

Annual Report

Phulwaris (Creches)

run by Jan Swasthya Sahyog, Ganiyari.

(April 2021-March 2022)



Context

Jan Swasthya Sahyog has been working in rural Chhattisgarh in parts of Kota and Lormi blocks of Bilaspur district since 2000. As part of the community programme, we have been running creches for children between 6 months and 3 years of age for several years now. These creches were started in response to the high prevalence of childhood malnutrition and child mortality that were observed in the area. Apart from addressing nutritional requirements of children, they also allow the parents to go out for work, providing the indispensable crucial income to communities that are all below the poverty line.

In some centres, where there is no Anganwadi (Government-run day-care centre for children 3-6 years old which runs 4 hours a day) in the village, older children up to 5 years of age are also kept in the creche. A child who reaches 3 years of age and is malnourished is also retained in the creche for some more months till he/she improves.

The Avni software introduced in the year 2019 used for the Phulwari programme, however, tracks only children below 3 years of age.

Report of activities

Creche activities during Covid-19 second and third waves.

The initial phase of FY 2021-22 was laid on the background of second and third waves of the covid pandemic. Therefore, the events and activities that happened in the program reflect the responses to the phase of pandemic the area was in. For the better understanding of the project report, the updates are presented in the framework of the same.

During the year, creches remained physically closed till August 2021 as the second wave was particularly severe till then. Except in the month of May 2021 when the wave was at its peak, food continued to be supplied to all the creche children in their homes. Children also continued to be weighed (as part of anthropometry to ascertain their growth status) by the creche supervisors during this period.

After obtaining parental consent and also, as the observed severity of omicron in the community was less compared to the second wave, creches were re-opened in the month of August and a decision was taken not to close them during the Omicron wave. However the parents were also instructed not to send their children to the creche if they had fever, cough or cold. Precautions like masking, holding the creche in the open till the weather became hot, and keeping the children at a safe distance from one another, were also observed.

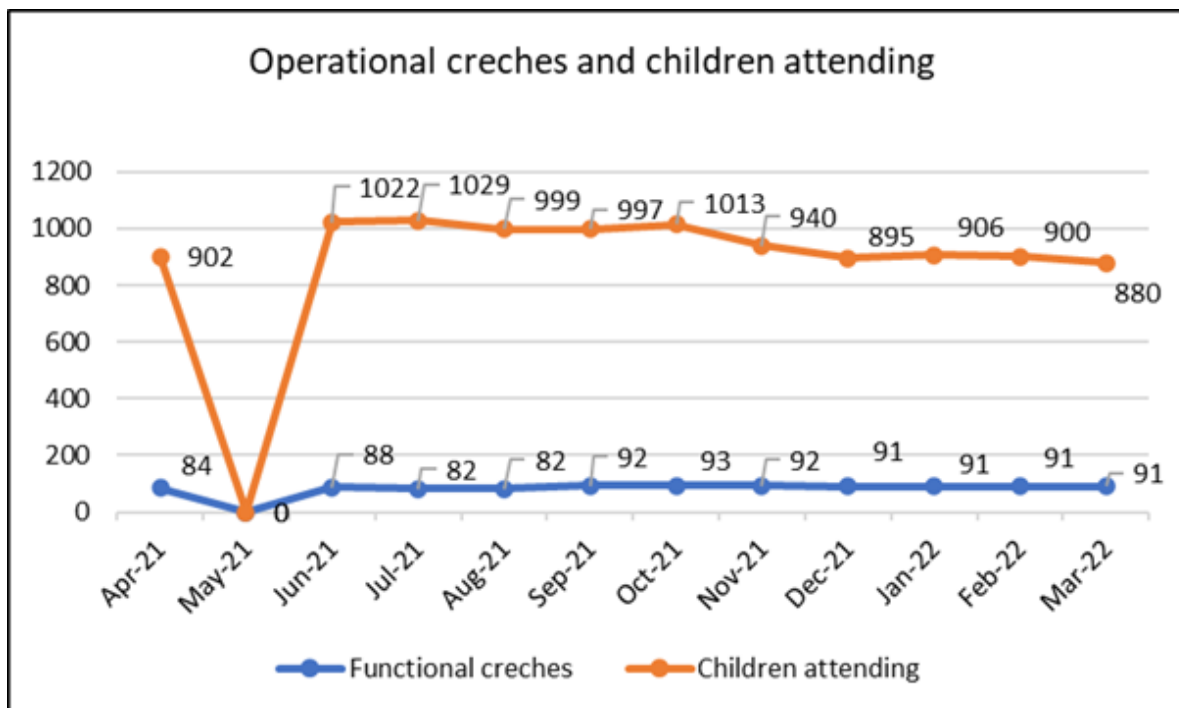
All children with symptoms of respiratory infection were seen by the Village Health Workers and the needful in terms of treatment, referral or follow up care was done for each such child.

Meetings with caregivers called “*Paalak baithak*” were held regularly in which the points related to running/ functioning of the creche, their children’s nutritional status, and a topic on child health and nutrition were discussed as part of the routine activity.

