Cabinet gives nod to nutrition mission

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved the launch of National Nutrition Mission with a target to reduce malnutrition and low birth weight by 2% each year. The government has budgeted Rs. 9,046 crore for the mission for a period of three years.

More than 10 crore people will be benefited by this programme. All the States and districts will be covered in a phased manner; to begin with, the worst-affected 315 districts will be targeted this financial year.

Single platform

The core idea behind the mission is to converge all the existing programmes on a single platform.

"One Ministry alone working in its own silo can't achieve this," Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi said. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Matruvandana Yojana, which provides support to pregnant and lactating women, works under the Ministry of Women and Child Development; while Mission Indradhanush, which seeks to increase rates of complete immunisation of women and children, is under the Ministry of Health.

"The results of this, if we are on the right track, should show in a year. This is momentous," Ms. Gandhi added.

The mission targets to bring down stunting in children. As per the National Family Health Survey, 38.4% of children in India have stunted growth. The mission plans to bring this down to 25% by 2022. It also aims to bring down anaemia among children, women and adolescent girls by 3% every year.

There remains confusion over whether or not Aadhaar is mandatory for all beneficiaries, many of who are children below the age of three years.

Official's assurance

Women and Child Development secretary R.K. Shrivastava said it was mandatory, but no beneficiary would be denied benefits for the lack of Aadhaar card.

"In a pilot study in Assam, we found 3 lakh fake children enrolled in anganwadis, which means pilferage of Rs. 30 lakh per day," Ms. Gandhi said.

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Maneka Gandhi

Women & Child Development Minister