

Mentoring Mothers towards Healthy Nation

The health and nutrition status of pregnant women have a profound effect on maternal mortality, child survival, children's growth and development. The proportion of malnutrition among children and women in India is among the highest in the world. In India, over 50% of pregnant women are anaemic. Early marriage worsens the situation. Nearly 30% of girls are married before reaching the age of 18. Consequently, under-5 mortality rate in India is more than 50% while child under-nutrition is over 40%. In addition, access to quality health care services and its usage is poor.



Aim



To identify positive deviants in a community and apply them as a local solution to improve the nutritional status of all children aged six months to 5 years within that community.



Vision and Approach



ChildFund envisions this program to result in improved health and nutritional status of infants and young children in the intervention areas. The program :

- Provides sustainable rehabilitation of malnourished (underweight) children.
- Prevents future malnutrition among children born in the community by identifying and adopting best practices existing within the community.
- Enables the community to seek existing local solutions to address malnutrition.

The basic principle of this approach is to identify positive deviant practices – “What enables some members of the community (the “Positive Deviants”) to find better solutions to pervasive problems than their neighbors who have access to the same resources?” and apply this to other children living in the same situations. In other words, the successful practices of positive deviants are identified and adapted as local solutions.



Target Area: In 8 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.



Beneficiaries:

- 40,000 children (direct and indirect) between the age group of six months to 5 years.
- Undernourished SAM (Severely Acute Malnourished) and MAM (Moderately Acute Malnourished) children.



Project Period: 3-5 years

Highlights



The program attempts to provide holistic benefits -- basic care, nutrition, health, stimulation and early learning, and protection. It also encourages caregivers to establish personal well-being behaviours to provide themselves with adequate self-care.

- **Identification of Mentor Mothers:** “Positive deviants” are identified in the community through an inquiry process with the support of community structures and community leaders. They are also known as Mentor Mothers. These women possess leadership skills.
- **Capacity building:** Mentor Mothers undergo an initial four weeks of capacity building, alternating theory and practice and based on adult learning principles. This is followed by hands-on training in the field, provided by the coordinators and community mobilizers who work alongside them.
- **Home-based child health intervention:** This intervention helps Mentor Mothers/ASHA and ANM to share their coping skills and knowledge with others. A Mentor Mother’s task is not to take on and solve the problems of a family she visits, but rather to help the family find their own solutions by sharing her knowledge and skills.
- **Nutrition garden:** The community is encouraged and supported to grow seasonal low cost nutritious vegetables in nutrition gardens, which are irrigated with rainwater. Rainwater harvesting mechanisms are established at the household level. Families are then able to readily access nutritious food.

- **Organizing Positive Deviance Plus sessions:** Counseling and advising sessions lasting 12 days are held within the community. Mothers and care givers are educated to discard harmful traditional practices and cook nutritious food using locally available resources. They also learn aspects of positive parenting.
- **Strengthening mothers’ committees:** Mothers’ Committees at the Anganwadi centers are strengthened and empowered to act as catalysts and pressure groups for strengthening health and nutrition services at the Anganwadi centers and advocate for promoting positive mother and childcare practices.



Impact



- In 2016-17, ChildFund organized 250 Positive Deviant hearth sessions in 60 project villages. These sessions reached more than 1500 pregnant and lactating women and 10,000 children below the age of 5 years. More than 1000 families were supported to develop nutrition gardens.
- Approximately 5000 children recovered from severe malnutrition to normal nutrition level and 3000 children from moderately malnourished to normal level.

