

## **State Consultation on addressing Childhood Wasting in Assam**

**Dispur, June 19:** Assam State consultation was held to address childhood wasting in Assam at AASC, Khanapara today. Government of Assam and 'The Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security' (CFNS) have joined hands to chalk out a plan to eradicate malnutrition from the state of Assam. Wasting (low weight for height ) which is also known as Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is a condition of under-nutrition among children. Wasting is calculated by comparing the weight for height of a child with a reference population of well nourished and healthy children as per World Health Organisation's guidelines on Child Growth Standards. Children who suffer from growth retardation tend to be at a greater risk of illness and death.

Speaking on the occasion as the Chief Guest, Chief Secretary, Assam Jishnu Barua said childhood wasting specially malnutrition status of the state is in an alarming position. In his speech the Chief Secretary highlighted on steps being taken by the social welfare department to address the issue of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) children of the state. He said that earlier the state social welfare department and its AWCs were obtaining rice from local markets. But now the government is taking rice from Food Corporation of India which is available at much lower price than earlier and it resulted in a vast amount of saving. With the amount saved, the government is coming out with an improved menu for children in AWCs. "Inclusion of egg in the menu is going to be a game changer", he remarked. He also mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has also made us realise the importance of nutrition as a whole. He also stressed the importance of nutrition dense foods which can be availed locally. The Chief Secretary also lauded initiatives like 'Sampoorna' which was taken up in Bongaigaon district of Assam which restored 95.6% of the malnourished children to a normal state of health and managed to bag Prime Minister's Award for excellence in Public Administration, 2021.

In his speech, Bibhas Modi, Director of Poshan Abhiyan, Assam stressed on the importance of Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) which is a globally recommended approach for SAM. "Along with Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres ( NRC's ) CMAM also play a role in children who are not suffering any medical complications" said the Director. He also said that Health and Social Welfare department needs to work hand in hand to achieve the best results in this programme.

Shri Mukesh Ch. Sahu, Principal Secretary to Government of Assam, Bhaskar Barua, Board Member, CFNS, Basanta Kumar Kar, CFNS were amongst the other dignitaries present during the occasion.

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