



## **Round Table Discussion on Nutrition Issues that impact Primary School Children: Challenges Ahead**

**Organized by  
Health, Development & Society Team  
Azim Premji University**

The Health, Development and Society team at Azim Premji University recently organized a one-day Round Table discussion on “Nutrition Issues that Impact Primary School Children”, held on April 29, 2015 at Azim Premji Foundation conference hall. About 30 representatives from various institutions working on this issue participated in the discussion. The Round Table was organized to share and reflect on the findings of the study on school nutrition being conducted by the Health, Development and Society team: *Do we know what they eat, and why? A Study on School-level Dietary Adequacy and Impact of Cultural Beliefs on Dietary Choice in Rural Karnataka*.

Three working papers were shared by the study team with the participants prior to the Round Table, providing the details of the key findings of the study, and the focus of the first session of the day was on these findings and their implications for policies and programs. This was followed by a discussion of the Integrated Child Development Services program of the Government of India, and an analysis of its impact on improving early childhood nutrition and care by Mohini Kak from the World Bank. Research on childhood nutrition conducted by the St. John’s Research Center was presented by Sumathi Swaminathan, who highlighted the need for fine-tuning interventions to suit individual nutritional challenges, rather than blanketing diverse groups with one-size-fits-all solutions. Shweta Khandelwal from the Public Health Foundation of India discussed the paucity of institutions providing a broad training curriculum in public health nutrition, and the challenges of capacitating human resources for fulfilling the public health nutrition goals of our national programs. Salil Kumar from the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) provided an update on the micro-nutrient initiatives of GAIN, implemented in collaboration with various state governments, and their plans for expanding such programs in the future. The day ended with a lively discussion moderated by Rajib Dasgupta from the Jawaharlal Nehru University on the current programmatic response to the country’s nutritional challenges, and the value of moving away from instrumental ideas of nutrition and moving towards a human rights approach.

This discussion contributed significantly to exploring and enriching several important ideas relating to the health and nutrition of young children, available opportunities for addressing current challenges, and the way forward. The discussion also provided important new directions for the on-going Nutrition Project of the Health, Development and Society team of Azim Premji University.