

## INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST ANEMIA - ECONOMY

NEWS: India with the world's largest adolescent population susceptible to Anemia is leading a **large-scale and targeted fight against anemia**.

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

#### Understanding Anemia: A Condition of Low Hemoglobin

- **Definition:** Anemia is a medical condition characterized by **low levels of hemoglobin in the blood**, which reduces the blood's capacity to **transport oxygen efficiently** to the body's tissues and organs.
- **Primary Cause:** The most common cause is **iron deficiency**, but anemia may also arise from **deficiencies of folate, vitamin B12, and vitamin A**.
- **Effects of Oxygen Deficiency:** Reduced oxygen delivery impairs **organ function**, energy levels, and overall well-being.

#### Vulnerable Population Groups

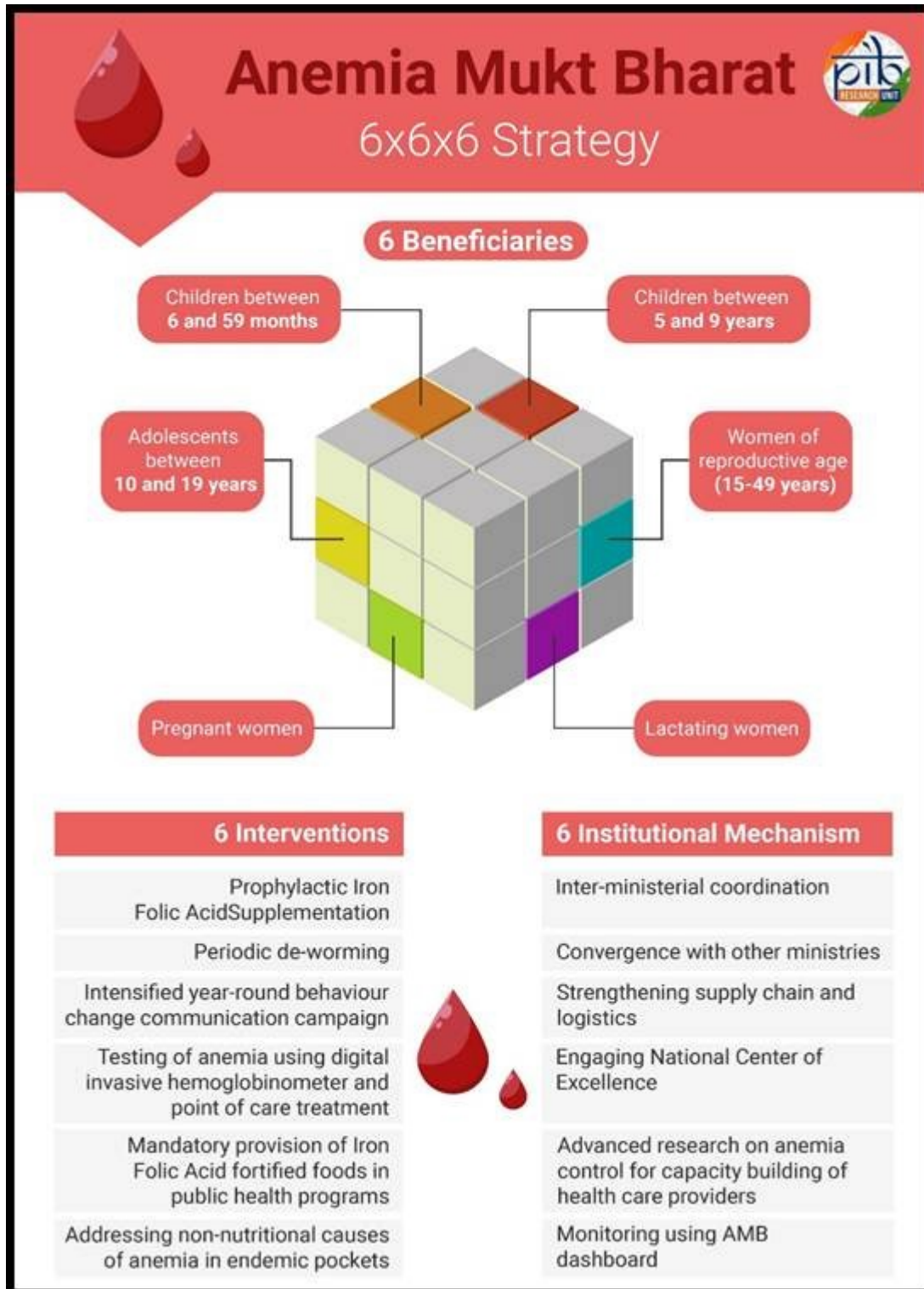
- **Infants and Children Under 5:** These groups are vulnerable due to **rapid growth, poor dietary intake, and frequent infections**.
- **Adolescent Girls:** Puberty-related blood loss and **nutritional gaps** make them prone to anemia.
- **Pregnant and Postpartum Women:** The **increased iron demand** during pregnancy, coupled with **blood loss during delivery**, significantly raises their risk.
- **Global Burden:** According to **WHO (2019)**, around **500 million women aged 15–49** and **269 million children under 5** suffer from anemia globally.

