

HAPPY  
New Year


पोषित माँ, सुपोषित चैम्पियन  
2022

- 1 Meet Aarti Tailor, a POSHAN Champion from Pratapgarh
- 2 Why we should pay attention to maternal mental health
- 3 What NFHS-5 says about health & nutrition in Rajasthan
- 4 How POSHAN Champion Megha Pandya helped Mira deliver a healthy baby

## Championing Nutrition in Rajasthan



Aarti Tailor,  
POSHAN Champion, Pratapgarh

I have been working with RajPusht as a POSHAN Champion for over a year in and around Awleshwar village in Pratapgarh District. This is my first job on a nutrition project. While I had an elementary understanding of issues related to nutrition, I didn't know much about counselling or Behaviour Change Communication.

I still remember my first day at work. I visited many villages with Block Programme Manager Vijay Patidar and learnt about the kind of foods people eat, how traditions and eating habits differ between cities and villages, locally available nutritious foods and the optimal diet for pregnant women and new mothers. I then started going to villages by myself and interacted with beneficiaries. I was initially a bit hesitant, but I was determined to work for the mothers and children I met. I counselled them regarding a nutritious diet and recommended pregnancy care and childcare practices. This wasn't just a job for me; I had the chance to bust myths, taboos and the harmful practices prevalent in the region and leave a lasting impact by improving mothers and children's health.

When I tell pregnant women and new mothers that they should have at least three meals a day and snacks on top of that, many respond that it would harm the child. One of them was Geeta. She said that she had only two meals a day and was scrupulously avoiding milk, ghee

and other dairy products. While I counselled her, she did not pay much heed to my advice. The next time I met her, she looked downcast. She said that the doctor she had met for her ante-natal check-up had told her that she had barely gained any weight during her pregnancy, as a result of which both she and her child might face complications. I then repeated all the advice I had earlier shared and reinforced those on subsequent visits. A couple of months later, I got a call from an unknown number. "Namaste, Aarti Madam," came the voice from the other end. "Gita just had a boy and he weighs 2,900 g." It was Gita's mother-in-law. She was elated that her grandson was healthy.

I also remember Mamta, whom I had met in the fifth month of her pregnancy. Her weight had increased by only 1 kg since she conceived. When I asked her about this, she said, "Is it really important to gain weight during pregnancy?" Many families believe that women shouldn't gain a lot of weight during pregnancy as it leads to complications during delivery. It was relatively easy to convince Mamta about the dangers of inadequate weight gain during pregnancy. Often, all it takes is for someone to provide the correct information. I am in touch with all the first- and second-time mothers in the villages I work in. While not all families follow my advice, I have seen many people's notions and practices changing despite deep-rooted traditions. I am grateful to Anganwadi Workers, ASHAs and women in these villages for supporting me in my work and helping me in my quest for better nutrition.



# Maternal Mental Health Matters



Gyanendra Vishwakarma, District Programme Manager, Dungarpur



A mother's physical and mental wellbeing are critical for good health during pregnancy. Many programmes under the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCHA+) umbrella are underway to ensure physical health. However, a mother's mental health while expecting a child or in the first year following childbirth also requires as much (if not more) attention from caregivers and formal healthcare channels. Estimates suggest that 10–35% of women worldwide suffer from depression during pregnancy and postpartum.

Within India, prevalence estimates for antenatal or postnatal depression range between 6 and 48%. 7.6% of women experience suicidal ideation in pregnancy. Maternal depression is one of the major contributors to pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality. Research findings indicate that postpartum depression is a strong predictor of parenting stress, negatively impacting mother-infant bonding and leading to cognitive,

emotional and behavioural problems in children. These health outcomes are linked to infant mortality and impaired development of children under five years, especially in contexts of poverty, violence, and poor education. Also, children of mothers with mental illness are more likely to be abused, perform poorly in school and suffer from developmental challenges.

Essential mental health services include identifying antenatal, perinatal and post-natal blues, providing psycho-social support, making appropriate referrals if needed, and running mental health sensitisation programmes at the community level to destigmatise mental health issues and encourage timely diagnosis and treatment. The Indian public health system needs to take serious note of mental health programmes. It is crucial to establish a mental healthcare model at first-contact health facilities for timely care through trained public health functionaries. Primary health centres' staff and frontline workers need to be sensitised and trained.



October 10th is celebrated as World Mental Health Day



ANM training by RCHO Dr. Jagdish Khushwaha in Baran City



ANM training by Medical officer Dr. Vikas Pargi in Partapur, Banswara



PLA training at CHC Shahbad, Baran



PLA training of first batch, Block Bhinder, Udaipur



PLA meeting organised by ASHA Logri Meena, attended by 24 members including 11 adolescent, 3 VHSNC members in village Sawna, Bhinder Block Udaipur

# Mothers, Rajasthan and NFHS-5

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households across India. It provides a comprehensive overview of the health and nutrition indicators of India's women, men, and children. The 5th round of this survey was conducted between 2019 to 2021.

