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A PEOPLE BASED NUTRITION SERVICES-A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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10.1136/bmjopen-2015-forum2015abstracts.73

Background The prevalence of underweight children in India among the highest in the world¹ and with score 17.8 it ranked 55th in Global Hunger Index². In Indian context, not only in less developed states, but also in ‘developed’ states characterized by major inequities like Maharashtra. Almost half of the children in Maharashtra are underweight and one fifth are severely stunted³.

While the majority of the interventions are direct and nutrition specific which deals with immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition. There are very few which address fundamental causes, based on such evolving understanding Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation initiated Nutrition Rights Programme in six districts. The project strives to make nutrition services accountable with right based approach by mobilizing social demand and generating pressure for response and policy changes.

The paper discusses the impact of intervention on supplementary nutrition scheme which is one the key component of government food and nutrition programme.

Objectives To assess the change in Supplementary Nutrition Services in six districts of project area.

Methods This intervention covers total 115 Anganwadi (village based child health and nutrition centers) from six districts. As

part of regular monitoring process to assess the service status, a village level committee conducts a successive round of assessment, which includes systemic data collection with semi-structured questionnaire. The findings are based on the descriptive trend analysis of the indicators measure availability and quality of services.

Result It was observed that indicators measuring services availability shown marked improvement, score for food supply, frequency of distribution and storage services improved by 30%. Utilization of the cook food service for children improved by 20%. Indicators measuring quality of services including food quality, promotion of feeding practices and trained staff shown slight improvement or remain constant.

Conclusion By empowering community with their rights and creating space participatory dialogue will lead to positive change in public services.