Life-saving food and care given at the right time saves severely malnourished children.
Why is life-saving food and care given at the right time vital to save severely malnourished children?

- Children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) are at a nine times higher risk of dying; and for their recovery, they need special (therapeutic) foods and care, and monitoring of weight gain.
- Children with SAM need special life-saving treatment and appropriate weight gain for recovery of the body’s immunity for survival, growth and development.

How to ensure life-saving food and care at the right time to all severely malnourished children?

**Raise awareness, develop national policy**

- Raise awareness on the severity of the problem and advocate for quality therapeutic feeding and care for children with severe acute malnutrition.
- Develop guidelines for the treatment of children with SAM that includes early detection, timely referral, timely treatment with appropriate therapeutic foods and management, regular follow ups and home-based care.

**Improve programming, scale up interventions**

- Set up malnutrition treatment centres to treat children with SAM and medical complications with quality.
- Establish a programme for children with SAM that combines facility-and home-based therapeutic feeding and care as part of regular health, nutrition and development programmes for young children.

Where are we today?

At any point in time an average eight million Indian children suffer from severe wasting, the most widespread form of SAM; over 70 per cent of these children are younger than three years. Rates of child wasting in India (20 per cent) are twice as high as in sub-Saharan Africa (9 per cent) and ten times higher than in Latin America (2 per cent).

Children aged under five years who are severely wasted by state (%)

- Madhya Pradesh
- Jharkhand
- Tamil Nadu
- Tripura
- Bihar
- Rajasthan
- Delhi
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Karnataka
- Gujarat
- Chhattisgarh
- Goa
- Himachal Pradesh
- Uttarakhand
- Maharashtra
- Nagaland
- Orissa
- Uttar Pradesh
- Haryana
- West Bengal
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Kerala
- Assam
- Andhra Pradesh
- Mizoram
- Sikkim
- Manipur
- Punjab

Source: NFHS-3, 2006

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