

## **Combating India's undernutrition: The Karnataka comprehensive nutrition mission**

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Despite impressive economic growth, India's nutritional indicators remain alarming, inhibiting physical/ cognitive/ economic potential of approximately 50% population.

India's undernutrition differs from other poor societies. It is chronic, inter-generational, has multiple causes, namely:

- Physical – hunger, protein-calorie-micronutrient deficit, infection/disease
- Socio-Economic - poverty, inter-generational malnutrition, lack of awareness
- Attitudinal - gender discrimination in intra-family nutritional and health care, female illiteracy & early marriage
- Governance-related - inadequate health/child/maternal care services, safe drinking water & sanitation coverage. Absence of urgently required national programme to combat undernutrition by holistically addressing critical multi-sectoral causes.

Karnataka is first State in India to implement multi-sectoral Comprehensive Nutrition Mission with specific objective of reducing undernutrition/micro-nutrient deficiency, based on:

- Inter-generational, life-cycle approach targeting underweight children, malnourished/anaemic adolescent girls & pregnant/lactating women
- Bridging calorie-protein-micronutrient deficit among inter-generational target groups through appropriate energy-dense fortified supplementation, produced by women's self-help-groups, from low-cost, local farm produce.
- Accelerating, integrating and monitoring ongoing multi-sectoral programmes impacting malnutrition, ex, Immunization, Vit A, Anaemia Control, Water & Sanitation, through improved governance, demand creation & involvement of community
- Launching public awareness campaign for attitudinal change & proper nutritional, child & maternal care practices within family budgets
- Vigorous quantitative & qualitative monitoring

The Mission is being piloted in 5 Blocks in partnership with NGOs. Initial activities have started.

(Strategy validated in 2 Pilots in Thane District, Maharashtra (2006-08). After 12 months, severe child undernutrition disappeared; children's nutritional status, adolescent girls' BMI improved; LBW babies & IMR reduced; productivity/income improved.)

### **Biography**

Veena S Rao, retired from the Indian Administrative Service in 2009 as Secretary to Government of India. She is an expert on development issues, particularly on malnutrition, a serious silent epidemic in India today. She is presently Advisor, Karnataka Nutrition Mission, an initiative spearheaded by her, making Karnataka the first State in India to launch an innovative programme to combat malnutrition, based on an inter-generational, inter-sectoral approach. Dr Rao has several publications on malnutrition to her credit. She is Guest Faculty at the LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, and All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

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