

DALITS AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD:  
DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION IN FOOD RELATED GOVERNMENT  
PROGRAMS

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Working Paper**

**Introduction**

**I. The Problem**

As a customary system of social and economic governance based on graded hierarchy, caste in Indian society lives in tension with the legal system of the Indian state, which is based on ideals of liberty and equality. Dalits, i.e. the Scheduled Castes or “untouchables” who constitute almost one-fifth of the Indian population, suffer most acutely from the social and economic violence of the caste system, which prescribes their position as uniquely at the bottom of the graded hierarchy. Dalits in Indian society negotiate social and economic transactions in many spheres of life from this inherited position at the bottom, while in other spheres “untouchability” excludes them from transactions with dominant caste society altogether.

Recognizing that caste discrimination and exclusion, particularly against Dalits, continues to thrive, and acknowledging that such discrimination and exclusion contradicts the spirit and letter of India’s Constitution, the central government has enacted various anti-discriminatory measures and legislation over the years, intended to redress these problems. The “Anti-Untouchability Act” of 1955, the “Protection of Civil Rights Act” of 1955/1976, and the “Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act” (SC/ST POA Act) of 1989 all acknowledge existing forms of discrimination and exclusion, and introduce new measures to eradicate them. A system of reservations in government employment, entrance in government educational institutions, etc., has also been enacted with the intent of redressing conventional caste discrimination and exclusion in these state-controlled sectors. In response to the growing Right to Food movement of recent years, the Supreme Court, following the Constitution, has required the central government, when introducing new food-related schemes in response to drought, unemployment, starvation, and so forth, to include specific provisions to prevent caste discrimination and exclusion in the implementation of these programs.

Conventional caste forces, however, are often able to subvert, evade, hijack or manipulate the progressive legal framework of the state, nullifying the transformative potential of its anti-discriminatory measures. Even in government schemes designed specifically for the welfare of communities traditionally discriminated against, members of those communities often find themselves excluded both from participation/partnership in the implementation of the scheme, as well as from the material or other benefits of the scheme. This is notably the case in Right to Food-related government programs such as the Midday Meal Scheme and the Targeted Public Distribution System.

**II. Objectives**

The Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS), therefore, undertook a study to look at caste discrimination and exclusion against Dalits specifically in the implementation of these Right to Food-related government welfare schemes. While violent atrocities and

other egregious violations of the human rights of Dalits have received some (warranted) attention in recent years, the area of discrimination in government programs remains a relatively neglected area of study.

The purpose of the IIDS survey was to obtain an accurate, current, ground-level view of how, where, and to what degree caste discrimination and exclusion operate in the above-mentioned government programs as they are implemented in villages across India. Specifically, this was examined in terms of:

1. Access – Can Dalits access the benefits of the government schemes?
2. Participatory Empowerment/Ownership – To what degree are Dalits able to participate meaningfully in the implementation of the schemes, from “having a say” to having ownership stakes in the schemes’ material capital?
3. Treatment – Are Dalits treated fairly and on equal terms with dominant caste communities in the implementation of the schemes?

### **III. Methodology**

#### ***A. Questionnaire format:***

In order to assay caste discrimination and exclusion in the Midday Meal Scheme (MMS) and the Public Distribution System (PDS), a questionnaire was developed for survey on a one village, one questionnaire basis. The questionnaire attempts to ascertain the degree of Dalit access to, participatory empowerment/ownership of, and treatment in both government programs. Originally, the MMS section and PDS section were followed by a third section addressing the distribution of Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards; problems of translation and divergent regional applicability, however, rendered the data from this section unusable. The complete questionnaire, with answer codes, is included as Appendix One.

#### ***B. Clarification of terms:***

For the purposes of this study, “exclusion” means prohibition from participation, whereas “discrimination” denotes participation with negative distinction. To illustrate with examples from the study, Kamalapurth Village in Tamil Nadu, where the dominant caste community jeered at and expelled a Dalit girl from the government school when she tried to participate in the midday meal, typifies “exclusion” of Dalit children in the MMS. Enumalavaripalli Village in Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, where Dalit children participate in the midday meal but are required to sit separately from the dominant caste children, typifies caste “discrimination”. While the two phenomena clearly share a great deal in common (e.g. both are illegal, both result in detrimental psychological effects on the children at the receiving end), they are nonetheless distinct, and therefore will be considered individually as well as jointly in the analysis of each of the government programs.

#### ***C. Indicators for measuring caste discrimination and exclusion:***

How does one measure caste discrimination and exclusion? What are the indicators? As mentioned above, the categories of analysis, through which caste discrimination and exclusion will be identified and examined in this study, are access,

participatory empowerment/ownership, and treatment. What, then, are the quantifiable indicators of “access” in the MMS and PDS?

1. *Existence of the scheme.* Is there a functioning Midday Meal Scheme in the government school in your village? Is there a PDS shop in your village? Access to government programs is first and foremost predicated on the existence of said government programs at the local level.
2. *Location of the scheme.* Is the MMS held in the school, on the premises of a temple, in an exclusively dominant caste locality, in a Dalit colony, or elsewhere? Is the PDS shop situated in the Dalit colony, the dominant caste locality, or elsewhere? Where Dalits are forbidden to enter dominant caste localities, or face restrictions on mobility and intimidation in dominant caste localities, the location of PDS shops and MMS meal centers is a crucial factor in determining the degree of Dalit access to these programs.
3. *Distance of the scheme from Dalit colony.* Especially in spread-out rural areas, the distance that children have to walk in order to reach a school serving the midday meal, or the distance that adults have to walk in order to access the government PDS shop, critically affects Dalit access to these schemes.
4. *Subjective responses to questions of access.* Are there any children rejected or left out of the MMS on account of their caste? Are any Dalits prohibited access to the PDS shop on account of their caste?

The measurable indicators of “participatory empowerment/ownership” of government programs are as follows:

1. *Percentage of Dalit cooks and organizers in the MMS.* What is the proportion of Midday Meal Schemes in which the cooks are Dalit to the total number of Midday Meal Schemes? What is the proportion of MMSs in which the organizers (those ultimately responsible for ensuring the MMS; usually teachers, sometimes sarpanches or PDS dealers) are Dalit to the total number of MMSs?
2. *Percentage of Dalit PDS dealers.* What is the proportion of Dalit PDS dealers to the total number of PDS dealers?
3. *Subjective responses to questions of participatory empowerment/ownership.* Have Dalit cooks in your village been denied employment in the MMS on account of their caste? Have Dalit efforts to own/maintain a PDS shop in your village been frustrated because of caste discrimination?

The measurable indicators of “treatment” in government schemes include:

1. *Seating/eating arrangement in the MMS.* Do Dalit and dominant caste children sit and eat together in the MMS, or is some form of segregation practiced?
2. *Discriminatory procedures in PDS distribution.* Are there separate queues for Dalits and dominant castes at PDS shops? Does the PDS dealer practice discriminatory scheduling, e.g. separate timings or days for Dalit customers?

3. *Subjective responses to questions regarding treatment.* In the MMS in your village, do Dalit children receive less or inferior food? Does the PDS dealer in your village give preference to dominant caste customers over Dalit customers?

All of these indicators will be used to identify and measure caste discrimination and exclusion in the IIDS survey data.

#### ***D. Dalits as respondents:***

Following the view that victims of discrimination are their own best spokespeople, it was decided that the Dalit community should be the respondents to the IIDS survey questionnaire. So that women's voices would be represented, preference was given to organized Dalit women's self-help groups, where they exist. In the absence of such groups, or alongside them, interviews were held with the Dalit community as a whole, and on occasion, with well-informed individual Dalit women and men in small groups or singularly. Teachers or other local officials were sought only for confirmation of school enrollment figures.<sup>1</sup>

#### ***E. Dalit composition of research teams:***

Not just government studies on caste and caste discrimination, but studies by well-intentioned academics and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well, suffer congenitally from lack of Dalit representation. Because of two fundamental ground realities, the dominant caste and/or outsider composition of most research teams in studies of this sort is likely to have a silencing effect on Dalit voices. First, in a phenomenon with well-documented global correlates<sup>2</sup>, generations of the psychological violence of caste have resulted in many rural areas in a Dalit internalization of oppressive dominant caste worldviews, such that, when pressed to represent their own views on their situation, many Dalits simply repeat self-denigrating, dominant caste rationalizations of caste. Alternatively, some Dalits who may share critical views of their situation strictly among themselves, still represent the resigned, self-effacing dominant caste trope when talking with dominant caste people. Second, Dalits face the threat of retaliatory physical and economic violence associated with "speaking up" (especially to outsiders) and acts of assertion. For these reasons, the dominant caste character of research teams indeed may do more to silence Dalit perspectives – and thereby suppress or skew data – than all the intimidation of class, education and gender that sensitive researchers sometimes take into account in their analyses.

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<sup>1</sup> Departures from this methodology, however, did occur, and provide an enlightening counter-study. An informal study of about forty surveys (mostly from Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) in which the researchers interviewed *not* the Dalit community, but rather *only* the dominant caste sarpanch, village administrative officer, other local official, schoolteacher, or a dominant caste community as a whole, points to a dramatic divergence in perception between communities. Almost without exception, the surveys based on interviews with officials and dominant caste people suggest smooth operation of government schemes and a complete absence of caste discrimination; whereas surveys taken from neighboring or adjoining villages but drawn from Dalit interviews, cite specific instances of caste discrimination and serious grievances with casteist government machinery. Recently elected Dalit women sarpanches are the exception to this trend; in this data set, surveys based on interviews with elected Dalit women officials provide candid acknowledgments of persisting caste discrimination.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Paolo Friere's, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", and James Baldwin's, "Notes of a Native Son".

In order to avoid this near-universal flaw in studies related to caste, it was decided that the IIDS survey should be conducted by teams of Dalit researchers known and trusted by local Dalit communities. In practical terms, this was affected by a partnership with the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), through whose constituent organizations, with IIDS oversight, the survey was conducted. Researchers were activists of Dalit women's organizations, unions of agricultural labourers, other Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and NGOs, with whom local Dalit communities were comfortable and able to communicate with a reduced fear of repercussions.

On the other hand, one might suspect that the use of Dalit research teams to interview Dalit respondents could give rise to exaggerated reports of caste discrimination in keeping with the culture of permanent victimization and complaint cultivated by some NGOs and political leaders. Individuals and NGOs that operate with this paradigm were not invited to help conduct this survey. The data, moreover, evidences nuanced, cautious community responses rather than the kind of irresponsible, indiscriminate finger-pointing characteristic of complaint-culture NGOs<sup>3</sup>. While the influence of complaint culture cannot be completely ruled out, none of its symptoms are evident in the data.

#### ***F. Geographical Spread:***

The survey was conducted in five states – Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the north, and Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in the south, were selected on the grounds of population: UP and Bihar have the highest SC populations of north Indian states (excepting West Bengal, where NCDHR and IIDS lacked sufficient institutional contacts to effectively conduct the survey), while Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have the highest SC populations of the southern states<sup>4</sup>. From each of the four states, between 100 and 200 villages were surveyed, based on availability of research teams. Because the state governments of both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have failed, to date, to implement the hot, cooked, Midday Meal Scheme required by the 2001 Supreme Court Order, Rajasthan was added to the survey as a smaller sample, so as to provide some northern data on the MMS to compare with Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

During data processing, a number of completed questionnaires were found to be defective for one of several reasons, mostly incomplete data collection and departures from methodology. The defective questionnaires, numbering 42, were excluded from the database. Appendix II contains a list of the excluded surveys and reasons for exclusion. Setting aside these exceptions, the final database contains 531 villages from 136 blocks in 30 districts of 5 states. In Rajasthan, 26 villages were surveyed; in Uttar Pradesh, 120 villages; in Bihar, 95 villages; in Andhra Pradesh, 180 villages; and in Tamil Nadu, 100 villages.

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<sup>3</sup> Of the 531 villages surveyed, only thirteen, or 2.4% of the total, claimed that caste discrimination was a problem in every one of the aspects considered. And of those thirteen, each one went on to clarify the specific character of and reasons behind the particular manifestations of caste discrimination, rather than making unsubstantiated claims. Of the other 518 villages surveyed, 476 (or 89.6% of the total) identify caste discrimination as present in certain sectors and absent in others, while 42 (or 7.9% of the total) claim no caste discrimination in any sector.

<sup>4</sup> National Council for Educational Research and Training (1997), *Sixth All-India Educational Survey* (New Delhi: NCERT), Table 1.1. The Seventh AIES data remains unpublished at the time of research.

With the exception of Rajasthan, in which only Ajmer District was selected for study on the basis of available organizational contacts, research teams in each of the states selected districts and blocks with a view toward geographic and demographic diversity. In Rajasthan, 26 villages in 2 blocks of Ajmer District were surveyed. In Uttar Pradesh, 120 villages in eight blocks of five districts (Baliya, Bareilly, Rampur, Lakhimpur Kheri, and Gazipur) were surveyed. In Bihar, 95 villages, 11 blocks, five districts (Buxar, Samastipur, Nawada, Patna, and Vaishali). In Andhra Pradesh, 180 villages, 81 blocks, 10 districts (Anantapur, Chittoor, Guntur, Khammam, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Warangal, and West Godavari). In Tamil Nadu, 100 villages, 24 blocks, nine districts (Dindigul, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Sivagangai, Thanjavur, Theni, Thiruvanamalai, Tirunelveli, and Virudhinagar).

The survey was formulated and distributed in April, 2003, and conducted in all states simultaneously in late April, May, and early June.

### ***G. Limitations:***

During the data collection process, two social factors were felt impinging upon and biasing data despite measures taken to reduce their anticipated interference.

