

Engaging Professional Medical Associations for Strengthening Micronutrient Interventions in the Context of Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) Services in India

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 FOGSI: Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India

Introduction

Despite a robust policy framework and political commitment, high rates of micronutrient deficiencies persist in India where a large proportion of health providers working across both the public and private health sector belong to professional medical associations. 60% of India’s healthcare infrastructure is private and remains largely unregulated. Professional medical associations are uniquely positioned to reach health providers and promote adherence to government policies and evidence-based guidelines for strengthening micronutrient interventions.¹

Objective

A&T’s objective was to engage professional medical associations in the development of evidence-based maternal infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) policies and guidelines, and in creating sustained and effective leadership, communication, and sources of capacity development and advocacy.

Methodology

A&T partnered with professional medical colleges² with a collective reach of more than 400,000 service providers. We worked to 1) adopt strong policy positions on micronutrient interventions such as iron folic acid (IFA) supplementation and promotion of dietary diversity; 2) develop evidence-based guidelines on diet diversity and micronutrient supplementation; 3) provide training to the medical practitioners; and 4) increase technical support to the government to improve the quality of implementation. We also conducted ongoing capacity strengthening sessions and joint work planning with associations to improve micronutrient interventions as part of MIYCN services.

Results

Lessons learned are displayed. Key accomplishments from our partnership included:

- Changing the landscape with evidence generation, position statements and policies on MICYN
- Strengthening the MICYN capacity of association members
- Providing technical support for the launch of a MICYN e-learning course
- Supporting government public health nutrition initiatives

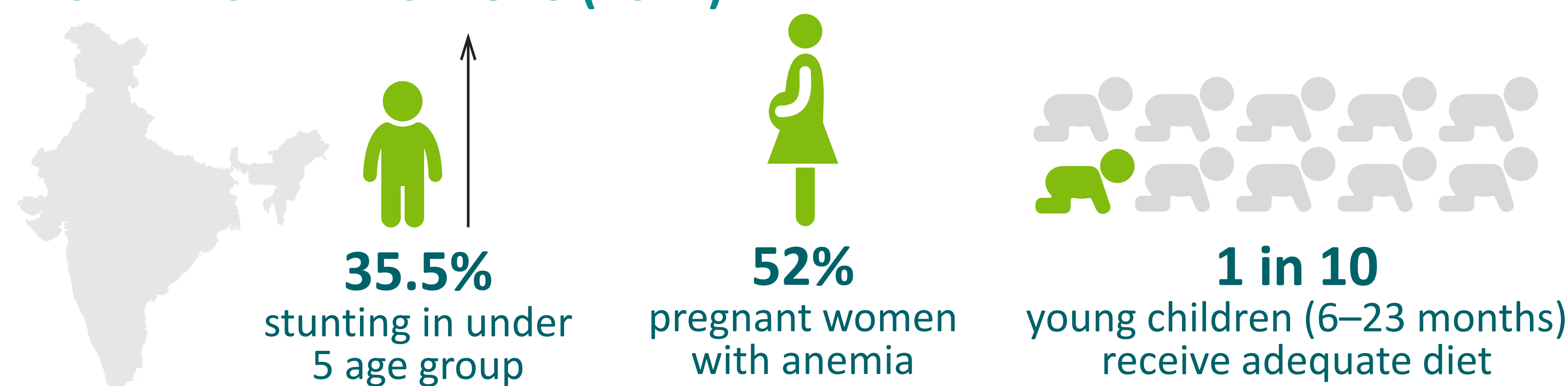
Conclusion

Professional medical associations have the potential to play a crucial role in both policy and advocacy efforts and in strengthening evidence-based MIYCN service delivery due to their leadership abilities and expertise, their extensive reach, and their relationship with the medical community. Looking ahead, future opportunities include developing and implementing quality assurance and quality improvement strategies to improve and increase MIYCN services as well as facilitating the adoption of e-learning methods for sustained medical learning. Institutionalizing the partnership with professional associations, along with government funding, would promote sustainability and impact health and nutrition outcomes in women and children.



