

WORKING GROUP FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX

(A Joint Working Group of the Right to Food Campaign and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan)
First Floor, G-46 Green Park, New Delhi - 110016

To
Mr CK Mishra
MD, NRHM
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India

08.08.2015

Dear Mr Mishra

We are writing to express our disappointment regarding the non-participatory methods of discussion around issues of child malnutrition and SAM in particular.

We believe that SAM Alliance shared the results of a study done in India on 29th July behind closed doors with limited participation including some international NGOs. From what we have heard of it, it appears that the study was a fairly unpalatable experiment in which very young children were forced to eat largely RUTF for an unprecedented period of 4 months; a process that could and should never be replicated through public programmes, and was thus unwarranted as an experiment in the first place.

We also hear that this study, which is yet to be peer-reviewed, clearly indicates that ready-to-use-foods are no magic bullet, and that there is not much difference in the results of the three groups. And there are major issues of sustainability. We also need to know the cost effectiveness and the real value of the study to programmes.

Meanwhile, the study does seem to have shown that food, health care and peer-counselling support at the family level is needed for impact and sustainability.

We note that models to prevent and treat malnutrition at community level that are sustainable and child-friendly exist and are emerging, such as the Maharashtra VDCs, AAM (Action Against Malnutrition) model and the Phulwari model (Chhattisgarh). These should be considered seriously and discussed alongside.

Organisations such as BPNI and PHRN, Right to Food and Right to Health groups have been working on malnutrition for decades and have been making recommendations promoting community-based interventions to policy makers consistently, many of which have been accepted¹.

We request you to share information on the SAM Alliance Study with us and give us a date to meet with you with respect to strategies for management of malnutrition in India. We would also like the Ministry to host a broad consultation to share and discuss the results with all stakeholders including those who are affected, before any policy change is even considered. We would also request that conflicts of interest be prevented in such a meeting.

If you need any clarification or assistance we shall be happy to provide it.

With our best regards,

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¹ See for example Strategies for Children Under Six: Recommendations for the 11th Plan available at: http://www.righttofoodindia.org/data/Strategies_for_Children_Under_Six.pdf