First, the phenomenon of internalization of caste norms mentioned earlier has in many places resulted in an environment in which terms like “discrimination” ring abstract, inapplicable and foreign to survey respondents. Allappanur village in Thiruvanamalai District, Tamil Nadu, provides a classic and typical example of this. Asked whether there was caste discrimination in the Midday Meal Scheme, Dalit respondents said no, there was no discrimination. Then asked about the seating arrangements in the MMS, the same Dalit respondents said that their children have to sit separately from the dominant caste children. This proved a common pattern in the IIDS survey data, applying not only to separate seating but also to other forms of discrimination in the MMS, as well as discrimination in the PDS. Where critical social consciousness and human rights awareness are less developed, general survey questions with key words like “discrimination” are unlikely to register positive responses, even if discrimination is common, because the discrimination is “normative”. Anticipating this phenomenon, the IIDS survey included particularizing follow-up questions to each of the questions on discrimination generally. Still, examples like that given above appear repeatedly in the data, suggesting that the phenomenon of internalization of caste discrimination as normative has indeed depressed the figures for reported discrimination in the study.

Second, as alluded to earlier, Dalit articulations of grievances, particularly in public fora or with outsiders, invite retaliatory violence from the dominant caste communities that stand to lose from the exposure. Awareness of (and misinformation about) the legal consequences of caste discrimination in the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, or in criminal legislation generally, among dominant caste and Dalit communities, makes the visitation of research teams, social activists, journalists, etc. a potentially threatening event for dominant caste perpetrators of discrimination. Therefore, organized intimidation, threatening, harassment and sometimes bribery of Dalits frequently precede such visits, when they are announced ahead of time. Because most Dalit communities lack the economically empowered social support base to counter such pressure, the threat of violence is often sufficient to silence discussion of sensitive

caste issues between Dalit community members and outside visitors. In this manner, dominant caste solidarity, in both its inclusive/rewarding (for dominant caste members) and exclusive/threatening (for Dalits) aspects, functions to suppress the mention of caste discrimination. While the hope for legal redressal ought to serve as an incentive for Dalit victims of discrimination to speak up publicly, this incentive must then be weighed against the fear of violent reprisal, usually a more imminent prospect than intervention by the state to enforce social justice legislation.

The IIDS study, by employing locally strong Dalit NGOs, CBOs and unions to conduct the survey, and by conducting the survey on unannounced visits, helped counteract some of the intimidation factor, expanding the space for free and candid expression for the people interviewed. The limited success of these efforts, however, must also be acknowledged. Some researchers reported that intimidation and fear of dominant caste retaliation continued to influence data collection despite various precautions. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, instances of respondents “turning hostile” in the course of interviews were not uncommon, precipitated by the arrival of other community members (i.e. dominant caste members, Dalit “informers”) at the interview site. In this manner several respondents who had begun describing specific instances of caste discrimination retracted their statements and subsequently denied any experience of discrimination. The intimidation factor, therefore, does appear to have biased data to a degree in favor of the dominant caste establishment’s preferred viewpoint.



## The Midday Meal Scheme

### I. Context

In November, 2001, in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed by the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL), Rajasthan, the Supreme Court of India ordered all state governments to implement the central government's lagging 1995 National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, providing free, cooked meals to all children in government primary schools, within six months. In states where it has been implemented, this program is popularly known as the Midday Meal Scheme (MMS). In blatant contravention of the Supreme Court Order, some states, including Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, still have not implemented the Midday Meal Scheme. Instead, they continue with a program originally intended as a temporary, intermediate step leading to the cooked midday meals, that is, monthly provision of a fixed quantity of dry grain to government school children.

Issues of exclusion and caste discrimination do afflict the MMS's precursor scheme of distribution of dry grain to government school children. However, as the IIDS survey primarily addresses the cooked, shared meal MMS, data from the three states of the study in which the MMS has been thus implemented (Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) will provide the substance of the following discussion. Later and separately, the manifestations of exclusion and discrimination evident in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh's pre-MMS system of distribution of dry grain, will be discussed.

531 villages were surveyed in the IIDS study; Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (MMS non-implementing states) account for 225 of the villages, while Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (MMS implementing states) account for 306 villages. For the ensuing discussion, then, the scope of the IIDS survey is 306 villages in three states: 26 in Rajasthan, 180 in Andhra Pradesh, and 100 in Tamil Nadu. Since the number of villages surveyed per state varies considerably, most data in the following discussion will be presented in percentages for comparative purposes.

### II. Approach

As mentioned in the introduction, the IIDS study attempts to identify and measure exclusion and caste discrimination using the three categories of *access*, *participatory empowerment/ownership*, and *treatment*. In measuring Dalits' *access* to the Midday Meal Scheme (and more broadly, to the Right to Food ideally enabled by the Midday Meal Scheme), the following measurable indicators are used. First, the existence of the MMS – is there a functioning MMS in the village of the respondents? Second, the location of the MMS – is the MMS held in a place that is equally as accessible to Dalit children as it is to dominant caste children? Third and finally, subjective comments on access – do the respondents note anything regarding Dalit children's access to the MMS in their village?

To measure Dalit *participatory empowerment/ownership* of the MMS, the following measurable indicators are used. First, the proportion of Dalit cooks to the total number of cooks – are Dalits fairly represented among those employed by the state for

MMS cooking? This is an especially crucial point because the MMS was designed with the intentional side benefit of providing employment to under-privileged sections, and also because Dalit cooking for dominant caste consumption threatens the very fundamental justificatory underpinnings of caste (i.e. because Dalits are considered intrinsically “polluted” and their contact “polluting”). Second, the proportion of Dalit organizers to the total number of organizers – are Dalits fairly represented among those employed by the state in this position of decision-making authority? Third, subjective comments on participatory empowerment and ownership of the MMS by the Dalit community – do respondents remark particularly on Dalit children’s or adults’ degree of ownership and participatory empowerment vis-à-vis the MMS?

Finally, to measure Dalit caste discrimination in terms of *treatment* in the MMS, the seating or eating arrangement is used as a measurable indicator, with segregated arrangements indicating discrimination, and integrated arrangements indicating non-discrimination. As a second indicator, subjective comments by respondents regarding preferential treatment or other informal methods of discrimination, are considered.

### III. Findings

#### A. Access:

##### 1. Existence of a functioning MMS

This was measured jointly by the responses to the first question on the IIDS survey, “Is there a Midday Meal Scheme in your village?” the fourth question, “Is the midday meal actually served every day? If not, then how many days per month is the midday meal actually provided?” and the fifth question, “Are the midday meals hot, cooked meals, or uncooked meals?”

Results are positive. Out of all 306 villages surveyed, only five villages (three in Andhra Pradesh, two in Tamil Nadu) reported that there had been a MMS, but it had been closed. Of those, one village (TN) reports that the cause of closure was that dominant castes opposed the scheme because it would benefit SC/ST children; two villages (one AP, one TN) report that there was no initiative or leadership for the scheme; one village (AP) reports a problem with funding, and the fifth village (AP) gives no reason for the closure. The other 301 villages reported having a current MMS in which cooked food was prepared every school day. See Table 1.

Table 1

"Is there a Midday Meal Scheme in your village?"				Total
	Yes	No	There was, but it closed	
Rajasthan	26	0	0	26
Andhra Pradesh	177	0	3	180
Tamil Nadu	98	0	2	100
Total	301	0	5	306

## 2. Location of MMS

Location of the MMS has two components: setting and locality. For setting, the survey asks, “Where is the midday meal held?” in the sense of, “in which sort of physical space is it held?” with options of school, temple, public building, or other – please specify. In 93% of respondents’ villages, the midday meal is held in the school building itself, while in another 3% the meal is held in another public building. Only in two cases, both in Tamil Nadu, is the government midday meal held in a temple, raising immediate questions of exclusion for Dalit children, who are generally forbidden entry into temples, as well as for other non-Hindu children. See Table 2.

Table 2: Setting of MMS

"Where is the midday meal held?"		
Combined 3 state picture	Number of villages	Percentage of villages
School	285	93
Temple	2	1
Public building	9	3
Other	9	3
Total valid responses	305	100

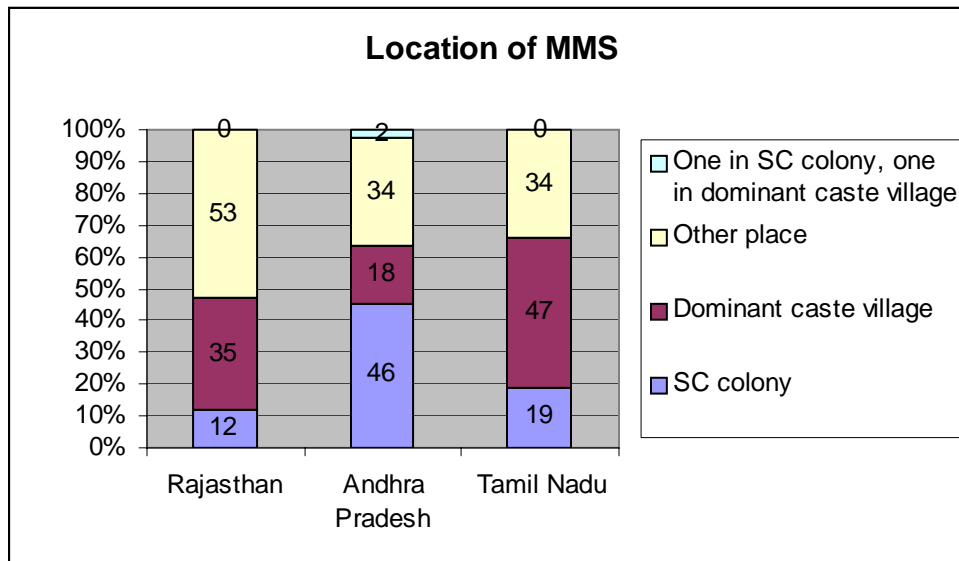
The second aspect of location, locality, is raised in the next survey question, “Where is this space located?” with options of SC colony, dominant caste colony, and other – please identify. In all three states, the villages in which the MMS is held in the Dalit colony are in a minority. After that point, however, the interstate variation is considerable. At 46%, Andhra Pradesh has a significantly higher proportion – more than double – of MMSs held in Dalit colonies than either Tamil Nadu (19%) or Rajasthan (12%).

One weakness of the survey is that while the option “dominant caste village” was intended to imply the area inhabited by all non-SC/ST castes (i.e. whether “upper caste” or BCs/OBCs; who, while often segregated amongst themselves, still share a common village from which the Dalit colony typically remains separate and outside) and the option “other place” was intended to imply some truly neutral place outside of caste colonies (e.g. on the roadside apart from the village), these intended meanings did not effectively translate during the conducting of the survey. Some researchers and respondents followed the intended meanings, while others understood “dominant caste village” to imply only “upper caste” neighborhoods, and therefore marked MMSs held in “backward caste” neighborhoods as “other place”. Since the distinction between neutral, un-casted space and space owned and occupied by dominant castes (of whatever grade, since, typically, segregation/exclusion of Dalits is common to all non-SC/ST castes) was thus blurred, conclusions can only be drawn from the figures for MMSs held in Dalit colonies. Tables 3 and 4 present this data in both numbers and percentages, respectively.

Table 3: MMS Locality

Location of MMS	Number of villages		
	Rajasthan	Andhra Pradesh	Tamil Nadu
SC colony	2	77	18
Dominant caste village	6	30	44
Other place	9	58	32
One in SC colony, one in dominant caste village	0	4	0
Total (valid responses)	17	169	94

Table 4: MMS Locality in Graph Form



The survey does not directly ask the distance of the place where the MMS is held from the Dalit colony. However, when discussing the location of the MMS with research teams, a number of respondents brought attention to distance as a factor that makes their children’s access to the MMS problematic. In three villages, all in Tamil Nadu, respondents said that Dalit children simply cannot participate in the MMS because the school is too far from their homes.

### 3. Subjective comments on access

In Kamalaputhur Village in Thiruvannamalai District in Tamil Nadu, respondents related that a Dalit girl in second standard was prohibited from eating and chased out of her government school (located in the dominant caste locality) by the dominant caste community when she tried to partake of the MMS<sup>5</sup>. In five other villages (three in Andhra Pradesh and two in Tamil Nadu), respondents stated that some Dalit children are barred from participation in the MMS on account of either caste discrimination generally or “untouchability” specifically. While these six

<sup>5</sup> When her parents objected to the school authorities, the dominant caste community lodged bogus cases with the police against the parents and had them arrested.

villages constitute only 2% of the 306 villages surveyed, the living practice of outright exclusion has profound implications for the Right to Food, and Dalits' access to that Right.

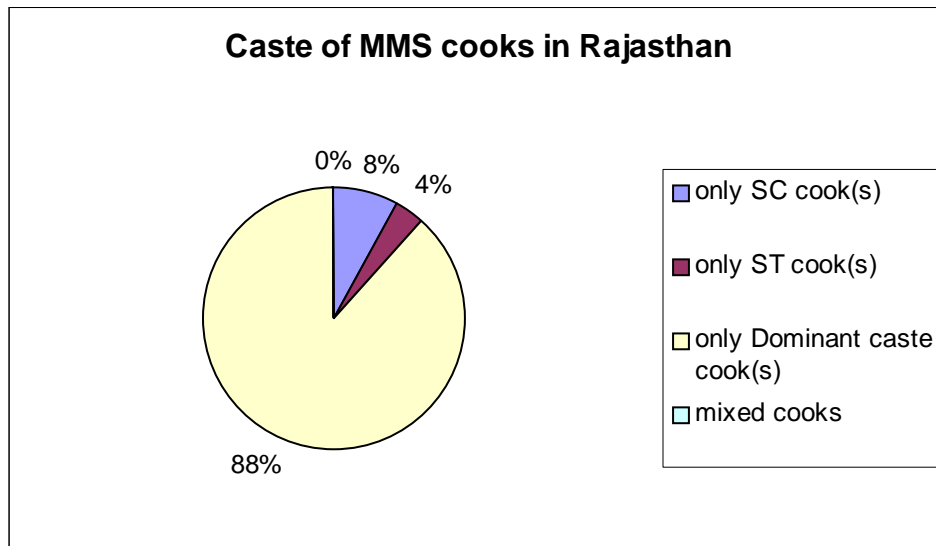
More common in the data than the outright exclusion of Dalit children is "inclusion with negative distinction", i.e. caste discrimination, in the MMS. While this too impinges on *access*, it will be discussed under *treatment*.

