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Three States to be awarded for reducing prevalence of stunting in population

The Ministry of Women and Child Development will hold the first ever National Conference in New Delhi tomorrow on *Mission Mode to address Under-Nutrition* in the country. In his curtain raiser briefing in New Delhi today, the Secretary WCD, Shri Rakesh Srivastava said that this conference is being organized by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, keeping in mind the goal of “**Malnutrition Free India-2022**”.

Giving details about the conference, the Secretary WCD said that the Government has decided to lay focused attention on this issue and for this said purpose, Ministry of Women and Child Development has identified 113 districts across the States/UTs based on the composite index of NITI Ayong and prevalence of stunting from NFHS-4 data. At least one district has been selected from each State/UTs so that the action taken in the selected district can be emulated in the other districts also, he explained.

Shri Srivastava said that the National Conference, first of its kind, aims at bringing convergence at District/Block levels of the three key Departments (Health & Family Welfare, ICDS/Social Welfare and Drinking Water and Sanitation) wherein a roadmap would be drawn to evolve an appropriate strategy in tackling the problem of stunting, under-nutrition and wasting comprehensively and conclusively.

The conference would be sensitizing the District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners/District Magistrates as well as the District-level officers of Health & Family Welfare, Nutrition (ICDS/SW), Drinking Water & Sanitation Departments in the 113 High Burden Districts along with the Principal Secretaries/Secretaries, in-charge of these three Departments of all States/UTs on a multitude of topics relating to stunting, under-nutrition and wasting and the key strategic interventions which are urgently required.

The District Magistrates/District Collectors/Deputy Commissioners in these 113 high burden districts, through a dashboard, will regularly monitor and review the schemes

covering the aspects of nutrition across the line departments within their jurisdiction at least once in a three month period. Such a review and monitoring at district level would be done in an exclusively and dedicated manner (between 1st to 10th of January, April, July and October every year) to address implementation of schemes having a direct bearing on nutrition and Health.

Shri Rakesh Srivastava said that three States will be awarded at the conference tomorrow. These three states will be awarded for showing good progress in the area of reduction in stunting as measured between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4. These States are Chattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh and Gujarat.

Joint Secretary WCD, Dr. Rajesh Kumar said that several important steps have already been taken by the WCD Ministry recently for a multipronged strategy to manage malnutrition. This includes training ICDS functionaries, developing a curriculum for ECCE, food fortification guidelines among others. He further stated that the WCD Ministry has developed a world class software 'ICDS-CAS' for real time monitoring of nutrition related parameters in 8 States. This system is one of its kind in the world and 60,000 Anganwadis have already been given tablets to report growth parameters on a daily basis with the help of this system, Dr. Rajesh Kumar explained.

The problem of malnutrition is inter-generational and is dependent on multiple factors which inter-alia, include proper Infant & Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, Immunization, Institutional Delivery, Early Childhood Development, Food Fortification, Deworming, access to safe drinking water & proper sanitation (WASH), Dietary diversification, full ANC checkup, early initiation of breast feeding, ICT enabled real time monitoring and implementation of Anganwadi Services, Improving infrastructure of Anganwadi Centres along with training of Anganwadi workers and other related factors. These factors can also be Area specific or dependent on particular geographical conditions. Further, it requires a convergent approach among all the three departments i.e. Health & Family Welfare, ICDS/Social Welfare and Drinking Water and Sanitation to tackle the issue of malnutrition comprehensively and conclusively.

Some of the important sessions at tomorrow's conference include efficacy of food fortification, sustainable solution through breast feeding, dietary diversification, improving maternal & child health through Mission Indradhanush, improving program delivery effectiveness, accelerating Real Time Monitoring among others.

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