



**Delivering for Nutrition in South Asia**  
Towards Impact at Scale

# **Integrating Private Schools into India's Weekly Iron-Folic Acid Supplementation Program**

**Expanding Reach, Amplifying Impact**

**Sunil Kumar Maurya**  
**State Program Lead, Health and Nutrition**  
**Evidence Action**

# Why Private Schools Matter for Anemia Prevention

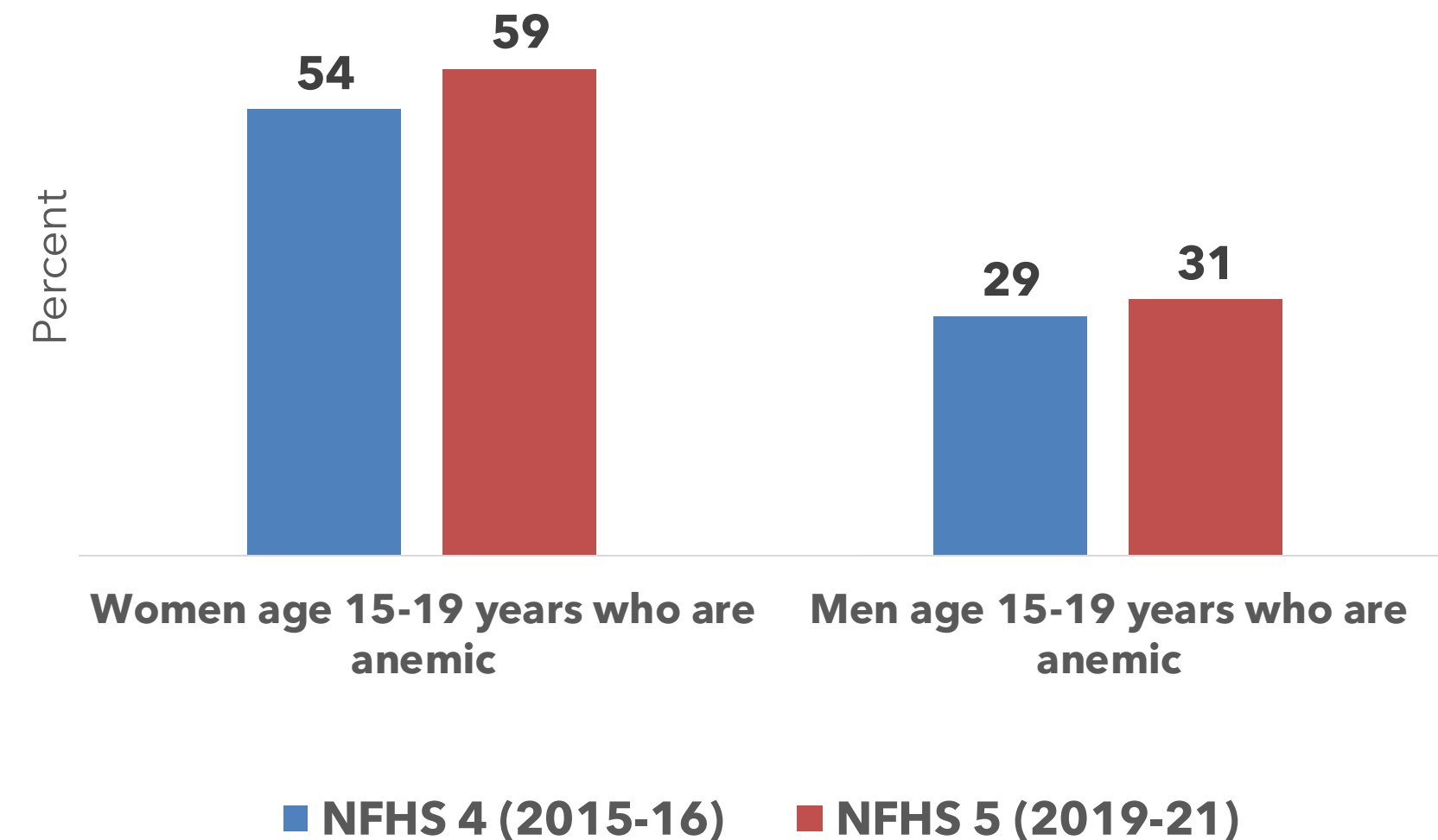
## The Coverage Gap:

