



**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 need special foods and care at the right time

- 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.

Children with severe acute malnutrition can be saved if identified before medical problems develop

- Active searching and finding of children with SAM will help detect children who need to be treated with therapeutic foods and care before they develop medical complications.
- Children with SAM who have medical problems have to be referred to a malnutrition treatment centre for centre-based therapeutic care; these children cannot be treated at home.

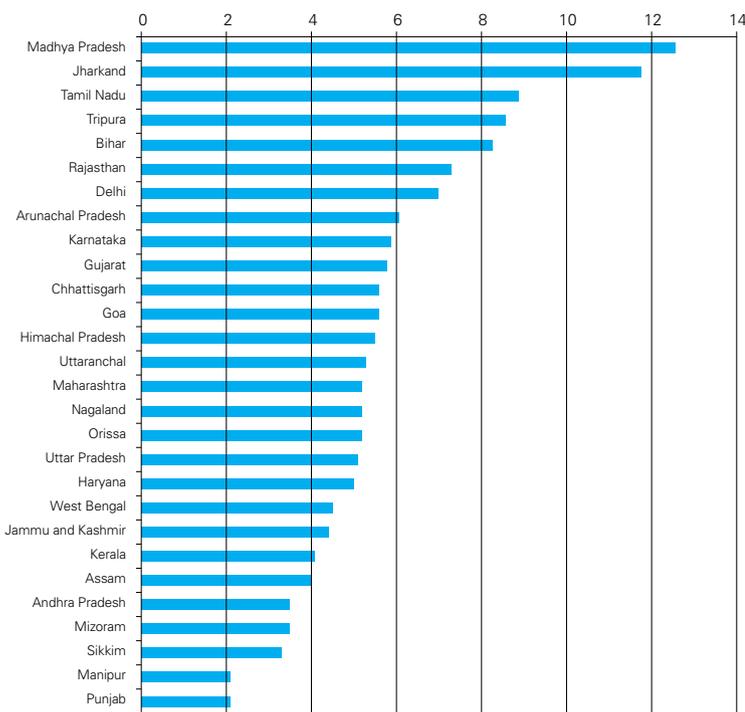
Children with severe acute malnutrition without medical problems can be treated in their communities

- Most children with SAM if identified before they develop medical problems can be treated at home with therapeutic foods and counselling; their weight gain can be monitored in the community.

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 (%)



Source: NFHS-3, 2006

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.