**B. Participatory empowerment/ownership:**

*1. Percentage of Dalit cooks*

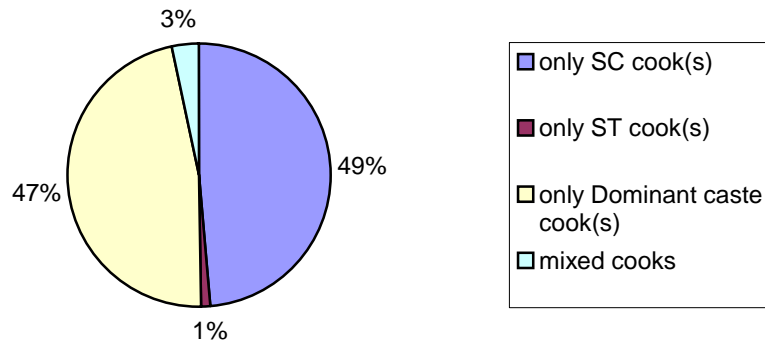
As with location of the MMS, so also are there sharp divergences between states in the percentages of MMS cooks who are Dalit. In Rajasthan, only 8% of villages surveyed had Dalit cooks for the MMS, another 4% had ST cooks, and the remaining 88% had dominant caste cooks. In Tamil Nadu, 31% of villages surveyed had Dalit cooks, another 4% had both Dalit and dominant caste cooks, and 65% had dominant caste cooks (no ST cooks were found in any of the villages surveyed in TN). In striking contrast, 49% of villages surveyed in Andhra Pradesh had Dalit MMS cooks, 1% ST cooks, 3% mixed cooks (some from each community), and 47% dominant caste cooks. This gives a three state average of 29% Dalit cooks, 67% dominant caste cooks, and 2% each ST cooks and mixed cooks. See Tables 5-10.

Table 5

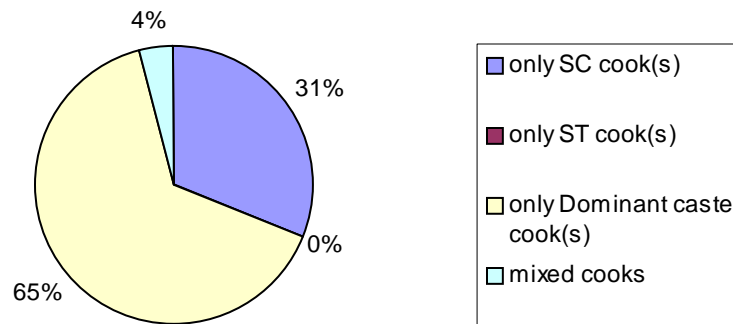


Tables 6-8

### Caste of MMS cooks in Andhra Pradesh



### Caste of MMS cooks in Tamil Nadu



### Caste of MMS cooks: National Picture based on averages of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

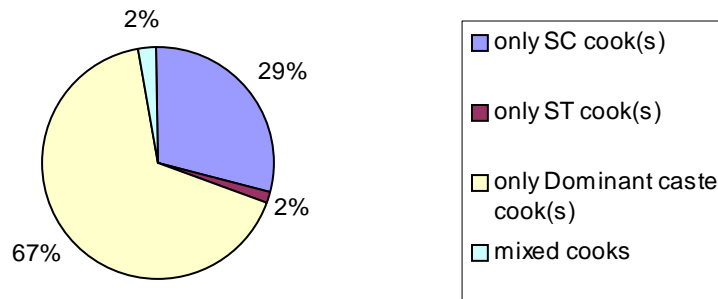
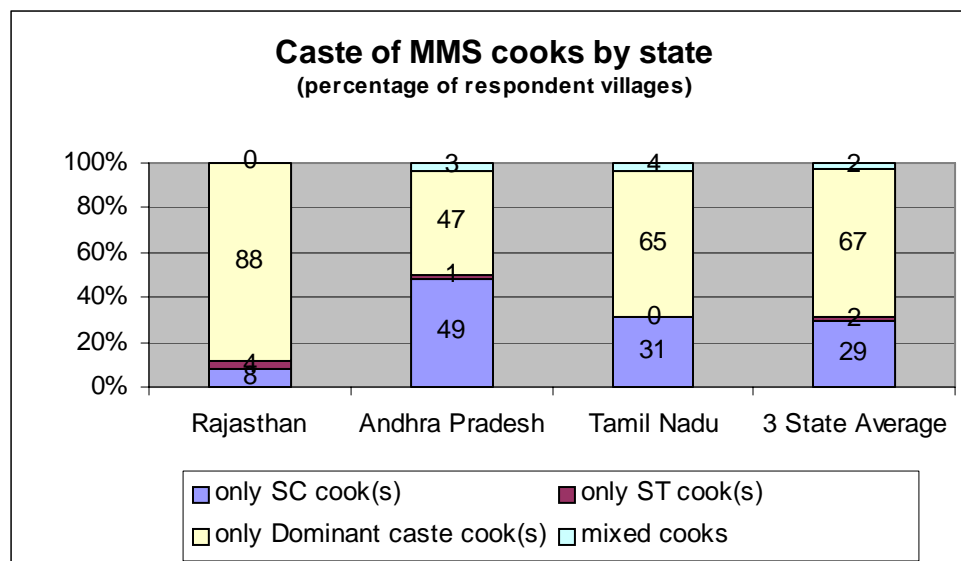


Table 9

Caste of MMS Cooks	Rajasthan		Andhra Pradesh		Tamil Nadu		3 State Average	
	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages
only SC cook(s)	2	8	87	49	31	31	120	29
only ST cook(s)	1	4	2	1	0	0	3	2
only Dominant caste cook(s)	22	88	84	47	65	65	171	67
cooks from various castes	0	0	6	3	4	4	10	2
total	25	100	179	100	100	100	304	100

Table 10



## 2. Percentage of Dalit organizers

The “organizer” or “in-charge” of the MMS means the person ultimately responsible for making the midday meal take place on a day-to-day basis. Most often the organizer is a schoolteacher or school headmaster, but in some places the PDS dealer, sarpanch or other community member is given responsibility for the MMS.

The survey data for Dalit organizers follows a similar pattern to that for Dalit cooks, except that there are even fewer Dalits employed as organizers (a decision-making position of authority) than there are as cooks. In Rajasthan, for instance, in not a single of the villages surveyed was there a Dalit in-charge for the MMS; 86% of respondent villages had dominant caste organizers, while 14% had ST organizers. Tamil Nadu follows with 73% dominant caste organizers and 27% Dalit organizers. Again, Andhra Pradesh has the highest degree of Dalit participation/ownership of the MMS, with 45% Dalit organizers, 51% dominant caste organizers, and 2% each ST organizers and organizers of various castes. See tables 11-16.

Tables 11-13

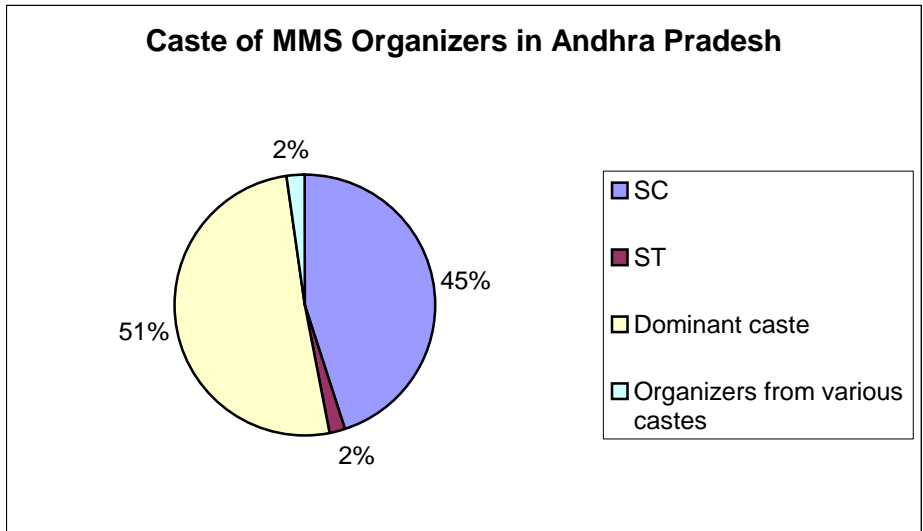
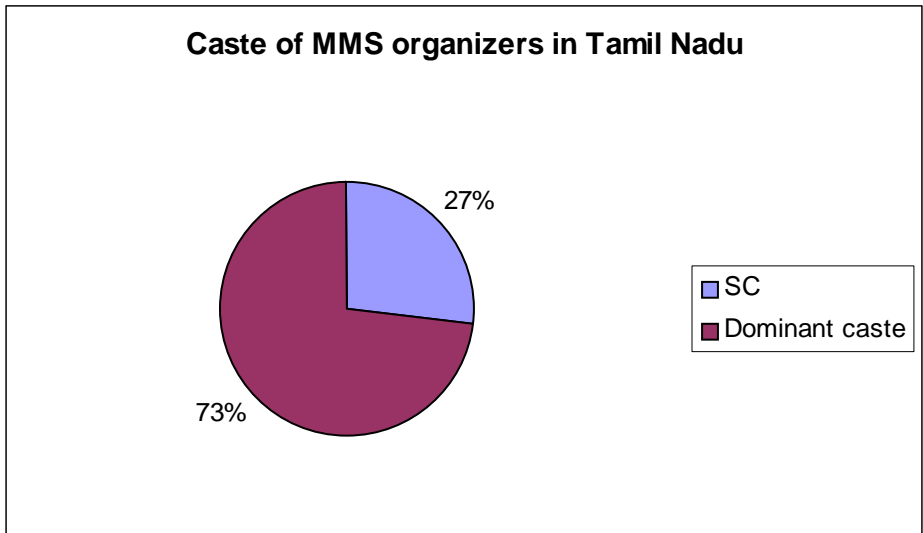
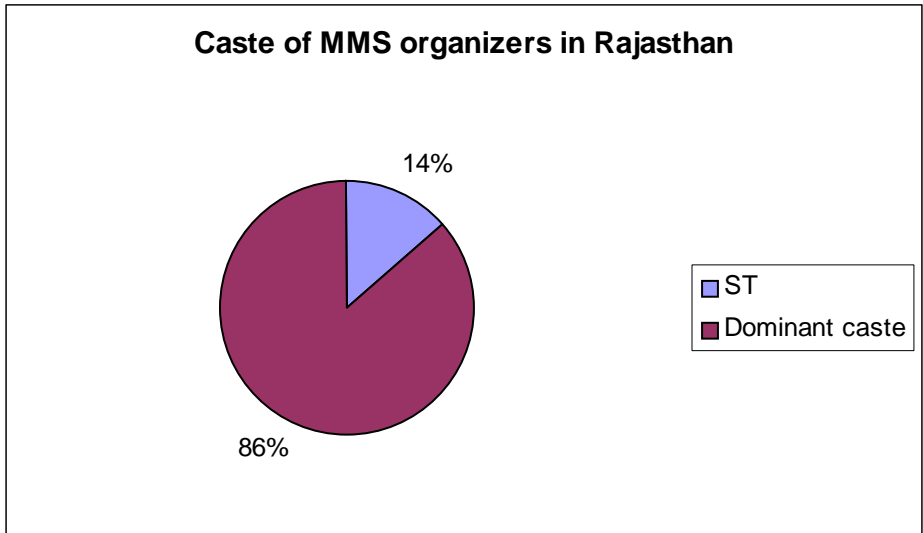




Table 14

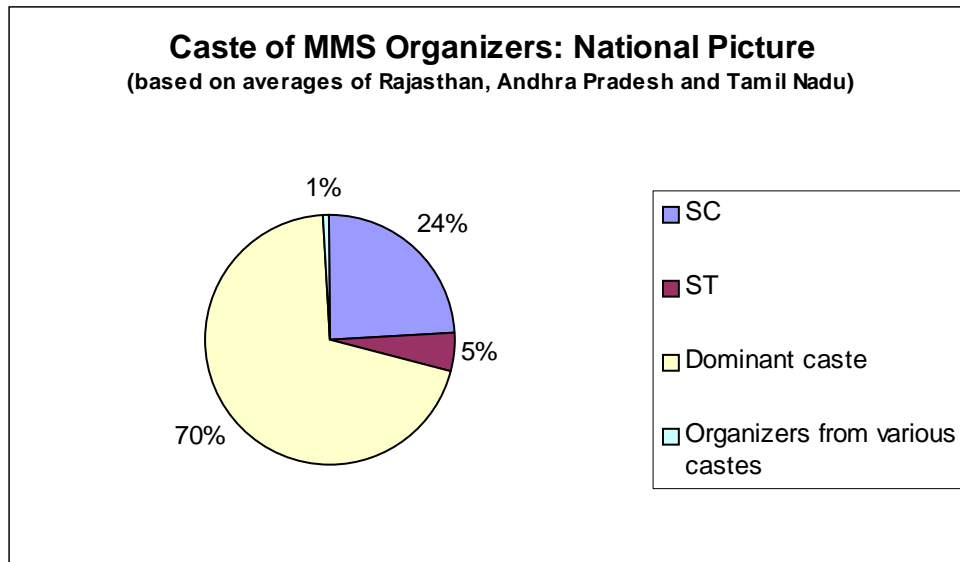
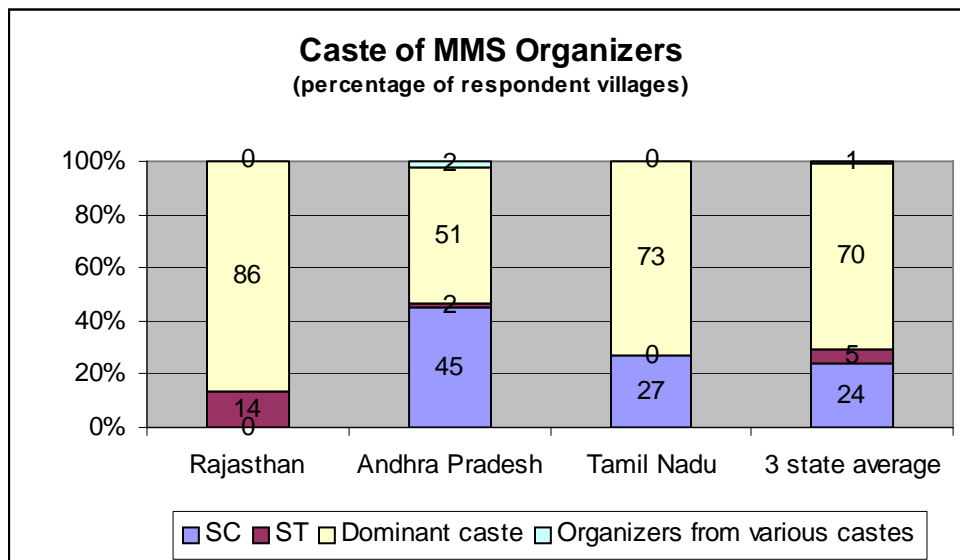


