

January 11th, 2008.
ICDS/533/ West Bengal.

Shri. Amit Kiran Deb
Chief Secretary
Government of West Bengal
Writer's Building
Kolkata
West Bengal.

Sub: Status of Implementation of ICDS in West Bengal.

Dear Shri. Amit Kiran Deb,

As you know we have been appointed by the Supreme Court to monitor food and employment schemes under PUCL vs. Union of India, CWP 196/2001. We have recently submitted the Seventh Report on the implementation of these schemes all across the country to the Supreme Court. We would like to bring to your notice some issues of concern in relation to the ICDS in West Bengal.

1. Despite data being collected, compiled and Monthly Progress Reports being prepared on ICDS, it is noted that none is available on the state website. We request you to please take necessary steps to make these reports and all the information related to the ICDS available on the website. The ICDS website of the Maharashtra Government (www.icds.gov.in), for instance, is not only very informative but is also a very good example of proactive disclosure of information about the programme. You may consider preparing an ICDS website along the lines that Maharashtra has done.
2. The number of children in the 0-6 age group according to the anganwadi survey register is 69,66,367 and of this 29,98,314 children (about 43%) are beneficiaries of the SNP programme. Efforts must be made to improve the coverage as almost 60% of the children do not receive the benefits of the SNP which is a critical part of the ICDS programme. We would be grateful if you could please also examine and let us know the reasons why such a large gap still persists in this basic element of ICDS operationalisation.
3. Moreover, the number of 0-6 children in the state as per Census 2001 is 1,14,14,222. Therefore only about 61% of the eligible children have been identified by the anganwadi survey. A mapping must please be done to ensure that every habitation and slum has been covered by an anganwadi centre and within each area every child has been reached out to (as per Supreme Court orders).
4. We would also like to draw your attention to the order of the Supreme Court dated October 7th, 2004 which states that:
 - "Contractors should not be used in providing supplementary nutrition to ICDS. Village communities, Mahila Mandals and Self-help groups should be given the preference for preparing the food to be served in ICDS. (In the

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process of providing anganwadi in each settlement) efforts should be taken cover all SC/ST habitations at the earliest. BPL criterion should not be used as an eligibility condition for a child to use anganwadi. While Government of India should ensure that funds are allotted on time, States should ensure that these are fully used so that there is no disruption in the provision of supplementary nutrition.”

We would request you to ensure compliance with this order since failure to do is likely to be construed as contempt of the orders of the Honourable Court. We would like to state here that the decentralisation exercise must be complete with no involvement of any intermediaries including consumer or other co-operative societies. The spirit of the Supreme Court order would imply the transfer of funds to the most appropriate local body like village level Mahila Mandals and Self Help Groups. It would also entail the provision of hot, cooked meals everyday at the ICDS centre to all children in the age group 3-6 years and appropriate provision of THRs to all children in the age group 0-3 years; pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls.

5. Of the 13,993 SC/ST habitations of the states, 4,626 are yet to have an Anganwadi Centre. We would therefore request you to accord this the highest priority in the ICDS expansion since the Supreme Court order specifically directs State Governments/UTs to ensure universal coverage of SC/ST habitations as a priority.
6. Similarly, in line with the Supreme Court orders, we would also request a detailed survey of all urban slums and universal coverage of children living in all urban slums, across the State on a priority basis. Please separately list the numbers of SC ST dominated hamlets and the population in each urban area under slums (both authorised and unauthorised) in the state, what is the current coverage of ICDS centres in these hamlets and slums, and the plans for filling the gap.
7. We recently sent you a letter requesting for information on coverage of SC/ST habitations and urban slums under ICDS (icds.coverage/518/allstates dated 30.11.2007). Kindly respond to this letter at the earliest.
8. Similarly, in line with the Supreme Court orders, we would also request a detailed survey of all urban slums and universal coverage of children living in all urban slums, across the State on a priority basis.
9. Further, we urge you to conduct a campaign to include disabled children under ICDS. For this Anganwadi level survey of disabled children should be undertaken in a time bound manner, and in future data at ICDS centre upwards to project, district and state levels disaggregated for coverage of disabled children.
10. We would be grateful if the State Government ensures that necessary steps are taken to ensure that children of all migrant workers have access to all the six services of the ICDS. Please send us a copy of the state government’s instructions in this regard.

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We request the Government of West Bengal to look into the above listed matters and send us an action taken report on the same at the earliest.

With regards,

Dr. N.C. Saxena

Harsh Mander

CC: Ms. Anuradha Talwar, Advisor to the Commissioners to the Supreme Court, West Bengal.