

Addressing malnutrition

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Various findings suggest that measures to address the malnutrition problem are not paying the desired results.

\n

- This rises the need for alternative measures to take the benefits to the targeted audience.

\n

\n\n

How serious is the malnutrition problem?

\n\n

\n

- The recent National Family Health Survey data has indicated that a third of our child population is being stunted.

\n

- And more than half the women in the reproductive age-group are being anaemic.

\n

- Besides, a recent World Bank Report has highlighted that India is paying about 9-10 per cent income penalty.

\n

- This is because of the fact that roughly three-fourth of the present workforce suffered from stunting in childhood.

\n

- The adverse effect on lifelong learning capacities and lower adult productivity is the result of early onset of stunting hampering mental and physical growth.

\n

\n\n

What are the limitations in addressing this?

\n\n

\n

- Government initiatives like the National Health Mission (NHM), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) have come in this regard.

\n

- However the pace of reduction of malnutrition has been suboptimal.

\n

- This is partially explained by our narrow approach to food.

\n

- As, measures have largely relied on in-kind transfers such as in the foodgrains through Public Distribution System (PDS), meals or Take Home Rations (THR) through Anganwadi Centres (AWC).

\n

- Besides, in many states these initiatives are marred by pilferage and leakages.

\n

- Also, there is only around 50 per cent enrolment because of lack of awareness of the programmes, seasonal migration and discrimination by field workers.

\n

- The successful results of in-kind transfers and meal programmes in southern States are largely due to the underlying social capital in these States making it context-specific.

\n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

\n

- An alternative to address this could be Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) that have emerged as an effective policy tool in driving developmental change globally.

\n

- CCTs are preferred over the food transfers as they have been successful in:

\n

\n\n

\n

1. reducing poverty.

\n

2. bridging inequality.

\n

3. inducing desired behavioural changes.

\n

4. diversifying diets and increasing consumption of meat, milk, vegetables and sugar.

\n

5. addressing nutritional deficits.

\n

\n\n

\n

- Cash in the hands of the women, with the right kind of 'messaging' can make significant improvements in addressing the malnutrition crisis.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: BusinessLine

\n\n

\n\n

\n\n

\n\n

\n

