



General Studies-2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Role of Community in Tackling Malnutrition

Malnutrition in Children

- Malnutrition is one of the leading causes of death and diseases in children under-five years of age globally.
- It adversely affects cognitive development and learning capacities among children, thereby resulting in decreased productivity in the booming years.
- According to a study by Lancet, 68 per cent of the under-5 deaths in India can be attributed to malnutrition.
- India is home to nearly half of the world’s “wasted or acute malnourished” children in the world.
- Wasting is a critical health condition where a child is nine times more likely to die as compared to a healthy child.
- 16 out of the 22 states and Union territories have shown an increase in Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM), as per NFHS-5 conducted in 2019-20.

Concerns / Challenges

- While the deteriorating facets of malnutrition continue to remain a matter of grave concern, the emergence of COVID-19 has only worsened it.
- The partial closure of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) along with disruptions in supply chains due to lockdowns has resulted in
 - halting of mid-day meals scheme,
 - reduced access to take home ration and
 - restricted mobility to health care services.

- According to a study, the challenges induced by COVID-19 are expected to push another four million children into acute malnutrition.
- This is also evident from India's ranking of 94th out of 107 countries on the Global Hunger Index 2020.
- Acute malnutrition is a complex socio-cultural problem that lies at the interplay of
 - inequitable access to nutritious foods and health services, sub-optimal infant, and young child-feeding practices (IYCF)
 - low maternal education,
 - low capacities of field functionaries in detection malnutrition,
 - poor access to clean water and sanitation,
 - poor hygiene practices,
 - food insecurity and
 - unpreparedness for emergencies.

Way Forward

- There is a need to adopt sustainable solutions aimed at integrated management of acute malnutrition in tandem with mitigating the impact of COVID-19.
- Ensure early identification and treatment of Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM) children to stop them from further slipping into the vicious cycle of malnutrition.

Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM)

- Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) is the need of the hour.
- CMAM is recommended by both WHO and UNICEF and has shown positive results across many countries and some of the states and district in India where it has been implemented as a pilot project.
- One such state that has fared well in CMAM is Maharashtra.
- CMAM can be implemented at four different levels
 - The first step involves community level screening, identification, and active case finding of SAM children by Anganwadi/ASHA workers.
 - Second, treatment of SAM children without any complications at community level through Village Child Development Centre (VCDC) by using different centrally and locally produced therapeutic food.
 - Third, treatment of children with complications at the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs).
 - Fourth, following-up of children discharged from the CMAM programme to avoid a relapse.
- If renewed interest is given in nutrition through Poshan 2.0, CMAM must be given a serious thought if India wants to meet the stunting and wasting targets by 2025.