Child enrolment / attendance in the creches

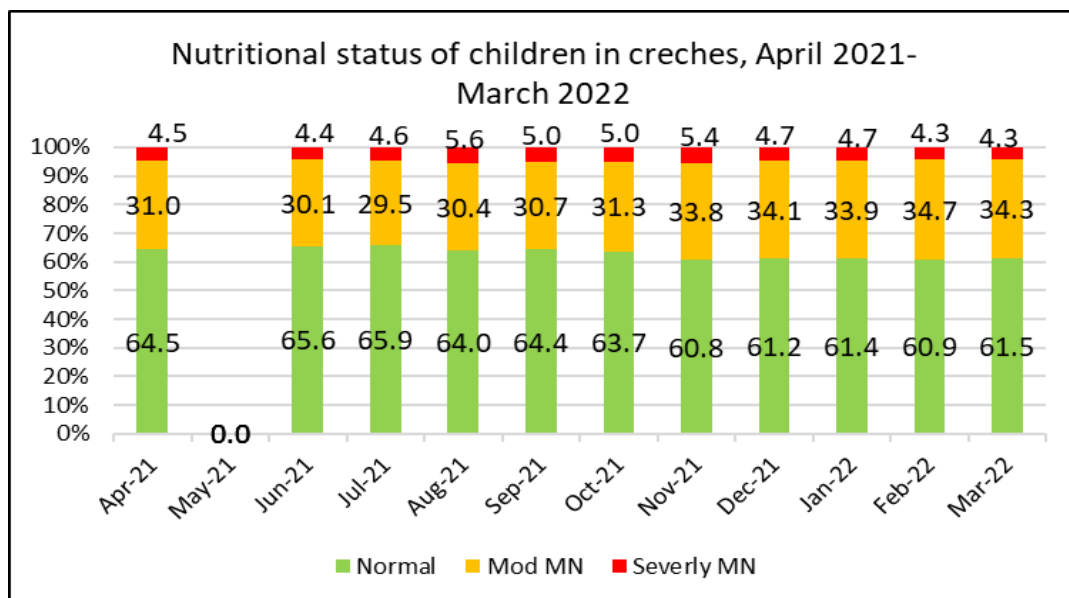
Total number of children enrolled each month fluctuates based on the number of children completing three years of age who get exited from the program and the number of new children who have reached six months of age who get enrolled.

Additionally, depending on seasonal migration and availability of work in the village, the families may not be present in the village. Hence enrolment and attendance may fluctuate through the year. During the agricultural season, more children are present in creches as the families return to the village and need childcare services while the parents work in the farm fields.



Nutritional status of children in creches

85-90% of enrolled children are weighed each month. Nutritional status of the children for the period under consideration is shown below. The proportion of children who are underweight (low weight for age) is 38.6%. The fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) found 32.7% of rural under-five children to be underweight. The higher rate of malnutrition in programme villages is also because we are serving children under 3 years of age among which the chances of getting malnourishment are much higher, especially after 6 months of birth. The needs of these under three years age group children are different compared to older children such as they need to be fed, need different food consistency, 4-5 times a day food frequency etc.



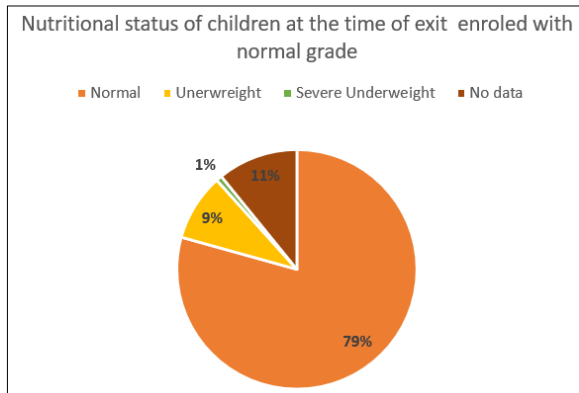
The matter of concern is the fact that the proportion of malnourished children (moderately and severely malnourished) has increased by 3 percentage points over the last year. We are trying to understand the reasons for this: certainly there is more economic hardship in the villages and we need to see how severely this has impacted the families of children who send their children to the centres. We also plan to conduct a survey among children who are not coming to the creches and study their socio-economic background and find whether there is any difference from the creche children. The study is planned for June when most families are expected to return to their villages from migration.

