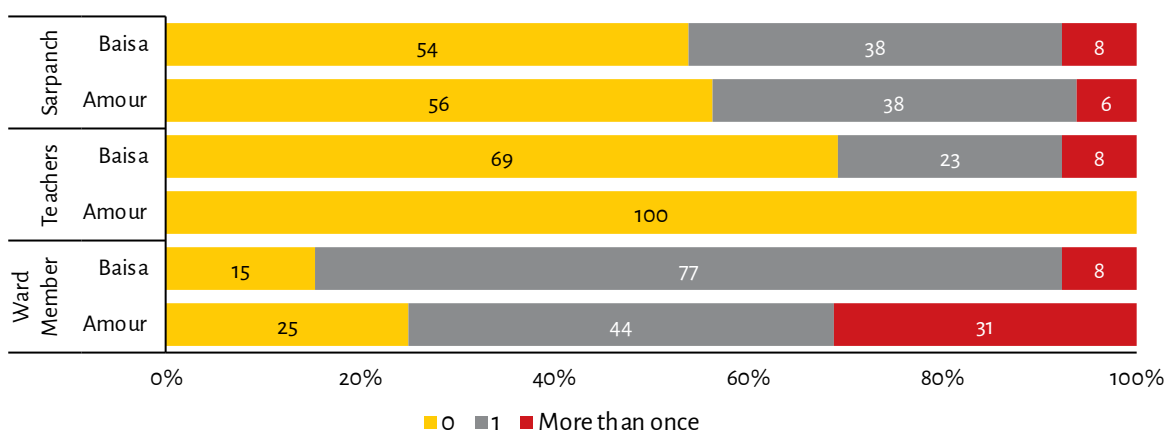
The survey found that, with the exception of 8 per cent of AWCs in Baisa, across both blocks, Lady supervisors had visited the AWCs at least once in the last month. In contrast, nearly 75 per cent of AWCs in Amour and 38 per cent in Baisa had not been visited by a CDPO even once in the last month. This is despite the fact that distance from the sample AWCs to CDPOs is lower in Amour than Baisa. For instance, 13 per cent of CDPOs in Amour were located at a distance of 0-3 kms but no CDPO was located in this same distance in Baisa.

AWCs in both blocks reported most visits by Lady Supervisors



AWWs were also asked about the frequency and regularity of the visits made by school teachers, ward members, Sarpanches in the last month. Here the frequency of visits by ward members was among the highest.

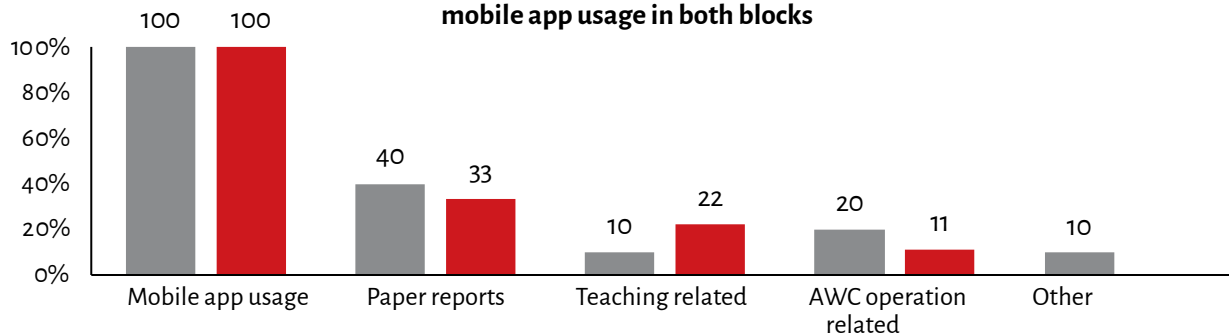
AWCs in both blocks reported most visits by Ward Members



Training

All AWWs reported receiving some training. The training typically covered information on THR, activities related to children and nutrition-related knowledge. Relatively fewer AWWs reported Incremental Learning Approach (ILA) training. In Baisa block, fewer AWCs reported receiving training on operations of AWCs and on-the-job training. AWWs also mentioned additional training needs with a focus on mobile applications.

