

**DR. N. C. SAXENA, COMMISSIONER AND
HARSH MANDER, SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF THE SUPREME COURT
IN THE CASE: PUCL v. UOI & Ors. WRIT PETITION (Civil) No. 196 of 2001**

August 30, 2007

allschemes/508/MP

Shri. R C Sahni,
Chief Secretary
Government of Madhya Pradesh
Mantralaya,
Bhopal 462 004

Subject: Status of Implementation of Food Schemes.

Dear Shri. Sahni,

I am extremely grateful to you and to all our colleagues who spared time for an extremely constructive dialogue on many aspects of the implementation of the right to food schemes in Madhya Pradesh. I want to place on record that the implementation and progress of the Madhya Pradesh government in most of the schemes is better than most other states, and thank you for this.

ICDS:

1. We appreciate the speed with which the newly sanctioned ICDS centres are being operationalised. I especially found the marking system for selection a major innovation, ensuring fairness and transparency. We will be commending to other state governments to consider following the same model.
2. I was happy to note that the state government has completed a survey of SC ST hamlets, and will be covering these fully in the next phase of expansion. I request that a similar survey is completed of the urban slums (both authorised and unauthorised) at the earliest, and a plan developed for their full coverage.

3. The firm resolve with which the state government has eliminated contractors in ICDS, and moved to a fully decentralised system of procurement and food preparation for the 3 to 6 years age group is also creditable. I learnt of the remarkable decision to transfer funds directly to the account of the AWW. I also was apprised of the case of the AWWs in the High Court, and we will take advice from our lawyer about how best we can intervene to support the state government.
4. In my field visits to villages in Raisen, I found that whereas there are varied menus for these children in the 3 to 6 year age group, they are still not being given hot cooked meals. According to the advice from the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), balanced hot cooked meals of the kind given in MDM are best for the children.
5. For the children from 6 months to 3 years, NIN would be happy to advise the state government about locally prepared weaning foods. If you wish, we could organise this support from NIN.
6. In my field visit, I found positive impacts of locating ICDS centres in or adjacent to schools, as older siblings were able to attend school while taking care of the children. In hamlets where schools are located, this may be encouraged, and common cooking arrangements for MDM and ICDS hot cooked meals for the 3 to 6 years age group considered.
7. You kindly agreed to issue orders that permit children of migrant workers to avail of ICDS services from the nearest ICDS centre in the migration destination of their parents.

MDM

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1. I request that the state government considers more attractive, palatable and varied weekly menus for MDMs.
2. Field studies report high involvement of teachers in MDMs. This was also my observation in the field visit. This is bound to lead to a backlash, and teaching will suffer. Theoretically the task is delegated to the PTA, but since the secretary of the PTA is a teacher or headmaster, in the last resort it is they who are responsible for purchases and supervising the cooking. I suggest that we consider alternatives, such as the panchayat, which in turn can deploy local agencies such as SHGs of women where they are active.
3. You kindly agreed to consider piloting an initiative as in Tamil Nadu, in which destitute aged people are permitted to eat at the MDM.
4. I also spoke to the Principal Secretary and Secretary Education to consider implementing in major cities a scheme of residential hostels for urban homeless street children, to ensure both their food and education rights.

TPDS and AAY

1. I requested that the state government kindly ensures that a survey is undertaken of the following social categories, and all future AAY cards are issued only to these categories as per Supreme Court instructions: a) PTGs; b) single women; c) old people; and d) persons with disabilities. In urban areas, similarly urban homeless populations may kindly be surveyed and covered with AAY cards.
2. I also requested steps to ensure compliance of SC orders that every household under TPDS and AAY are given 35 kg of grain.

NOAPS, NFBS and JSY

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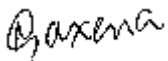
1. We noted the rising coverage under both NOAPS and NFBS, well beyond the GOI allocations.
2. The success of the state government to fully cover all pension beneficiaries through banks and post offices is also noteworthy, and is likely to lead both to timely distribution and elimination of corruption. I request that an independent assessment is undertaken of these initiatives, so that we can commend these to other states.
3. We also noted that JSY coverage is now much higher for non- institutional deliveries, as per SC orders.

Sahariyas

1. The state government is taking up a major initiative to assist the Sahariya tribes, which is commendable. However, our repeated field visits reflect intense and chronic food deprivation in this community, leading to conditions of living with starvation, and their succumbing to ailments which people with better nutrition would be able to survive. In addition, as you pointed out, they suffer from an acute shortage of drinking water. I request that the Sahariya Plan kindly focuses most on these two denials which are critical to their survival.

I am grateful for giving me the opportunity to try to contribute some few suggestions for your consideration regarding food schemes in MP.

With Regards,



Dr. N.C. Saxena



Harsh Mander

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