Nutritional status of children who left Phulwaris this year

A total of 684 children graduated from Phulwaris. Out of 684 children, 56.4% were normal, 30% were moderately malnourished and 13.4% were severely malnourished at the time of admission into Phulwaris. At the time of exit, 53.9% were in normal grade, 34.6% were moderately malnourished and 11.6% were severely malnourished. We see an increase in malnutrition in this cohort of children. During the first and 2nd COVID waves we had to close down the Phulwaris. Though we continued distributing

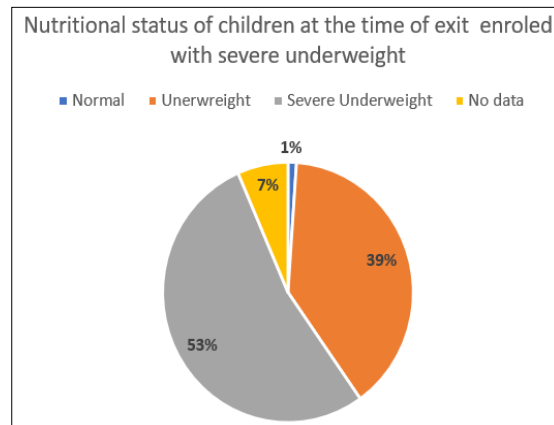
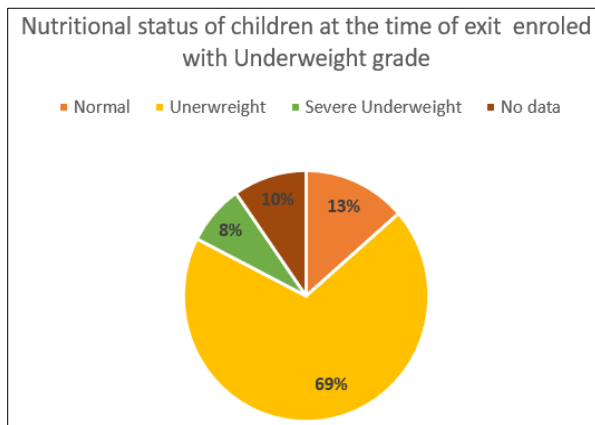
food at homes, in most families food got distributed among the siblings and in some homes, parents used to go to the field. This has affected the nutritional status of children during the COVID pandemic.

Following is the nutritional status at the time of exit. For children enrolled with normal grade, 79% of them remained in the same grade and 9% and 1% of them became moderately and severely underweight respectively.



For children enrolled with underweight, 13% of them became normal at the time of exit and 69% of them remained in the same grade. 8% of them became severely underweight. Exit status is considered after spending at least 6 months in Phuwlaris regularly. Growth faltering is monitored for every child and action steps are taken

accordingly be it a health check-up, referrals to subcentre/ referral hospital, counselling of parents to provide extra meals before and after Phulwari hours.



For children enrolled with severe underweight, 1% of them became normal and 7% became underweight. 39% of them remained in the same grade at the time of exit. For all the children enrolled with severe underweight, an extra meal and egg is given. More frequent health checks are done by health workers for these children and referred immediately to senior health workers or doctors at subcentre for further checks.

Nutritional Status of children in 55 Phulwaris supported by FoJSS UK

55 Phulwaris were selected from all the three clusters of villages. Following is the nutritional status of children from these 55 Phulwaris.

Weight for Age (WfA) Grades	Enrolment	%	Dec-21	%	Mar-22	%
Normal	534	76.3	314	66.1	304	67.4
Moderate Underweight	174	21.9	120	25.3	118	26.2
Severe Underweight	85	10.7	41	8.6	29	6.4
Total children	793		475		451	

There were 793 children in these 55 Phulwaris at the time of enrolment and about 76.3% were normal, 21.9% were moderate underweight and 10.7 were severely underweight. 318 children from these Phulwaris either exited or migrated with their parents up to December 21. The nutrition status of children continuing Phulwaris in the month of Dec 21 was - 66.1% were normal, 25.3% were moderate underweight and 8.6% were in the severely underweight category.

At the end of March 2022, 67.4% of these children were normal, 26.2% were moderate underweight and 6.4% were severely underweight.

Future plans

In the coming year, we plan to conduct a study comparing the nutritional status of children attending and those not attending the phulwaris. We also aim to study the reasons for continuing high malnutrition rates among the children in the creches, including the socio-economic status of the family.

We also intend to increase our interaction with the community and dialogue with parents regarding their contribution towards running the creches.

If we have enough resources, we would like to increase the number of creches to meet the need and demand – something we are unable to do at present.

Our supporters

We would like to extend our gratitude towards Friends of JSS (UK) for their support in providing to these vulnerable children in the rural part of Chhattisgarh, a childhood that they deserve. Other major supporters of this programme were Galaxy surfactant Ltd, SPA Education Foundation, Association for India's Development (AID), Sud Chemie, ML Outsourcing Ltd, Surabhi Foundation, Hema Hatangadi ji and other individual donors.

Some pictures of various activities in Phulwaris



Kitchen Garden in Phulwari



Monthly parent meeting



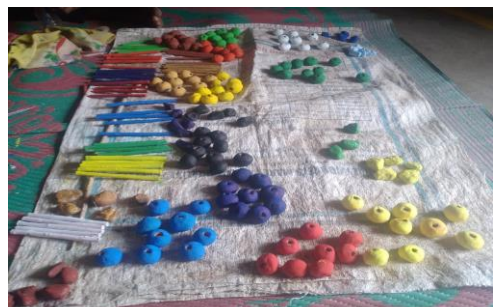
Children having food in Phulwari



Children performing stimulating activities



Handwashing practices in Phulwari



Various toys made by Phulwari workers from locally available material



Children playing in sand pit