#### Global Prevalence and Health Impact

- **Prevalence Among Women:** Globally, about **30% of non-pregnant women** and **37% of pregnant women** are anemic.
- **Impact on Children:** Anemia impairs **cognitive function, learning ability, and motor development** in children.
- **Impact on Adults:** In adults, especially women, it leads to **reduced physical productivity and fatigue**.
- **Risks During Pregnancy:** It increases the chances of **low birth weight, premature delivery, and maternal mortality**.

#### Anemia Mukh Bharat (AMB) Initiative

- **Launched in 2018:** AMB is India's flagship initiative aimed at **reducing anemia prevalence across various age groups**.
- **6x6x6 Strategy:** It includes **6 target beneficiaries**, **6 interventions**, and **6 institutional mechanisms** to address anemia using a **life-cycle approach**.



### Key Government Programs Supporting AMB

- **Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS):**
  - Targets **adolescents aged 10–19 years** in schools and out-of-school settings.
  - Provides **weekly IFA tablets** and **biannual deworming**, aiming to prevent iron-deficiency anemia.
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):**
  - Offers **free and quality antenatal care** on the 9th of every month at public health facilities.
  - Focuses on **early detection and treatment** of anemia and other pregnancy complications.
- **Integration with AMB:** WIFS and PMSMA are integral parts of the **AMB platform**, promoting **coordinated action through health, nutrition, and education departments**.

#### Recent Achievements in Combating Anemia

- **Wide IFA Coverage:** In **Q2 of FY 2024–25**, around **15.4 crore children and adolescents** were administered iron and folic acid supplements.
- **Digital Monitoring:** The introduction of **real-time data tracking systems** for anemia screening and supplement distribution has enhanced program efficiency.
- **Cross-Sectoral Integration:** AMB has successfully brought together **healthcare, education, and nutrition stakeholders** to operationalize a life-cycle-based intervention model.

#### Persistent Challenges in Addressing Anemia

- **High Prevalence Rates:** As per **NFHS-5**, **67.1% of children** and **59.1% of adolescent girls** in India remain anemic.
- **Nutritional Deficiency:** Around **75% of Indian women** consume diets low in iron, limiting natural prevention.
- **Socioeconomic Barriers:** Factors like **early marriage and pregnancy, inadequate maternal care, and limited access to iron-rich food** contribute significantly.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Irregular **supply of supplements**, poor **community awareness**, and **weak outreach at grassroots** affect program impact.
- **Neglected Non-Nutritional Causes:** Conditions such as **malaria, helminth infections, fluorosis, and hemoglobinopathies** continue to be under-addressed in endemic regions.

### Way Forward: Strengthening India's Response to Anemia

- **Strengthen Last-Mile Delivery:** Ensure **timely and consistent supply** of IFA tablets, deworming drugs, and nutrition kits to the remotest regions.
- **Promote Community Awareness:** Intensify **behaviour change campaigns** that focus on **nutrition literacy**, especially for adolescent girls and mothers.
- **Expand Digital Monitoring Systems:** Utilize **digital dashboards and mobile applications** for real-time screening, treatment, and follow-up.
- **Tackle Root Causes Holistically:** Integrate anemia interventions with **poverty reduction, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) programs, and gender empowerment initiatives.**
- **Ensure Political and Financial Commitment:** Long-term success will require **sustained investment in public health infrastructure, nutrition services, and multi-sectoral coordination.**

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2122623>