

POSHAN Abhiyaan should not be limited to women and children: WCD Minister

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During the meeting of the Council, presentations were made by the Ministry of WCD, NITI Aayog and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare regarding the implementation of the POSHAN Abhiyaan by the states. Image Credit: Twitter(@NITIAayog)

The Union Minister of Women and Child Development, [Smriti Zubin Irani](#), chaired the 5th National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges today in New Delhi.

In her keynote address, Women and Child Development (WCD) Minister said that a humane solution has to be developed to tackle the menace of [malnutrition](#) in India and for this, the economic benefits of investing in nutrition have to be highlighted and propagated. [WCD Minister](#) quoted the [World Bank Global Nutrition Report](#) - 2018 which says that [malnutrition](#) costs India at least USD 10 billion annually in terms of lost [productivity](#), illness and death and is seriously retarding improvements in [human development](#) and further reduction of childhood mortality. [POSHAN](#) is an exercise for life for all citizens and should not be limited to women and children, she further stated.

WCD Minister informed that the Ministry along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and [Deendayal Research Institute](#) is developing a [POSHAN](#) atlas to map the crops and [food](#)

[grains](#) grown in different regions of the country because the solution to tackling [malnutrition](#) lies in promoting regional cropping patterns and embracing local food that is rich in protein.

WCD Minister suggested that in order to acknowledge the unsung heroes of the [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan, who work tirelessly and selflessly for the cause of nutrition like the Aganwadi and ASHA workers, a system of ranking of states on health and nutritional parameters may be developed and for this [NITI Aayog](#) may develop a framework for the states to rank districts. Minister further suggested that the process of ranking may involve citizens and civil society.

During the meeting of the Council, presentations were made by the Ministry of WCD, [NITI Aayog](#) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare regarding the implementation of the [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan by the states. Discussions took place in detail about the challenges being faced in aspirational districts and in the states that are lagging behind. The need for capacity building and improving the quality of [health workers](#) have to take place on war footing so that all [Anganwadi workers](#) may be trained in the use of smartphone and other tools to upload the data on the dashboard successfully. Success stories of innovative schemes by states and initiatives to tackle [malnutrition](#) were shared during the discussions. It was decided to document all good practices of the states and the innovative schemes that were implemented during the [POSHAN](#) Maah observed in September this year.

WCD Ministry placed before the Council the report of the [POSHAN](#) Maah observed on September 2019. During the month-long [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan, 22 lakh programs were held and 3.66 crore activities were organised in different parts of the country. Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) programs were also organised in 7.86 lakh places.

For the success of [POSHAN](#) Maah [WCD Minister](#) visited 9 states, met 11 Chief Ministers and Governors, along with officials of the [NITI Aayog](#) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and appealed to them to participate and support the [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan of the Government of India. [WCD Minister](#) personally wrote letters to Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies, district panchayat presidents and city mayors appealing to them to wholeheartedly be a part of the [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan. WCD Ministry also held a workshop to guide the states for the [POSHAN](#) Abhiyaan. Regular reviews were held with State Government officials. [WCD Minister](#) held video conferences with District Magistrates of the aspirational districts and she also reviewed the work being done during the [POSHAN](#) Maah with states and Union Territories through video conferences.

The [WCD Minister](#) thanked Prime Minister of India for taking up the subject of [POSHAN](#) during [Maan ki Baat](#) on 25th August 2019 which had a countrywide impact. She also thanked all State Governments and District Administration for making the [POSHAN](#) Maah a success. However, she stressed that this battle may not be restricted to only one month in a year but has to be fought every day if India has to eradicate the scourge of [malnutrition](#), stunting, and wasting.

The 5th National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges was attended by Secretary WCD, Rabindra Panwar, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, [NITI Aayog](#), Swati Singh, [WCD Minister](#), Uttar Pradesh, Mamta Bhupesh, Minister of WCD, Rajasthan and other senior officials from Ministries

of Health and Family Welfare, Agriculture, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Rural Development, Tribal Affairs, Panchayati Raj, Consumer Affairs and Food, Finance, Human Resource Development, Housing and Urban Affairs, Information and Broadcasting and Environment Forest and Climate Change. The Council was also attended by representatives of the Indian Council of Medical Research, National Institute of Nutrition, Food Safety & Standards Authority of India, Tata Trust, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Bank.

The National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges is mandated to provide policy directions to address India's nutritional challenges through a coordinated inter-sectoral action; coordinate and review convergence between Ministries; and review programs for nutrition on a quarterly basis.