Table 15

Caste of MMS Organizers	Rajasthan		Andhra Pradesh		Tamil Nadu		3 State Average	
	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages	Number of villages	Percent of villages
SC organizer	0	0	78	45	27	27	105	24
ST organizer	3	14	3	2	0	0	6	5
Dominant caste organizer	19	86	88	51	73	73	180	70
Organizers from various castes	0	0	4	2	0	0	4	1
Total (valid responses)	22	100	173	100	100	100	295	100

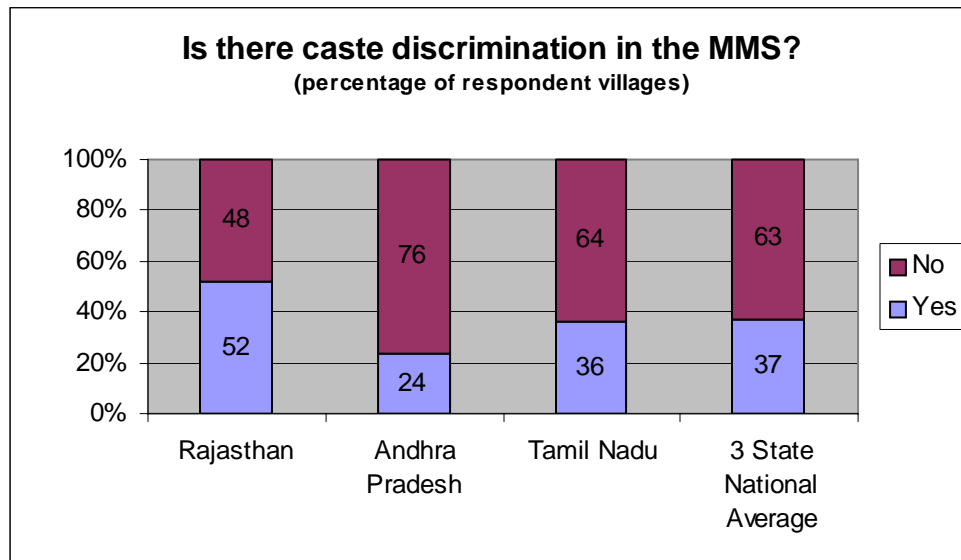
Table 16



3. *Subjective comments on participatory empowerment: denial of right to work*  
 Survey questions framed in terms of subjective experience are equally if not more important to understanding the nature of exclusion and caste discrimination, than questions framed in terms of quantifiable variables. The pitfalls of subjective questions can be largely overcome by a process of verification and specification through particularizing follow-up questions; and the IIDS survey self-consciously attempts to do exactly that.

In response to the general question, “Is there caste discrimination in the MMS in your village?” 52% of respondents from Rajasthan, 24% from Andhra Pradesh and 36% from Tamil Nadu (giving a three-state national average of 37%) report that there is indeed a problem of caste discrimination in the Midday Meal Scheme in their village. See Table 17.

Table 17



In response to the following, particularizing question, “If so, then how?” the data furnishes 79 valid responses from the three states. Of these, 42 of respondent villages, constituting the largest proportion, report that opposition to Dalit cooks is either the primary problem or one of the problems in their MMS. See Tables 18a, 18b, and 19.

Table 18a

<b>If there is caste discrimination in the Midday Meal Scheme in your village, then how?</b> (numbers of respondent villages)				
	<b>Rajasthan</b>	<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	<b>National Total</b>
Separate seating (1)	0	11	12	23
Separate meals altogether (2)	0	3	2	5
When cook is SC, dominant caste children will not eat (3)	11	16	10	37
Inferior or insufficient food for SC children (4)	1	2	2	5
Other (5)	0	2	0	2
Reasons 3&4 both	0	0	2	2
Reasons 1&3&4 all	0	0	1	1
Reasons 1&3 both	0	0	1	1
Reasons 1&2 both	0	0	2	2
Reasons 2&3 both	0	1	0	1
<b>Total valid responses</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>79</b>

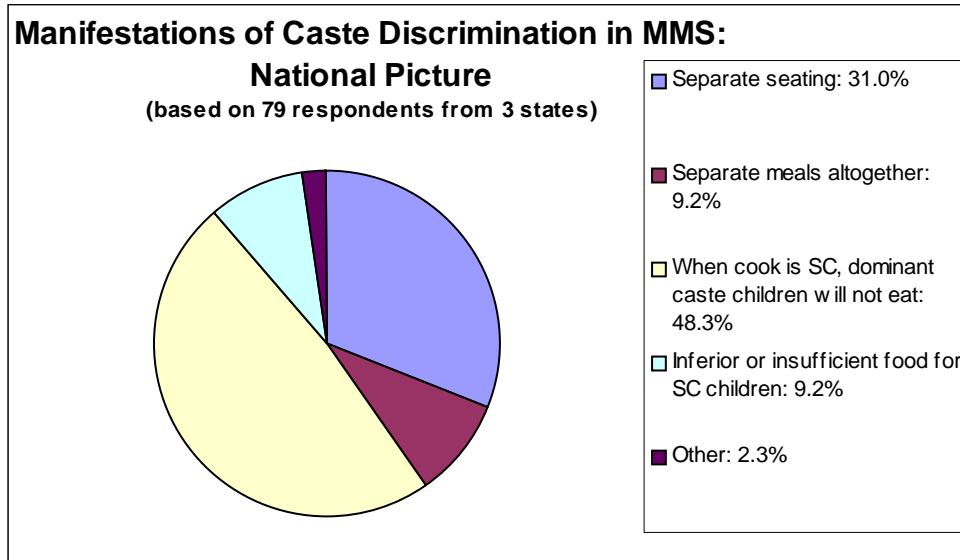
Table 18b

<b>If there is caste discrimination in the Midday Meal Scheme in your village, then how?</b>					
Total number of villages reporting each form of discrimination, <i>including</i> those who reported more than one form of discrimination (i.e. incorporating overlaps)					
	<b>Rajasthan</b>	<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	<b>National Total</b>	<b>National Percentage</b>
Separate seating (1)	0	11	16	27	31.0
Separate meals altogether (2)	0	4	4	8	9.2
When cook is SC, dominant caste children will not eat (3)	11	17	14	42	48.3
Inferior or insufficient food for SC children (4)	1	2	5	8	9.2
Other (5)	0	2	0	2	2.3
<b>Total valid responses</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36*</b>	<b>39**</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100</b>

\* 34 single responses plus 1 double response (34+2)

\*\* 26 single responses plus 5 double responses and one triple response (26+10+3)

Table 19



“Opposition to Dalit cooks” is actually a blanket term describing several different patterns of specific acts of caste discrimination and exclusion observed in the IIDS study. The patterns can be grouped into five, taking place at different points during the process of MMS institution and continuance. First, when local administrators are putting the MMS into place, dominant caste community members intervene to block the hiring of Dalit cooks, favoring dominant caste cooks instead. Where a Dalit cook has been hired, dominant caste parents then begin sending their children to school with lunches packed at home, or require their children to come home for lunch, in any case forbidding their children to eat food prepared by the Dalit cook. In the third stage, dominant caste parents or community members pressure the local administration to dismiss the Dalit cook, on any pretext, and hire a dominant caste cook instead. Where this is ineffective, or sometimes without the intervening step, the dominant caste parents campaign to shut down the MMS in the village school altogether. Finally, some dominant caste parents react to the hiring and keeping of a Dalit cook by withdrawing their children from the school, and sometimes admitting them in a different school where the cook is not Dalit.

Some examples may help illustrate the above patterns. The first is adequately exemplified by Komara Village in West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. There, dominant caste women organized in the state government’s “Dwacra” (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) scheme successfully mobilized community and administrative support to bar a Dalit women’s Dwacra group from obtaining employment as cooks in the village MMS.

Bhunabhay Village in Ajmer District, Rajasthan, illustrates two of the trends identified above. In Bhunabhay, when the MMS began in July, 2002, Sunita Bhil, a Scheduled Tribe widow, was hired to prepare the midday meal of ghughri. Dominant caste parents, considering Sunita polluted on account of her caste,

ordered their children not to eat the midday meal at their school, effectively launching a proxy hunger strike through their children. Alongside this, the dominant caste parents met with and pressured the dominant caste headmaster of the school to dismiss Sunita Bhil from employment. Ultimately, the headmaster consented, expelled Sunita Bhil, and hired a dominant caste woman to cook in her place.

Typifying the fourth trend, the MMS of a government school in Ranga Reddy District, Andhra Pradesh, lasted exactly ten days before the dominant caste community, incensed that Dalit cooks had been hired, shut down the school<sup>6</sup>.

Behind all of these trends of dominant caste behavior is the classic Hindu understanding of purity and pollution, according to which food prepared by a Dalit – that is, an “untouchable” – is considered “polluted” by virtue of its contact with the intrinsically polluted Dalit. On another level, dominant caste opposition to Dalit cooks also represents a power struggle over livelihood rights. In the manner of social boycotts, concerted dominant caste opposition to Dalit cooks functions to break Dalit economic aspirations, i.e. Dalit entry into new livelihood domains such as government employment at the village level. The rural dominant caste establishment, which traditionally enjoys the economic dependence of the Dalit community, perceives Dalit entries into new economic spheres as threatening, and therefore responds with a backlash. This is most evident in Andhra Pradesh, where a greater proportion of Dalits have secured employment as MMS cooks.

### ***C. Treatment:***

#### *1. Seating arrangement/eating arrangement*

Referring again to Tables 18 and 19, the second most commonly reported manifestation of caste discrimination in the MMS is segregated seating arrangements. The psychological scarring and other detrimental effects of segregation have been well documented worldwide, and do not require rehearsal here. As has been famously observed, “separate is never equal”. This observation is entirely applicable to segregation in the Midday Meal Scheme, which violates Indian law as well as international law to which India is signatory, and which has obvious negative effects on the actualization of the Right to Food.

Several variations on the theme of segregation surface in the IIDS survey data. 31% of the villages that specify the form of caste discrimination in their MMS identify separate seating in their schools. In these instances, Dalit children are required to sit apart from the dominant caste children; sometimes simply apart within the same space, other times outside of the school building while the dominant caste children sit inside, or on a lower level than their dominant caste peers.

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<sup>6</sup> This example comes not from the IIDS survey, but from a media report in the Telugu daily Vaartha, Ranga Reddy District pullout, 4 January, 2003.

9.2% of villages report that the Dalit children and dominant caste children are required to eat separate meals altogether. This is most often the case where there are two MMS cooks for the same school, one Dalit and one dominant caste. The practice of separate meals usually implies segregated drinking water arrangements as well.

Interestingly, segregated seating is not always an institution from the beginning of the MMS. Paradigmatic of a trend most visible in the southern states, in Enathi Village in Sivagangai District of Tamil Nadu, in 2001, the dominant caste community instituted segregated seating in the MMS in a primary school where Dalit and dominant caste children previously had been sitting and eating together. In Enathi, following a dispute between a dominant caste woman and a Dalit woman over the latter's right to draw water from a public well, the dominant caste woman's community attacked the Dalit colony, causing the Dalit woman and her husband to be hospitalized. When the Dalit community approached the police and administration for justice, Enathi's dominant caste community organized a rigorous social boycott of the Dalits, physically enforced by barricading the Dalit colony; and it was in this context, as part of the boycott, that segregation was launched in the previously shared MMS.

Similar incidents reported in the IIDS survey suggest a trend in which a caste conflict unrelated to the MMS flares up in a village, often as a result of Dalit assertion of rights, and as part of the effort to reestablish hegemony, the dominant caste community inaugurates new forms of segregation (in the MMS, for instance) and asserts new practices of untouchability. In one village in Tamil Nadu, respondents to the IIDS survey state that the dominant caste government schoolteacher "solved" the caste tensions in their village by introducing segregated seating. While it is common in popular discourse to describe phenomena of caste discrimination as "remaining", "still continuing", and "lingering", such language does not accurately characterize the ground reality. Discourse aimed at eradicating caste discrimination must take into account the dynamism of caste phenomena, erroneously portrayed by the dismissive language of inevitable social progress.

## 2. *Preferential treatment*

Respondents in another eight villages (Table 18b) report more subtle forms of discrimination. In these villages, dominant caste teachers practice caste favoritism in serving the MMS, treating the dominant caste children preferentially and reserving the smaller or less desirable portions for Dalit children.