As a program dedicated to improved maternal nutrition for reduced instances of low birthweight and wasting among children, RajPusht works towards improving the following NFHS-5 indicators:



Women whose **BMI is less than normal**



Prevalence of **anaemia among pregnant women**



Under-5 **stunting, wasting, underweight**

There are remarkable improvements across almost all the above maternal and child health indicators in NFHS-5 versus NFHS-4 in the state. Figure 1 shows the degree of change between the two rounds for India and Rajasthan, with the latter outstripping the former by more than 5 percentage points in all indicators except prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women.

We also note that while anaemia among pregnant women has increased for India, it has reduced for Rajasthan by 0.5% points between the two rounds.

On ranking Rajasthan's districts on their composite performance in the above indicators, we find that the concentration of contiguous bottom districts has moved eastwards in NFHS-5.

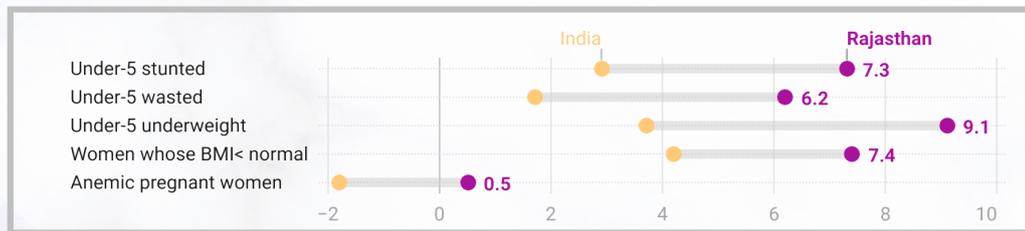


Figure 1: Improvement in Outcome Indicator performance between NFHS-4 and 5: Rajasthan & India (percentage points)

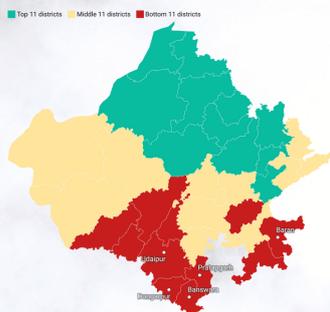


Figure 2: District-wise ranking as per select NFHS-4 indicators

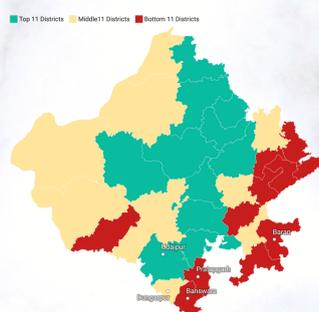


Figure 3: District-wise ranking as per select NFHS-5 indicators

Other salient shifts between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 for Rajasthan are as given below:



Women with self-operated bank accounts increased from 58.2% to **79.6%**



The total fertility rate declined from 2.4 to **2**



Institutional births increased from 84% to **94.9%**

Mothers receiving post-natal care visits increased from 63.7% to **85.3%**

Children with anaemia have risen from 60.3% to **71.5%**



Counselling of Pregnant and Lactating Mothers by BPM Harish Katare during MCHN at AWC Hanumat Kheda, Block Chhabra, Baran



PLA training in Dhariyawad Block, Pratapgarh



PLA meeting organised by ASHA at AWC Mohakampura in Block Kushalgarh, Banswara



ANM training in Kherwada Block, Udaipur



Customized posters for nutrition being used by AWW Ranjana Joshi during beneficiary counselling, AWC Nadiya 2, Chitri Block, Dungarpur

# Showing The Way



Megha Pandya, POSHAN Champion,  
Pratapgarh

Mira Meena, a resident of Moheda village in Pratapgarh district, was expecting her second child when she met Megha Pandya who works as a POSHAN Champion with RajPusht. Despite being in her second trimester, Mira had not sought ante-natal care even once as she was wary of the costs involved.

Megha informed her about the Maternal & Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) day services offered free-of-cost at the Anganwadi Centre and persuaded her to meet the ANM.

Further interactions with Mira revealed that she was expressly forbidden from consuming rice and items prepared from milk such as ghee, chhas and paneer. This led Megha to counsel Mira's husband, Ramratan Meena, and his mother on the importance of multiple meals and weight gain during pregnancy.



Mira began gaining 1 to 1.5 kilograms each month once she started eating thrice a day. On 4 September 2021, she gave birth to a healthy baby girl weighing 3.2 kilograms. Among the many congratulatory calls, one was by the happy new mother to Megha, requesting her to continue counselling over phone as she was going to her maternal home for postpartum care. Megha has happily obliged. They continue to stay in touch while Mira and her new baby navigate through the phase of exclusive breastfeeding.

