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# Corporates help govt fight malnutrition using spirulina

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**Bengaluru:** More than 50% of children in Karnataka are malnourished and anaemic, according to the National Family Health Survey-4. Consequently, the Karnataka government launched Balposhna scheme in March this year to supply 2gm of spirulina for 180 days to 25,000 children across the state.

However long before the government embarked on the project, Biocon Foundation had in 2012 started administering spirulina to severely malnourished children in Badami taluk of Bagalkot district. Like Biocon Foundation, JSW Foundation and Scania are also supplying spirulina to malnourished children in the state.

Rani Desai, head of Biocon Foundation, said: "We are working with the women and child development department to help the state attain a long-term solution for malnutrition following a request from the government to provide spirulina in Bagalkot district on urgent basis. Spirulina comes in the form of granules which may be sprinkled over the food or eaten directly."

The Foundation spends around Rs26 lakh on providing dietary supplements to malnourished children. From January this year, it has been working with the government in

Bagalkot and Bilgi taluks too.

They procure spirulina from Tumakuru. "Growing spirulina is easy, and it is a very cost effective way of fighting malnutrition. Till the age of six months the child is dependent on breast milk but after that we have to think of a long term solution to tackle acute malnutrition," she said.

With the help of the government data moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM), they identify the children, and call them to the primary health check-up camps, where nutrient supplements are given to kids depending on their condition. "We ask the mothers to bring back the sachets or bottles to spirulina after a month to make sure the child is indeed taking the prescribed dietary supplements" she said.

Anganwadi workers have to record the weight of the child and make home visits to sensitize mothers about the importance of the dietary supplements.

"We are more than happy to share our model with more corporates and encourage them to come forward to help the cause. We need to reach the interior pockets of the state that are in acute need of attention," Rani said.

NUTRITION SUPPLEMENTS DISPENSED							Impact in Bagalkot district since supply of dietary supplements started	
Protein	Iron	Calcium	Multi-Vitamin	MCT Oil	Zinc	Spirulina	YEAR	NO. OF SAM CHILDREN
1281	1208	1219	1464	231	153	272	2011-12	3,346
							2012-13	1,611
							2013-14	848
							2014-15	663
							2015-16 (till date)	653
							Total children	SAM kids (Severe acute malnutrition)
							Bagalkot	130
							Badami	105
							Bilagi	90