### ***D. Issues in the pre-MMS dry grain distribution: the case of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh:***

Two of the states most in need of a functioning Midday Meal Scheme to help improve their dismal education and nutrition records, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have yet to comply with the Supreme Court's six-month deadline (nearly two years old at the time of writing) in implementing the MMS, and continue instead

with the distribution of dry grains that was intended only as a precursor to the MMS.

In Bihar, 99% of researchers in the IIDS study left the MMS section of the survey blank after answering the introductory question, “Is there a Midday Meal Scheme in your village?” in the negative. In Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand, a majority of researchers completed the data in the MMS section by applying the questions to the existing program of dry grain distribution. The following brief discussion, then, will be based on this UP data and informal observations from a number of survey researchers in Bihar.

### A. Access

#### 1. Existence of a Functioning MMS

Setting aside the free, shared, cooked, midday meal required by law to be served at all government schools, is the system of free dry grain distribution to all government school children up and running in Bihar and UP?

Because some researchers treated the dry grain distribution system as equivalent to the MMS for the purposes of the survey and others did not, the survey data for “Is there a Midday Meal Scheme in your village?” cannot be used. In UP, however, nearly every respondent village that elected to address the MMS questions pointed out two basic, congenital problems with the functioning of the dry grain distribution. First, while the distribution is intended to be 3 kilograms of wheat or rice (the grain of choice varies by location) per child per month, the full 3kgs are rarely provided; instead, the PDS distributor, sarpanch, teacher, or combination thereof, distribute 2kgs, 2.5kgs, or some other amount less than 3kgs, per child, and misappropriate the rest. Second, the distribution rarely takes place on a monthly basis; rather, distribution takes places every two, three, or four months, or in some cases less often still, without regularity or assurance. Some researchers in Bihar and UP reported a complete absence of the dry grain distribution system, or a system that had once functioned but had become defunct. Still, the majority of villages appear to have the dry grain distribution, but with abundant corruption and no regularity.

#### 2. Location of the MMS

In 57% of valid responses in Uttar Pradesh, the actual event of grain distribution takes place in the school itself, as it should. In an alarming trend, however, another 37% of respondent villages report that their children have to go to the home or shop of the PDS dealer to receive their 3kg of grain. See Table 20.

Table 20

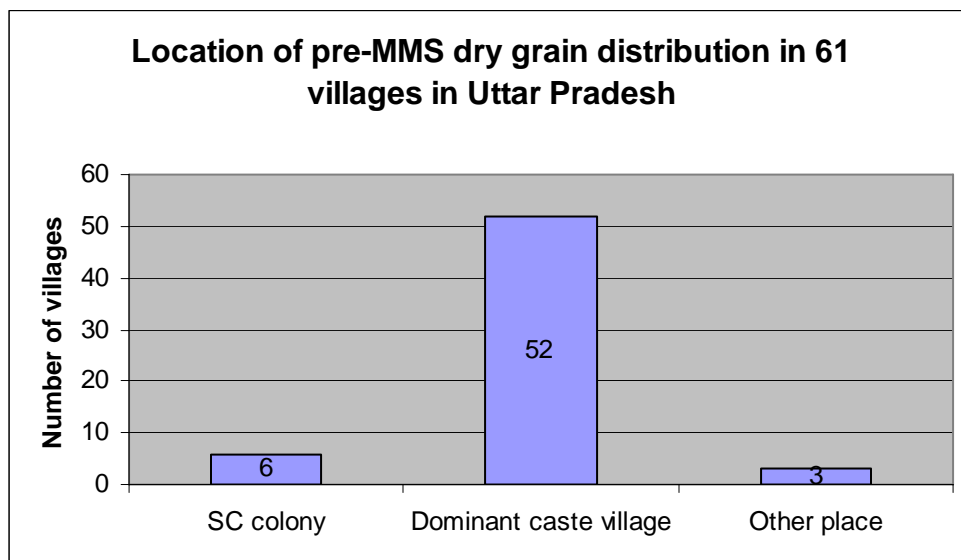
Location of dry grain distribution in UP		
	number of villages	Percent of villages
School	31	57
Public building	3	6

Other*	20	37
Total valid responses	54	100

\*usually home or shop of PDS dealer

Whether in school or in the PDS dealer’s home, in 52 out of 61 valid responses in Uttar Pradesh, the event of grain distribution to school children takes place in the dominant caste village. In six villages, the distribution takes place in a Dalit colony, and in three villages, in some other place. See Table 21. Even when not outright prohibited from entering, Dalit children are still in a situation of disadvantage and heightened vulnerability in dominant caste localities. The extreme bias of location evidenced by this data is thus a considerable impediment to Dalit children’s free and equal access to monthly government grain, and, by extension, the Right to Food generally.

Table 21



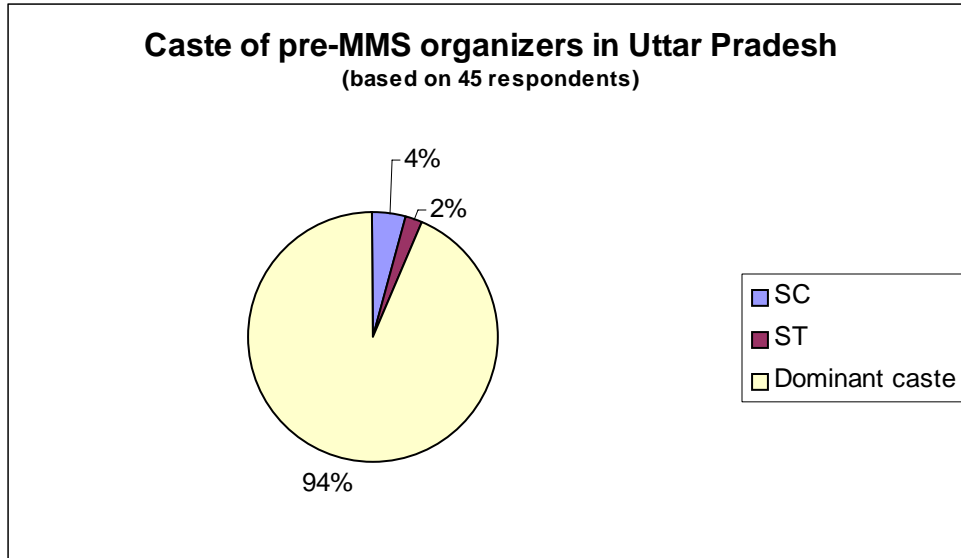
***B. Participatory empowerment/ownership***

The issue of cooks does not arise in the dry grain distribution system. The proportion of Dalit organizers, however, to the total number of organizers, will provide a clear and measurable indicator of Dalit participatory empowerment and ownership of the pre-MMS dry grain distribution system.

In 42 out of 45 respondent villages in Uttar Pradesh, that is, in 94% of cases, the dry grain distribution organizer is dominant caste. Two villages reported a Dalit organizer, and one village, a ST organizer. See Table 22.

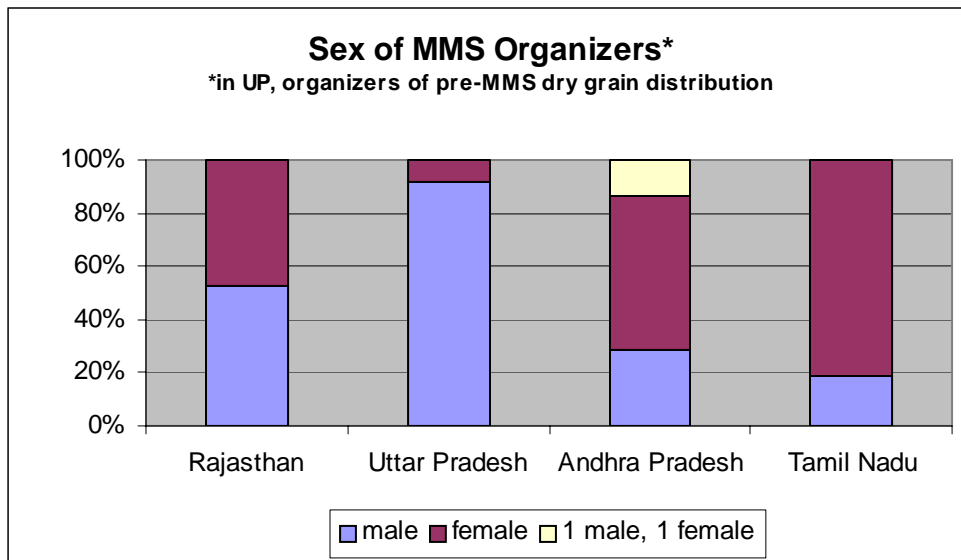
Table 22





It is also noteworthy that in Uttar Pradesh, the distribution organizers are overwhelmingly male (32 out of 35 valid responses, or 91%). This contrasts significantly with the gender configuration of MMS organizers in the states where the cooked MMS is functioning. See Table 23. When considering the degree of reported corruption and discrimination in the functioning of the pre-MMS system in UP, the 91% male, 94% dominant caste composition of the grain distribution in-charges may prove significant.

Table 23



### ***C. Treatment***

Discriminatory treatment in the pre-MMS dry grain distribution system is widely reported in the UP surveys in which respondents applied MMS questions to the grain distribution, as well as by survey researchers in Bihar. One commonly reported phenomenon is that the previously mentioned stinting of grain by the distributor (2 or 2½ kgs instead of 3) is reserved for Dalit children, while dominant caste children receive the full quantity. Elsewhere, respondents explained that the entire quantity of grain allotted to Dalit children is simply consumed by the government intermediaries and Dalit children and parents are informed that the grain supply has not come, or was insufficient. In other places, if Dalit children miss one or more days of school in any given month, the teacher refuses to give those children their allotment of grain, whereas this rule is not applied to dominant caste children.

In Sonadi Village in Ghazipur District, UP, respondents report that the dominant caste teacher arbitrarily withholds the monthly rice allotment from some SC children, while giving it to other SC children and all of the dominant caste children. When the Dalit community approached the PDS distributor to lodge a complaint, the distributor responded that the grain is “not for your children anyway”.

## **IV. Concluding Summary of MMS data**

IIDS survey data clearly identifies the strong points and shortcomings of the Midday Meal Scheme as it is being conducted in India today, in terms of exclusion and caste discrimination as barriers to Dalit attainment of the Right to Food. A review of this data will highlight the primary issues Dalits face in the MMS, and will bring forth interstate variations that indicate possible solutions.

*Access* to the Midday Meal Scheme is first and foremost contingent on the implementation of the scheme by state governments. On this point, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where one third of India’s Dalits live<sup>7</sup>, deny Dalit and other poor children access to their legislated entitlements from the very beginning, by simply refusing to implement the shared, cooked, Midday Meal Scheme. In the distribution of dry grains to government school children that continues to substitute for the MMS in Bihar and UP, regularized corruption and caste-based discriminatory distribution are widely reported, and in some cases outright exclusion of Dalit children from distribution is reported. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, then, are currently blocking, rather than facilitating, Dalit children’s access to food through the MMS.

The governments of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, have achieved the initial step towards access, by implementing the MMS. Out of 306 villages surveyed in these three states, 301 villages, or 98.4%, have a functioning MMS in the government school in their village. A functioning MMS, however, does not always assure access. In a small number of respondent villages in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Dalit children are completely barred from functioning MMSs by dominant caste communities.

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<sup>7</sup> National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), 2000, Table 1.1.

A second critical factor affecting Dalits' access to the MMS is the setting and location of the program. 93% of respondent villages in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu hold the MMS in the school building itself, as is appropriate. Requiring immediate relocation, however, are two villages in Tamil Nadu in which the MMSs are currently held in temples, spaces from which Dalits are excluded.

In Uttar Pradesh, on the other hand (data is not available for Bihar), in only 57% of respondent villages is the pre-MMS distribution of dry grain to government schoolchildren conducted in the school building itself, while in another 37% of villages it is conducted in an "other place", unacceptably often the home or shop of the PDS dealer.

If the physical setting of the MMS is important, the locality in which that space is situated is equally if not more significant. Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu have very low percentages of villages in which the MMS is held in a Dalit locality (12% in Rajasthan and 19% in Tamil Nadu), whereas villages in more than double that percentage in both states hold the MMS in dominant caste localities. In notable contrast, 46% of respondent villages in Andhra Pradesh hold the MMS in a Dalit locality, which goes a long way toward assuring Dalit access, and should help erode dominant caste prejudices against entering Dalit localities.

In Uttar Pradesh, in 85% of respondent villages, the distribution of dry grain to government school children takes place in dominant caste localities, while in less than 10% of villages is the distribution conducted in Dalit localities. In UP, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, then, the vast majority of Dalit children must enter an area of heightened vulnerability, tension and threat, in order to avail themselves of the midday meal or its dry grain equivalent. Access for Dalit children is thus conditional, and hostage to the fluctuating state of caste relations in the village or region. Incidents like those at Enathi and Kamalaputhur villages in Tamil Nadu demonstrate how Dalit children's access to the MMS, already tenuous because it is held in the dominant caste locality, is then cut off when dominant castes feel the need to reassert their hegemony.

In measuring Dalits' *participatory empowerment* in and *ownership* of the MMS, the IIDS survey data unearths interesting patterns both in terms of national trends and interstate variations. In hiring practices, Rajasthan is consistently the least likely to employ Dalits, with 8% of respondent villages having a Dalit cook, and not a single respondent village having a Dalit MMS organizer. Tamil Nadu hires proportionally more Dalits, while still keeping them firmly in the minority, with 31% of respondent villages having Dalit cooks, and 27% having Dalit organizers. Andhra Pradesh leads the three states in indicators of Dalit empowerment and ownership of the MMS, with 49% and 45% of respondent villages having Dalits as cooks and organizers, respectively. See again Tables 10 and 16.