Photo credit: Alive & Thrive

SELECT MIYCN INDICATORS (2021)



LESSONS LEARNED

Engaging with professional medical associations can provide a unique opportunity to interact with large networks that influence health providers across the country

KEY BENEFITS

- 1 Enabled building expert champions to support advocacy efforts with the government
- 2 Led to adoption of evidence-based guidelines on MIYCN for members, as anecdotal evidence shows that a significant number of providers referred to and followed guidelines issued by their associations
- 3 Accelerated the process of capacitating and motivating members to deliver evidence-based practices

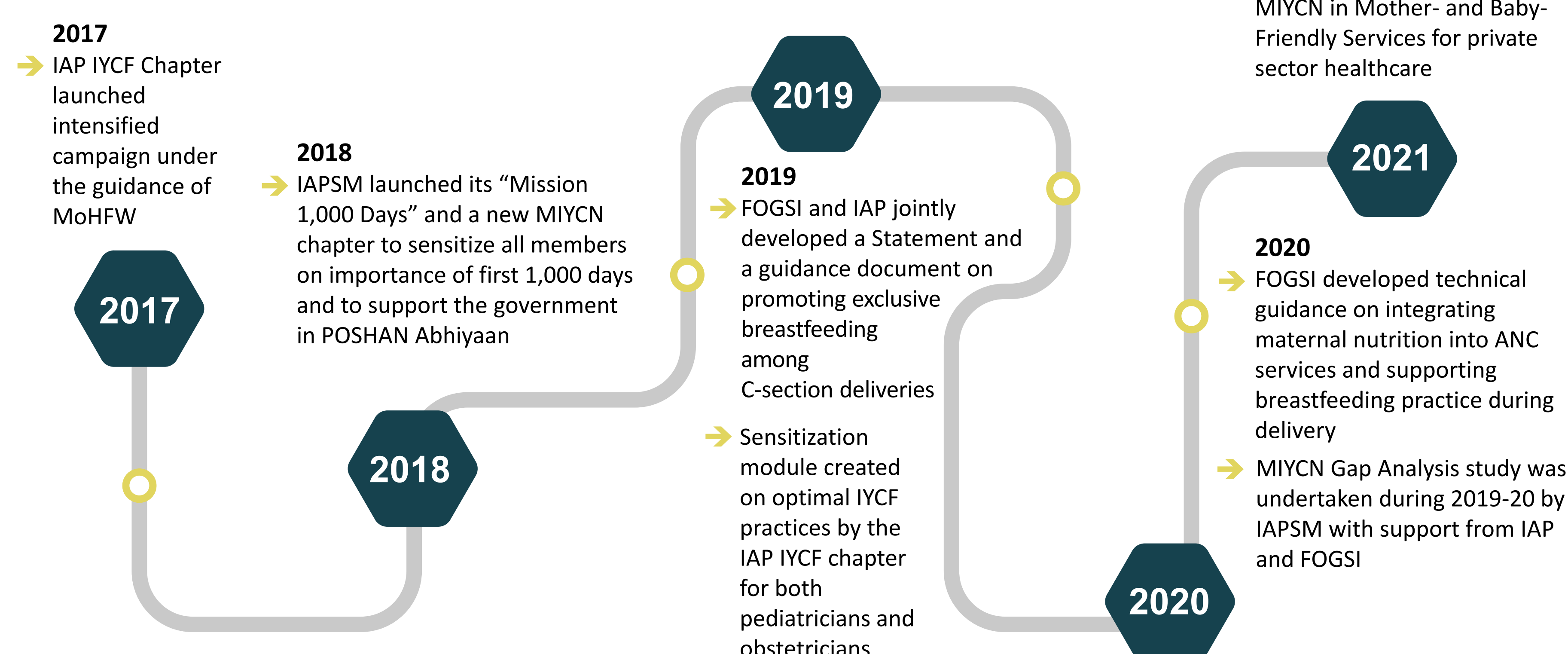
EMERGING ISSUES

- ⚠ Overcoming financing challenges
- ⚠ Weighing the costs and benefits of resource-intensive activities.
- ⚠ Developing mechanisms for tracking improvements in MIYCN practices

WHAT WORKS WELL

- ✓ Formalizing partnerships through signed agreements that clearly outline the intended activities, roles, responsibilities, and any related budget needs from both ends
- ✓ Ensuring leadership commitment to the MIYCN agenda
- ✓ Identifying MIYCN champions within the associations
- ✓ Facilitating technical seminars for association members
- ✓ Working with association leadership to develop and disseminate updated policy and program guidelines

MIYCN GUIDANCE COLLABORATION



¹ Alive & Thrive (2023). *Leveraging Professional Medical Associations to Strengthen MIYCN Policy and Program in India*.

² The medical associations include the IYCF chapter and Pediatric and Adolescent Nutrition (PAN) Society under the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), the Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM), and the Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI).