

## Odisha SNP systems strengthening

Evolving development agendas have sparked off wide-ranging and multi-faceted discussions on accountability and transparency within development programmes. Central to such discussions is the call for greater accountability of States to their citizens. In the case of children, the fulfilment of their rights is an obligation not only of the State but of the community and the family, who collectively have a duty to children in both public and private realms.

Globally, various programmes have been implemented to tackle child under-nutrition- however, given the scale of the intervention and the spread of beneficiaries- many of these suffer from leakages, non-transparent implementation and information asymmetry. Accountability within nutrition programmes can be ensured, but it requires political commitment, a sustained and large-scale capacity-building effort, the harnessing of modern technology, and mobilising of communities to sustain the system.

### Background to the intervention

The State of Odisha is noted to struggle with challenging levels of poverty. Though there has been a reduction in under-nutrition in recent years, the levels remain high. In the last decade, Odisha has undertaken several measures to combat under-nutrition focussing strongly on 'systems strengthening', wherein a major reform was initiated under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme. Delivering SNP means that every day, nearly five million people are in direct contact with the State. At the AWCs 3-6-year-olds are fed a hot cooked meal, and for 0-3-year-olds, pregnant and lactating mothers (and adolescent girls in some districts), rations are given rations to be taken home.

An intervention of such scale inevitably suffers from leakages and opacity if implemented in a centralised manner. To avoid the same, SNP administration was decentralised in 2011- thereby bringing greater transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the system.

### Details of the intervention

With the decentralisation of the SNP administration, local village communities (Jaanch Committees), Women's Self Help Groups, Mothers Committees and elected representatives were given specific responsibilities in procurement, preparation, supervision and monitoring. Detailed operating procedures for each aspect, including food safety and quality, were laid out.

Further, the State invested in building the capacity of community members and AWC workers to empower them to demand greater public accountability. Capacity building and training of nearly 850,000 community members, Anganwadi Workers, Anganwadi Helpers and the supervisory staff were done across the state using ICTs and video conferencing initially, and later through master trainers. Moreover, previously unknown entitlements were publicised through advertisements, flex boards at AWCs and folk media. All funds were routed through e-transfers on fixed days and strictly monitored. In addition, the State gave an impetus to the conduct of social audits to measure adherence to nutrition norms, and improvements in AWC attendance.

### Impact

Regular collection and updating of records at the AWC, with community oversight, has led to greater transparency. At the community level, there is greater involvement in the AWC

functioning, and gradually in Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) and growth monitoring of children.

Use of ICTs in training and monitoring has led to greater accountability and transparency at all levels. Dashboard monitoring and Management Information Systems (MIS) feedback has led to greater ownership in the districts. This model has now been recognised as a best practice by the Planning Commission of India and the Commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court of India to monitor ICDS.