One argument against hiring Dalit cooks is that where the society is not prepared to accept a shared meal cooked by a Dalit, it will "create tension", schools will be paralyzed and (dominant caste) children's attendance will drop, thus defeating the purpose of the MMS. This argument has been made with reference to Rajasthan, formulated something like, "In a socially conservative environment like Rajasthan's, where people are not *ready* for Dalit cooks, hiring them now will cause more harm than good". Significantly, however, opposition to Dalit cooks is the most frequently reported problem not only in Rajasthan but in Andhra Pradesh as well (and is a close second to segregated seating in Tamil Nadu). In other words, Andhra Pradesh's success in hiring a

significant proportion of Dalit cooks is *not* due to lack of opposition; but is rather a matter of political will (generated by sustained pressure from people's movements). That Andhra Pradesh's relatively progressive hiring practices have not been accompanied by a corresponding crisis of dropping school attendance or paralysis of the school system suggests that the above argument against hiring Dalit cooks, speculative in nature anyway, is in fact spurious.

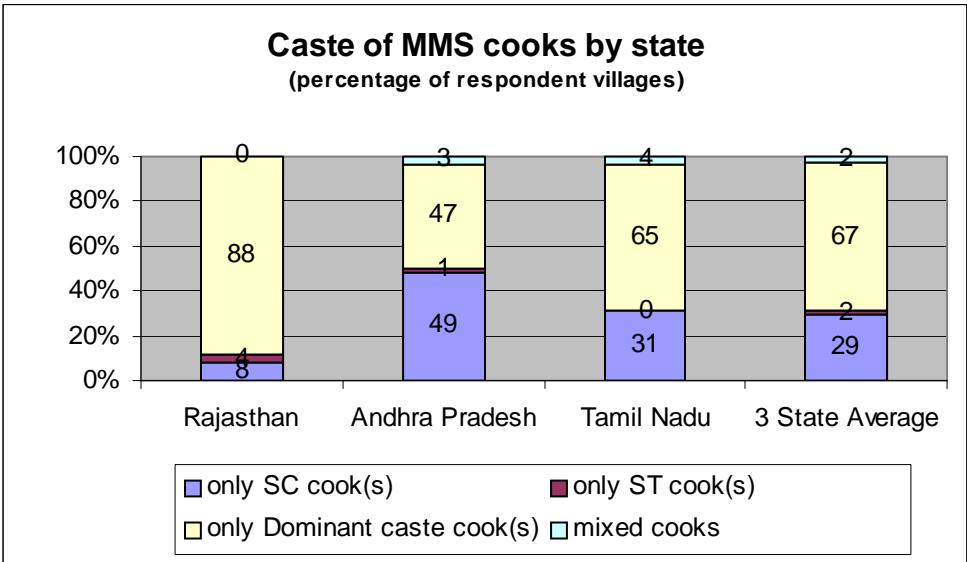
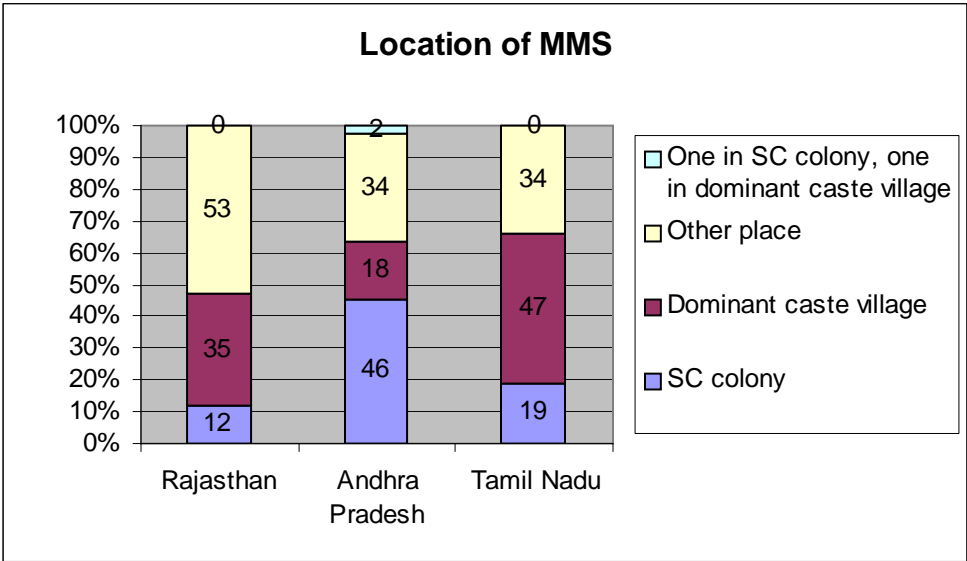
Measurable indicators point to an extremely low level of Dalit participatory empowerment and ownership of the pre-MMS dry grain distribution system in Uttar Pradesh. In 94% of respondent villages in UP, the distribution organizer is dominant caste; SC and ST organizers are found in a combined 6% of respondent villages.

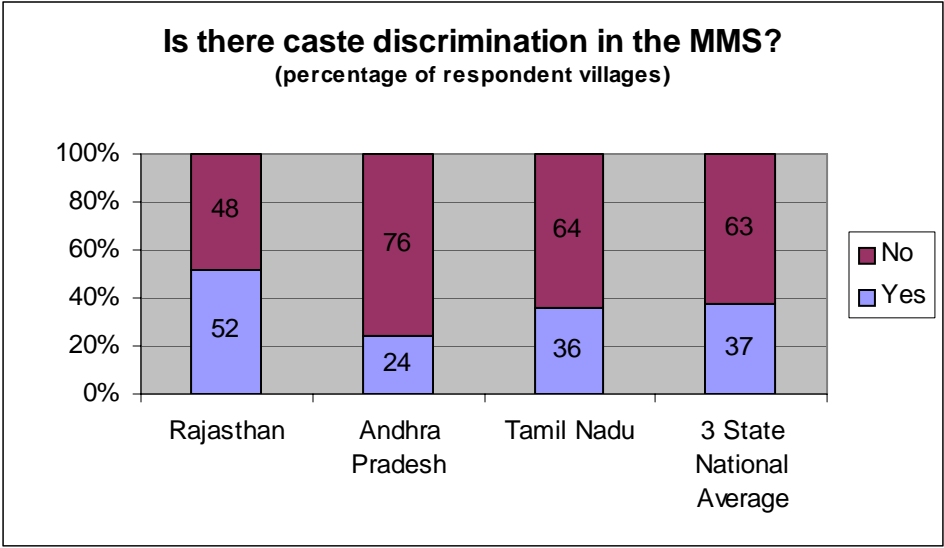
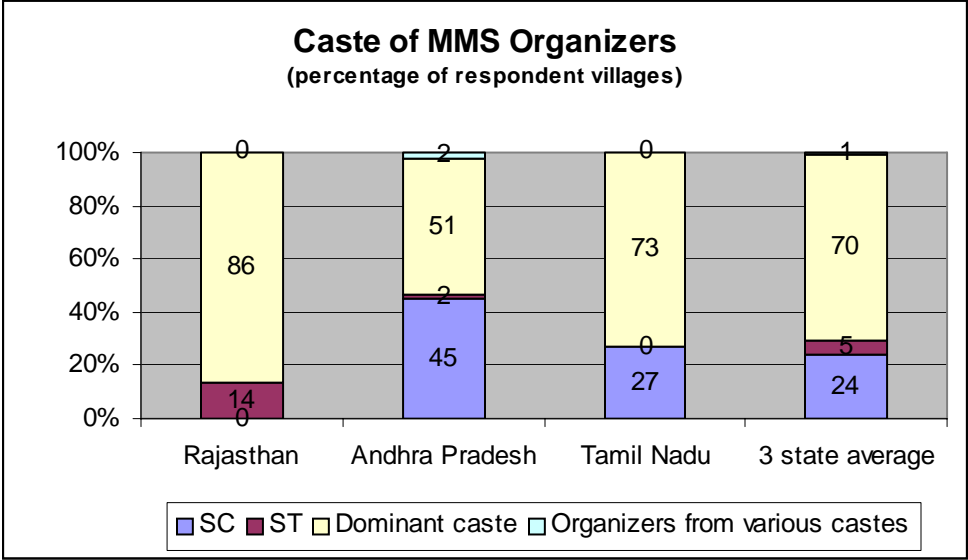
In terms of *treatment* of Dalits in the MMS, 27 respondent villages in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu reported segregated seating in the MMS, and eight villages reported segregated meals altogether. In another eight villages, respondents reported that Dalit children are served food inferior to or in lesser amounts than their dominant caste classmates.

A three-state national average of 37% of respondent villages reports that caste discrimination does, in fact, afflict the Midday Meal Scheme in their village. Opposition to Dalit cooks is the single most common problem (48.3%), followed by segregated seating (31%), segregated meals (9.2%), and unfavorable treatment in food allotment (9.2%).

Taking a closer look at the 37% national average, considerable interstate variation comes to light. In Rajasthan, 52% of respondent villages report caste discrimination in the MMS; in Tamil Nadu, 36%; in Andhra Pradesh, 24%. It can hardly escape notice that this configuration is a nearly exact inverse of the interstate variation for percentage of villages with Dalit cooks, percentage of villages with Dalit organizers, and percentage of villages in which the MMS is held in a Dalit locality. That is to say, Andhra Pradesh, which has the highest percentage of Dalit cooks, Dalit organizers, and Midday Meal Schemes held in Dalit localities, simultaneously has the lowest percentage of reported caste discrimination in the MMS. Rajasthan, which has the lowest percentage of Dalit cooks and organizers and Midday Meal Schemes held in Dalit colonies, simultaneously has the highest rate of reported caste discrimination; and Tamil Nadu stands about midway between Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh in each of these variables. (See Tables 4, 10, 16 and 17).

Table 4 (Tables 10, 16 and 17 on following page)





Do these matching patterns in the data indicate causality?

Quantitative and qualitative evidence from the field suggests that the above variables share at least an influential, if not directly causal, relationship with the degree of reported discrimination in each state. Considering each variable alone, for instance, the rates of reported discrimination are consistently lower when Dalit organizers are in charge of the MMS, when Dalit cooks are cooking the midday meal, and when the MMS is held in a Dalit colony, than when dominant caste organizers are in charge of the MMS, dominant caste cooks are cooking the midday meal, and when the MMS is held in dominant caste localities. Subjective comments from researchers and respondents also affirm that these trends are interlinked.

A look at Andhra Pradesh further supports this understanding of the data. What sets Andhra Pradesh apart? Does the lower incidence of reported caste discrimination in the MMS in Andhra simply reflect a more caste-free, egalitarian society than neighboring Tamil Nadu or distant Rajasthan? A quick glance at any of the literature on the subject, for instance the annual reports of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, or the annual reports of human rights organizations such as Sakshi-Human Rights Watch AP, will disabuse the reader of any such notion. In fact, to take one commonly used indicator, rates of reported crimes committed against Dalits are higher in Andhra Pradesh than in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Karnataka or Orissa, while lower than in Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh<sup>8</sup>. Andhra Pradesh's relatively lower levels of reported discrimination in the MMS in IIDS survey data, then, cannot be linked to lower levels of casteism in the society generally.

Instead, as the patterns in data suggest, the higher percentages of Dalit cooks and organizers, and higher percentage of villages in which the MMS is held in Dalit localities, appear to be responsible for Andhra's relatively low incidence of reported caste discrimination in the MMS. But how is it that Andhra Pradesh has come to have these higher levels of Dalit participatory empowerment, and Midday Meal Schemes held in Dalit colonies? One primary reason is that the Andhra Pradesh government conducts the MMS through local women's organizations known as DWACRA (Development of Women And Children in Rural Areas) groups. As an alternative to implementing the scheme only through the usual channels of entrenched government machinery, known for corruption, casteism and unaccountability, having a joint set-up between the government and local social organizations, appears to have an invigorating effect on all actors involved. Given the opportunity to take up leadership roles and local level government employment, mothers of government school children take an increased interest in and engagement with the school and the MMS, and begin to demand access and extract accountability from government machinery.

Sustained mass action by mobilized people's movement in Andhra Pradesh should be credited with creating the political atmosphere in which the state government has been forced to engage and cooperate with local non-governmental organizations in implementing its schemes. While DWACRA groups are government sponsored, they are clearly influenced by the models provided by social movements. Just as people's participation has a proven record of decreasing corruption by government officials, so

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<sup>8</sup> National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Sixth Report, 1999-2000 & 2000-2001, Delhi.

likewise it seems that people's participation, particularly Dalit people's participation, is beginning to bring down levels of exclusion and caste discrimination in government schemes.

All of that being said, it would be misinformed to suggest that the DWACRA group model is alone sufficient to eradicate the problems of the MMS or that Andhra Pradesh has "arrived" in terms of enabling Dalits' Right to Food through the MMS. There is still a 24% rate of reported caste discrimination in Midday Meal Schemes in Andhra Pradesh, meaning that Dalit children in one in four schools face segregated seating, opposition to their community's cooks, segregated meals altogether, or other forms of discriminatory treatment. IIDS survey data furnishes several instances of dominant caste women's DWACRA groups practicing exclusion or discrimination in the MMS, for instance by rallying the dominant caste community to bar Dalit women's DWACRA groups from employment as MMS cooks. Three of the cases of brazen exclusion of Dalit children from the MMS also remain for Andhra Pradesh's government to eradicate before it can make any meaningful claims about the success of its policies.

A study of Andhra Pradesh's Midday Meal Schemes provides not an ideal model, but a work in progress, with mixed success, from which some directional ideas can be taken. What policies/approaches seem to be working there, that can be applied in other states? First, increase the proportion of schools and MMS centers in Dalit colonies. Second, promote Dalit participatory empowerment and ownership of the MMS through hiring and promoting larger proportions of Dalit cooks and Dalit organizers. This can be catalyzed partly by implementing the MMS through or with the collaboration of people's movements and local organizations such as Dalit women's self-help groups.

