JSS Phulwari Program
Updates from 2015 - 2016
Infant malnutrition in Chhattisgarh

Many studies have shown that various grades of undernutrition is the underlying cause for over 50% of mortality in children under five in India. Severe undernutrition is highly prevalent in Chhattisgarh - 47% of Chhattisgarhi children were malnourished, and 16% severely malnourished, and 40% of women in the state are severely undernourished\(^1\)(see Box 1).

The Phulwari program was started by JSS to accomplish two objectives: (a) to provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment for young children 6 months to 3 years of age so both parents are able to work, and enable older siblings to attend school (b) to prevent malnutrition among this age group and where children are malnourished, to improve their nutritional status and impact physical, emotional and intellectual development.

The story of Prince

Prince, aged 4 years, stood out in his Phulwari group. Parvati, the caregiver, held his hand to walk to the Phulwari, which she ran at her home. While the other children washed their own hands before every meal, Prince needed help. While most children could eat hot Khichdi with spoons on their own, Prince needed help. Bajrang the young Phulwari coordinator in this area looked up the growth chart on the wall and indicated that Prince weighed 7 Kg 200gm at the start of the year. He pulled out the WHO Age vs. Weight chart and places his finger in a region marked as Grade III malnourished. He estimated that around 20% of the children coming to the Phulwaris are Grade III malnourished. Prince’s family, Parvathi explained had migrated away for a month and he has come back weaker. The pain of distress migration is thus largely lost upon the policy makers of India who see this as an inevitable step on the linear path of development.

Phulwaris have achieved great success in reducing malnourishment in under 3 children and JSS has demonstrated the feasibility of operating them over a large scale of 80 Phulwaris with 1200 children in it. A study conducted by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust showed that the number of underweight children went down from 56% to 44% between 2009 and 2011 in areas where the Phulwaris were running. But the lives of children like Prince serve as a reminder that much work remains.
**Phulwari - Community run creches**

At present, there are 85 crèches with 1182 children in 37 villages, which typically function from 8 am to 5 pm normally (but flexible according to the needs of the community, e.g. during harvesting season). Each phulwari unit has one caregiver for ten children. The caregivers are women from the same village community, and have received training in basic child care, hygiene, nutrition and health with the help of JSS. Their skills are being upgraded periodically in facilitating early child learning and play.

2015 & 2016 Updates

The following are key updates of the Phulwari program in the year 2015-2016.

**Monthly Training:** Monthly training of Phulwari workers & supervisors has been regularly going on. The conducted training topics were mostly season specific like hypothermia in winter season, dehydration, heat stroke in summer etc.

**Data Recording Tools:** JSS introduced a new weight-height register with additions of anthropometric parameters and also to reduce manual work of maintaining register.
2015—2016 Updates Continued...

Training mothers on child nutrition: JSS has observed an absence of awareness amongst young mothers of the nutritional requirements of children. In collaboration with ASER-PRATHAM (a Delhi based NGO), a workshop was held for Phulwari supervisors on 23-24th May 2016 to enable them to engage mothers on child nutrition.

Nutrition survey: JSS conducted population survey of ~3000 children under five years of age in 54 program villages across three clusters, collecting anthropometric data, disability data and diet practice data.

![PRATHAM-ASER workshop (left), and Dr. Raman Katariya in Karpilha village (right).](image)

Model Phulwaris: For training and advocacy, JSS is building two “Model Phulwaris”, which could serve as an example of a good, running Phulwari, and be used as a tool for both training and advocacy. JSS is commencing the construction of two model Phulwaris in Karikachar (Semariya Cluster) and Karpilha village (Shivtarai Cluster), on land donated by the village panchayat.
2015—2016 Updates Continued...

Forums and Advocacy: JSS presented the Phulwari program as “Community-based Approaches for Improving Nutritional Outcomes” in under three children on date November 20th, 2015, organized by the group SEWA. This workshop was attended by a number of bureaucrats (e.g. Joint Secretaries of Ministry of Women and Child Development, and Ministry of Rural Development), and representatives from UNICEF, MacArthur Foundation, CHETNA, Ahmedabad, Mobile crèches and PRADAN, Chakradharpur. The Government of Bihar also going planning to implement Crèche Model in state. JSS has sent them our training materials related to Phulwari.

Redesigning monthly formats for Phulwari supervisors: To gather more substantial data, JSS redesigned monthly formats for Phulwari caregivers. With the introduction of this new format, we are getting details of grade III malnourished children, newly joined children and those who discontinued or completed Phulwari. Various reasons for discontinuation of Phulwari were also captured.