- 302M school-age children (6–18 years) in India
- 37% (>1 in 3) attend private schools
- Existing WIFS program reaches government schools only

## The Burden:

- 51% of school-going children are anemic
- Among adolescents (10–19 years): 28% overall anemia

## Anemia Among Adolescents



→ **Universal anemia prevention requires universal school coverage**

# Implementation Strategies for Private School Expansion

## Advocacy & Policy Alignment

- Evidence-based advocacy using high enrollment data to demonstrate coverage gaps
- Pilot programs in select districts with existing stocks to show feasibility and address misperceptions
- Iterative budget cycles:  
pilots→demonstrated impact→dedicated allocations→expansion

## System Strengthening

- Mapping 20,000+ private schools, associations, and nodal teachers
- Calculating training load and training nodal teachers as implementers
- Establishing supply chain linkages for uninterrupted IFA distribution

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Partnerships with school associations, chains, and education boards
- Tailored IEC materials and consent processes (diary notes, FAQs, DC appeals)
- Building parental trust through transparent communication and mobilization

## Rollout & Institutionalization

- Integration with existing government reporting systems (paper and digital)
- Fixed-day distribution model with embedded review mechanisms
- Governance led by district collectors for true institutionalization

# Scale and Context

**3 states, 43 districts, 242 blocks**  
(sub-districts)

**20,000+ private schools**

**3.2M children** including **0.68M**  
**adolescent girls**

Jan 2022

RoP approvals for year 2022-24

Sep 2021

PIP proposals and advocacy with EA states for private school inclusion

Nov 2022

**Haryana pilot launch** (in 7 districts)

Jul 2023

**Uttarakhand pilot launch**  
(in 2 districts)

Sep 2023

PIP proposals and advocacy with EA states for private school inclusion

Jan 2024

RoP approvals for year 2024-26

Feb 2024

Program Process Monitoring (PPM) introduced

May 2024

HR - pilot expansion to 10 districts  
(10- pink and 7- blue)

Sep 2024

**MP pilot launch**  
(89 tribal blocks in 20 districts)

Jul 2025

UKD – scaled up to all 13 districts

# What Enabled Success, and What We Had to Overcome

## ✓ Key Enablers

- **Strong governance:** Cross-departmental coordination anchored by state and district leadership
- **Strategic partnerships:** School associations, education boards, and local influencers
- **Teacher ownership:** Trained nodal teachers became program champions
- **System integration:** Leveraged existing public health supply chains and reporting
- **Sustained budgets:** Government financial commitment for supplies, training, and awareness

## △ Barriers Addressed

- **Variable school buy-in:** Required continuous relationship-building
- **Supply chain gaps:** Initial delays in drug distribution to private schools
- **Misconceptions about IFA:** Concerns about drug quality and side effects
- **Reporting delays:** Paper-based systems created bottlenecks
- **Limited monitoring:** Needed systematic review mechanisms

→ *Barriers were surmountable through persistent engagement and adaptive strategies*



# What is required for Scale-Up

## For State/Provincial Governments

- Private schools in annual program implementation plans
- Dedicated budgets (supplies, training, awareness, monitoring)
- Joint Health-Education coordination with systematic review
- Teacher and official capacity building

## For National Policy

- Private school inclusion in anemia/micronutrient policy guidelines
- Private school data in national monitoring frameworks (HMIS)
- Implementation guidelines and operational frameworks
- State/provincial capacity building for cross-sectoral programs

## For Implementation Partners

### **Support in:**

- Standardized, adaptable tools and protocols
- Sustainable district capacity through systematic training
- Knowledge-sharing platforms for regional learning
- Transition to government-owned implementation

# Key Lessons: What Makes Private School Integration Work

1. At-scale implementation with government integration is feasible
  - 3.2M children reached across diverse contexts
  - 90% of mapped schools successfully engaged
2. Private schools require different engagement strategies than government schools
3. Building trust takes time—but pays dividends
4. Level of institutional engagement determines sustainability
5. Convergence is core to successful programming

# Every Child. Every School. Every Week



# Thank you

[sunil.maurya@eaiiadvisors.in](mailto:sunil.maurya@eaiiadvisors.in)

<https://www.evidenceaction.org/>