The IIDS survey data, from Uttar Pradesh's dry grain distribution system to Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh's cooked MMS, sketches two vivid pictures of possible Midday Meal Schemes, at different ends of a broad spectrum. On one end is a government welfare scheme, in which the entrenched, dominant caste intermediaries of the government machinery are entrusted with giving monthly handouts to poor children. In practical terms, this scheme is conducted strictly on the terms of the dominant caste intermediaries, in their locality, with preferential treatment for their children, routine embezzlement, corruption, unaccountability, and anything from apathy to contemptuous hostility toward the children and parents of the Dalit community. On the other end of the spectrum is a government program jointly operated and monitored by the government and local, empowered community groups with Dalit leadership and/or representation, in which Dalit children and dominant caste children daily share a hot, cooked, nutritious meal, as often in a Dalit locality as in a dominant caste locality, and as often with a Dalit cook as with a non-Dalit cook. In practical terms, the only exclusion in this picture is the elective self-exclusion of the more conservative elements in dominant caste society, who withdraw their children from the program initially, but eventually, when their pressure tactics on a government committed to actualizing its Constitution and laws fail, re-enroll their children and slowly adjust to a truly democratic society. Dalit access to and fair treatment in the MMS in this picture is assured through Dalit decision-making empowerment and real ownership stakes in the program, which as part of the fabric of a vigilant civil society keeps the government accountable.



## The Public Distribution System

### I. Context

The Indian Government's Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS, or, often, simply PDS) is reputed to be the largest system of controlled food distribution in the world. In it, government stocks of essential food commodities, notably rice, wheat, sugar and oil, are distributed through the Food Corporation of India to needy areas, where people of Below Poverty Line (BPL) status can purchase the goods at subsidized, below-market prices fixed by the government. At the local level, stocks are provided through government-recognized "Fair Price Shops", or PDS shops, run by the local, government-recognized PDS dealer.

Unlike the Midday Meal Scheme, the TPDS is functioning throughout India. In the IIDS study, all 531 villages surveyed in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, addressed the PDS in the survey.

### II. Approach

As in the MMS section of the study, so also in the PDS section, exclusion and caste discrimination are identified in terms of *access*, *participatory empowerment/ownership*, and *treatment*. The following measurable indicators are used to evaluate access. First, the existence and number of PDS shops in respondent villages – are there PDS shops in your village, and how many? Second, the location of the PDS shops – are PDS shops located in dominant caste localities, Dalit colonies, or other places?

The measurable indicator for participatory empowerment/ownership is the proportion of Dalit PDS dealers to total PDS dealers – do Dalits have always to receive goods from dominant caste PDS shops, or are there Dalit PDS dealers in the community as well?

Measurable indicators for treatment in the PDS include subjective responses to questions regarding, first, discrimination in quantity – do Dalits receive less than the legislated amount of goods for the price? Second, discrimination in price – do PDS dealers charge Dalits more than dominant caste members for the same products? Three, caste-based unfavorable treatment by the PDS dealer – do dominant caste PDS dealers favor their own community in distribution? And four, the practice of untouchability by PDS dealers – do PDS dealers employ untouchability practices in the physical act of distribution or sale?

### III. Findings

#### A. Access

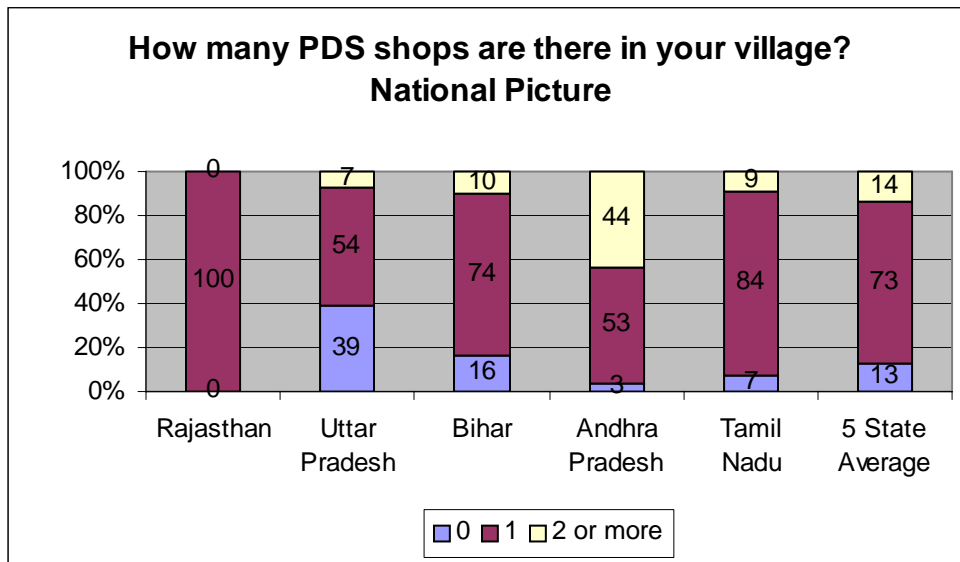
##### 1. Existence and number of PDS shops

To the credit of the Public Distribution System, PDS shops are largely up and running. As a national average, 87% of respondent villages in the IIDS study report having at least one functioning PDS shop in their village: 73% of respondents have exactly one PDS shop in their village, while 14% have more than one PDS shop per village. 13% of respondent villages, however, have no

PDS shop in their village, and must travel outside to avail themselves of their legislated entitlements of subsidized goods.

Most of the villages without PDS shops are in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Taking a look at interstate variation, Uttar Pradesh shows itself the most recalcitrant in assuring PDS accessibility, with 39% of respondent villages lacking PDS shops, and only 7% having more than one shop. Bihar follows with 16% of villages lacking a PDS shop, and only 10% having more than one. Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu score about equally; 100% of Rajasthan’s admittedly small sample size of respondent villages report having exactly one PDS shop per village, while Tamil Nadu has a marginal 7% and 9% of villages lacking PDS shops and having more than one PDS shops, respectively. Access appears most assured in Andhra Pradesh, where 44% of respondent villages have more than one shop, 53% have exactly one shop, and only 3% have no shop. See Table 24.

Table 24



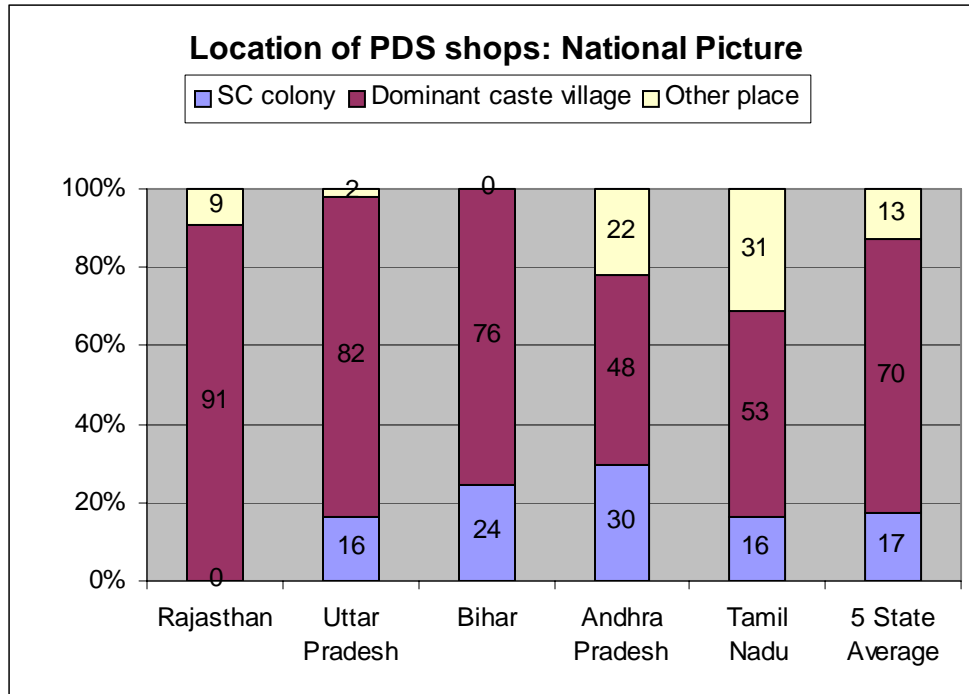
While the IIDS survey did not directly ask about the distance between Dalit dwellings and the nearest PDS shop, 29 respondent villages made a point to remark on distance as a factor that impinges upon their access to the PDS. Of these, 26 villages, or 5% of all surveyed, commented that they had to travel “far” or “more than 2 kilometers” to reach the nearest PDS shop.

## 2. Location of PDS shops

A second factor conditioning Dalit access to the benefits of the Public Distribution System is the location in which the PDS shops are physically situated. In Rajasthan, PDS shops are located in dominant caste localities in 91% of respondent villages, while not a single village had a shop in a Dalit colony, and 9% had shops located elsewhere. In Uttar Pradesh, shops are located in dominant caste localities in 82% of villages, with 16% in Dalit colonies, and 2% elsewhere. In Bihar, dominant caste colonies host the shops in 76% of villages, and the other 24% are in Dalit colonies. In Tamil Nadu, dominant caste localities have the

shops in 53% of villages, 16% are in Dalit colonies (same as UP), and 31% are elsewhere. Andhra Pradesh has the highest proportion of PDS shops in Dalit colonies at 30%, and the lowest proportion in dominant caste colonies at 48%, and 22% elsewhere. As a national average, then, 17% of villages have PDS shops in Dalit colonies, while 70% (more than four times the former) have PDS shops located in dominant caste localities, and 13% of villages have PDS shops located elsewhere. See Table 25.

Table 25

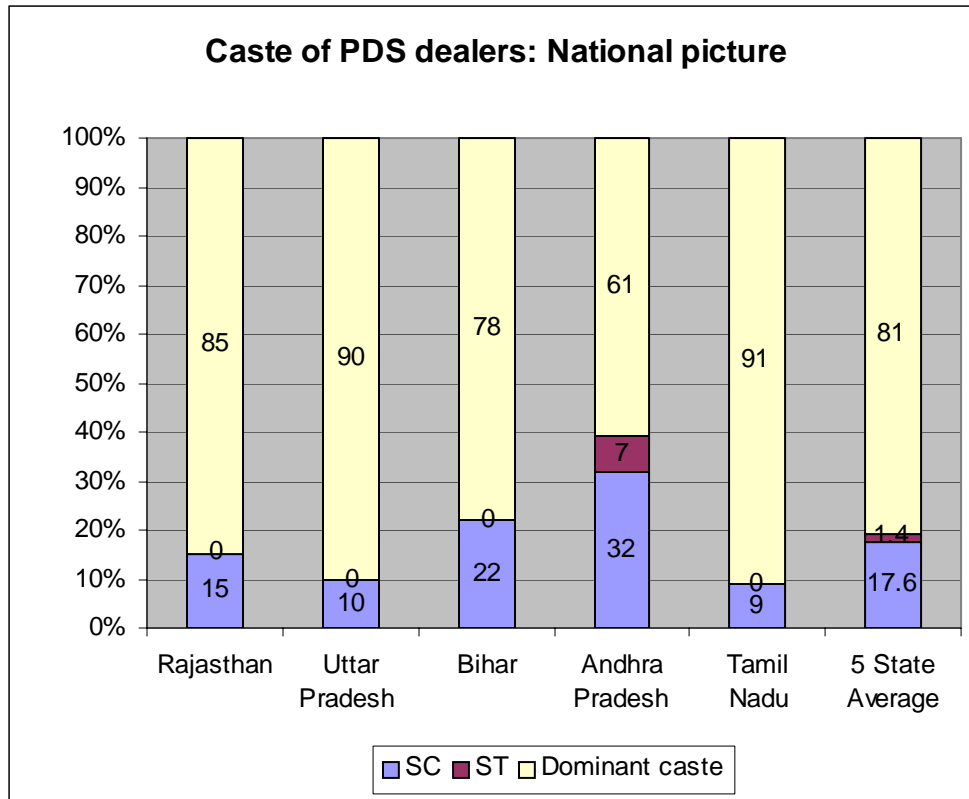


## B. Participatory Empowerment/Ownership

### 1. Proportion of Dalit PDS dealers to total PDS dealers

Even more striking in the IIDS survey data is the preponderance of dominant caste PDS dealers, and the paucity of Dalit dealers. Here again, Andhra Pradesh stands out as the only state in which Dalits have attained a significant degree of participatory empowerment, at 32%, with another 7% ST ownership of PDS shops, and 61% dominant caste ownership. In an interesting departure from earlier patterns, however, in PDS shop ownership it is Tamil Nadu that boasts the most complete dominant caste hegemony (91%) and the lowest level of Dalit empowerment (9%), followed by Uttar Pradesh (90% and 10%), Rajasthan (85% and 15%), and Bihar (78% and 22%). The national average comes to 81% dominant caste ownership of PDS shops, and 19% combined SC and ST ownership. See Table 26.

Table 26



### C. Treatment

#### 1. Discrimination in Quantity

As a national average, 40% of respondent villages report that Dalits receive, for the same price, lesser quantities than the dominant castes receive from the PDS shopkeeper. In ascending order of reported discrimination, 16% of respondent villages in Rajasthan report discrimination in quantity, 29% in Tamil Nadu, 30% in Andhra Pradesh, 56% in Uttar Pradesh, and 70% in Bihar.

#### 2. Discrimination in Price

Less common, but still a problem, is the practice by some PDS dealers of charging Dalit customers extra for the same quantity of product that dominant castes purchase at a lower cost. The practice is not reported in Rajasthan, perhaps because of the small sample size there. 9% of respondent villages in Andhra Pradesh report discriminatory pricing, 16% in Tamil Nadu, 51% in Uttar Pradesh and 66% in Bihar. This gives a national average of 28%.