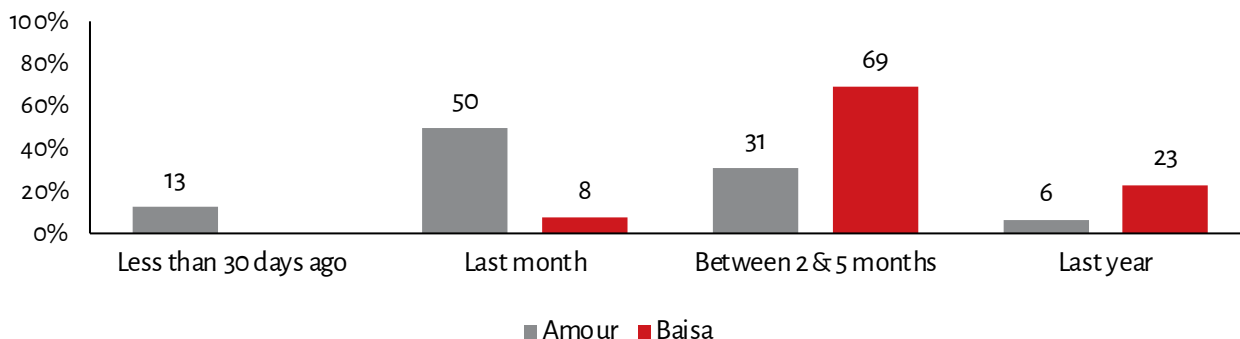
Of those who reported requiring additional training, 100 per cent wanted training on mobile app usage in both blocks



Honorarium and Responsibilities

The AWWs were asked about the regularity in which they received their salaries. AWWs in Baisa reported frequent delays in honorariums compared to Amour.

While in Amour 50% AWWs reported receiving honorarium in the last month, 69% AWWs in Baisa reported receiving honorarium between 2 & 5 months

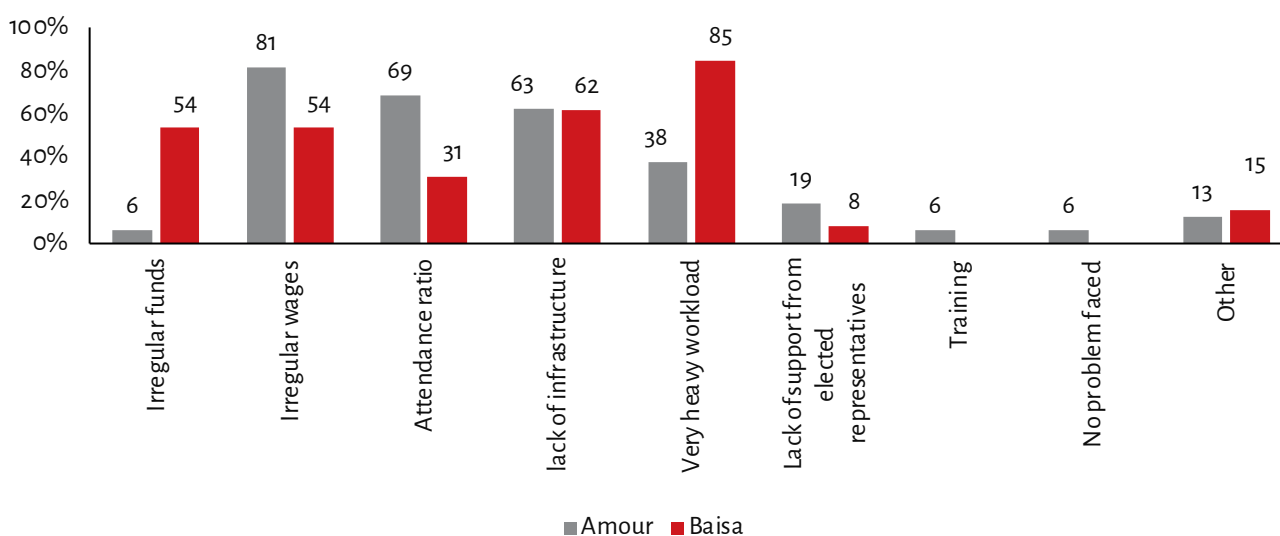


Additionally, they were asked if they had any additional responsibilities along with their regular tasks under ICDS. More than 75 per cent of AWWs indicated that they had additional responsibilities, mostly related to elections and the pandemic.

Challenges

AWWs were also asked about the biggest hurdles they faced while undertaking their work. As can be seen in the graph below, among the biggest challenges in Amour were irregular wages (this is despite them receiving their honorarium relatively more frequently than Baisa), followed by attendance rate for pre-school and lack of infrastructure. The biggest challenge in Baisa was with respect to heavy workload, lack of infrastructure and lack of regular wages.

The biggest challenge for AWWs in Amour was irregular wages and in Baisa was heavy workload



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