

Awareness, Regular Training on Improving Nutritional Need of Rural Child Care Centers (Anganwadis)

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Often news on malnourishment deaths agitates my mind as even after 25years of establishment of Anganwadis or rural childcare centers why this takes place. We need to rethink and redesign our thoughts to bring grass root changes both in our approach for strategic implementation and empowering both the department officials involved in the scheme, workers and parents. In India where 35.7 per cent of children below five years are underweight (low weight for age), 38.4 per cent stunted (low height for age) and 21 per cent wasted (low weight for height), the existing strategies of tackling malnutrition also come under question, given that between 2005-06 and 2015-16 (when the third and fourth rounds of the National Family Health Surveys were conducted), the population of underweight and stunted children fell by just 6.8 per cent and 9.6 per cent, respectively, while that of stunted actually went up by 1.2 per cent [2]. The news in August 2019 reporting on Anganwadi children was being given just chappati and salt [1] in the government's midday meal scheme, was shocking. The woman who cooked meal revealed that no raw ingredients for cooking was given hence this was served. Latest news on the undernourished children in State of Madhya Pradesh is reported as 119574 and medium nourished children as 1084948 [3].

Poor nutrition is a very important factor in children's vulnerability to diseases. The first 1000 days of every child i.e. 9 months in mother's womb, 1st year and 2nd year are the most crucial and if malnourishment is there, then the health and learning abilities are reduced and will not be able to achieve the needed potential.

On a pilot basis few very simple things that nature has given to us, can be explored and taken with wheat flour or rice as a curry for the mid-day meal preparations. In English, it is known as the Ben Oil Tree, Moringa or munga, popularly known as horse radish/drumstick tree, is one of the most common plants and frequently found throughout India. The plant can fulfill the additional nutrients requirements and is useful in the treatment of several ailments. In Ayurveda it is mentioned that the plant is capable of curing almost 300 common and chronic diseases.

The plant is a rich source of chemical ingredients that are biologically very active. Apart from that plant is a rich source of nutrients like Protein, Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium, Iron, Vitamin A, and Vitamin C.

The leaves are highly nutritious; Moringa is one of the best alternatives to fight malnutrition. The leaves have excellent nutritional value and can be dried in shade and stored. Later with wheat flour to make chappatis.

Alternatively, it can be made with buttermilk. The plant is a rich source of nutrients as it contains more Vitamin A than carrots, more calcium than milk, more iron than spinach, more Vitamin C than oranges, and more potassium than bananas, and that the protein quality of Moringa leaves equates that of milk and eggs. There are many more green veggies that can be shade dried and used for these kids like fenugreek leaves that are abundantly grown in this part.

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