#### 3. Caste-based favoritism by PDS Dealer

At a national average of 48%, this is the most commonly reported form of caste discrimination in the PDS. Respondents describe this phenomenon taking numerous forms. In some places, PDS dealers service their own caste community, or all dominant castes, throughout the week, while only serving the Dalit community on arbitrarily designated, “Dalit days”, falling once or twice in a week. Preferential order in service, meaning that Dalits are kept waiting and

served last while the PDS dealers' caste-fellows or other dominant caste members are served immediately, is widely reported. Describing the way in which caste-based favoritism works in the PDS in their village, respondents in Tarka Village of Ghazipur District, Uttar Pradesh, related an incident in which members of the Dalit community were in severe need of sugar and other goods from the PDS, but the dominant caste PDS dealer flatly refused, saying that his stock had run out. The same day, members of the PDS dealer's own caste had a wedding for which they received "quintal after quintal" of sugar and other supposedly absent goods from the PDS shop.

In Andhra Pradesh, 17% of respondent villages report a problem of the PDS dealer practicing caste-based favoritism in the distribution of goods. In Tamil Nadu, 41%; in Rajasthan, 42%; in Uttar Pradesh, 54%; and in Bihar, a remarkable 86% of villages contend regularly with this manner of casteist treatment from their PDS dealers. See Tables 27-32.

Table 27

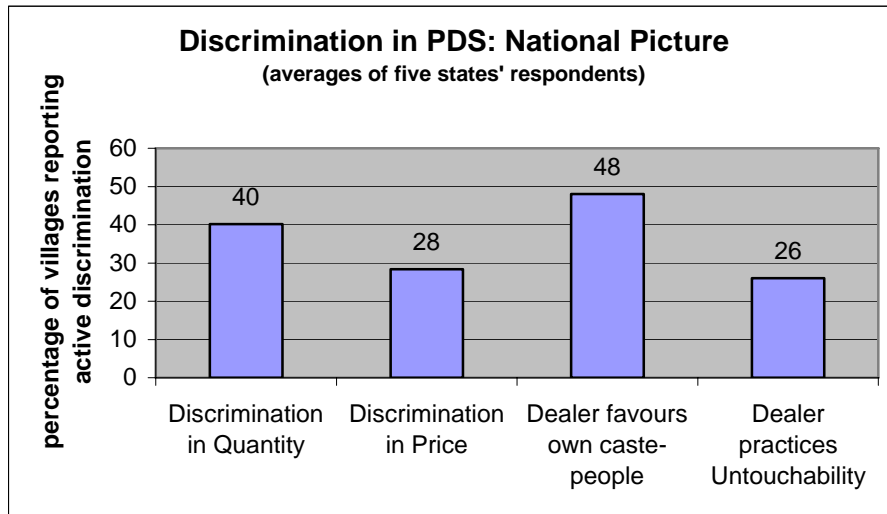


Table 28

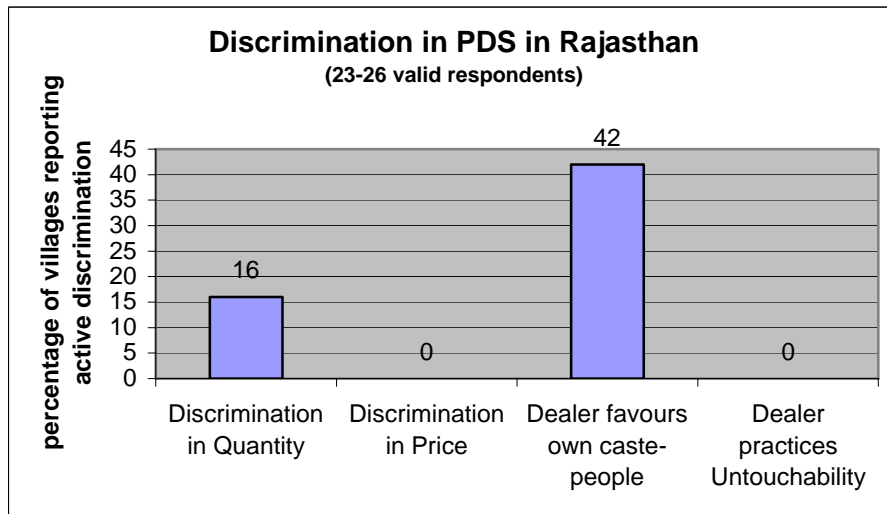


Table 29

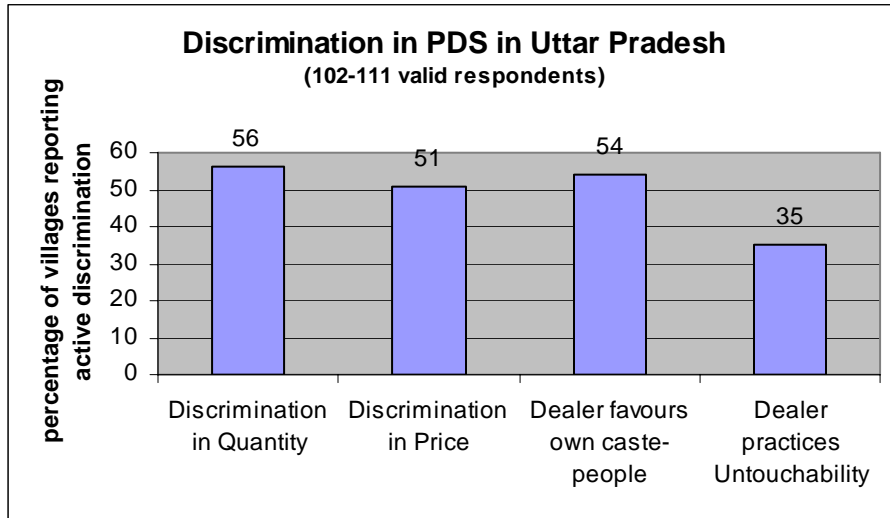


Table 30

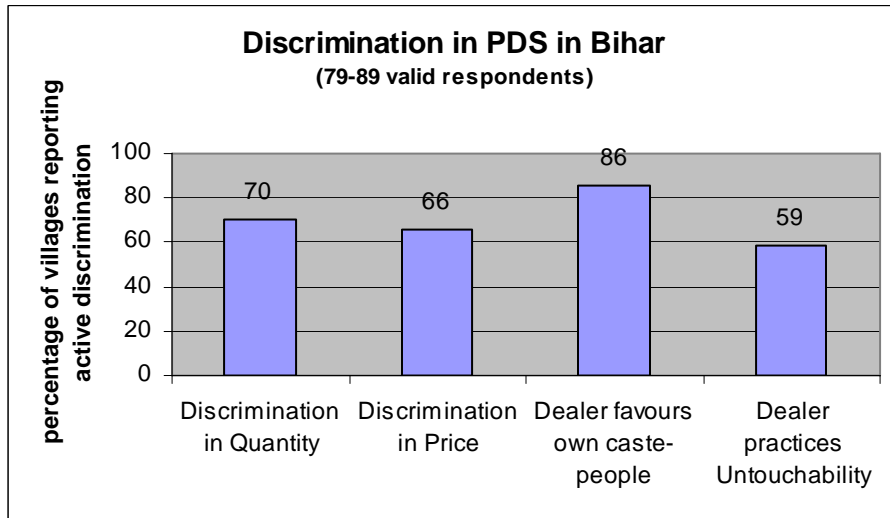


Table 31

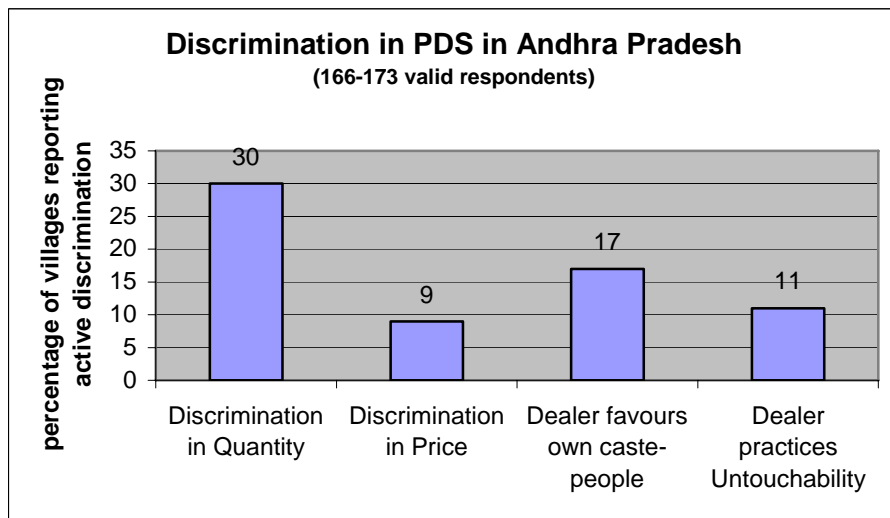
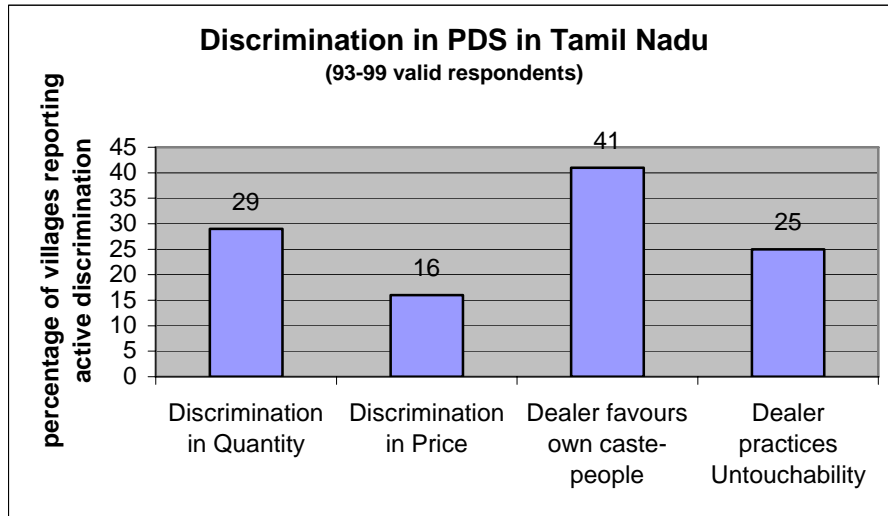


Table 32



4. *Untouchability practices by PDS Dealer*

Outlawed in 1950 with the ratification of the Indian Constitution, the dominant caste practice of “untouchability” toward Dalits continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century not only as a social neurosis but also as an unofficial policy of various government actors. A national average of 26% of PDS dealers, according to IIDS survey respondents, practice untouchability in the distribution of government goods to Dalits. One classic untouchability practice is the dominant caste dropping of goods (water, food, money) from above into cupped Dalit hands below, so as to avoid the possibility of “polluting” contact between the “upper” and “lower”. This remains in evidence, but other untouchability practices also emerge in the survey data. In villages in Patna District in Bihar, for instance, dominant caste PDS dealers hang a separating purdah in the shop window before having any dealings with members of the Musaher Dalit community.

In the IIDS study, none of the small sample of respondent villages in Rajasthan reported “untouchability” practices in their local PDS shops, though such practices in Rajasthan have been documented elsewhere. In Andhra Pradesh, 11% of respondent villages reported “untouchability” practices; in Tamil Nadu, 25%; in Uttar Pradesh, 35%, and in Bihar, 59%. See Table 33. Within states, as well, the considerable variation between regions and districts is noteworthy, and may help identify the areas where more attention is needed to eradicate the practice. For a complete breakdown of the geography of “untouchability” in the IIDS survey data, see Table 34.

Table 33

**Untouchability in PDS:  
PDS dealers practicing untouchability during distribution**

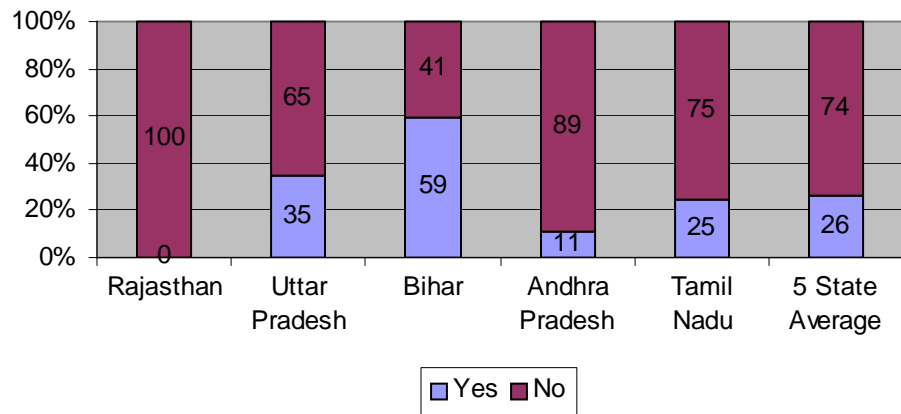




Table 34

<b>Untouchability in Public Distribution System:</b>							
<b>Does the owner of the PDS shop in your village practice untouchability in supplying goods?</b>							
<b>State</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Number of villages</b>			<b>Percentage of villages</b>		
		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Rajasthan	Ajmer		24	24	0	100	100
	<i>Total Rajasthan</i>		24	24	0	100	100
Uttar Pradesh	Bareilly		3	3	0	100	100
	Rampur		4	4	0	100	100
	Lakhimpur Khiri	3	7	10	30	70	100
	Baliya		5	5	0	100	100
	Gazipur	36	53	89	40	60	100
	<i>Total Uttar Pradesh</i>	39	72	111	35	65	100
Bihar	Buxar		1	1	0	100	100
	Samastipur	2	1	3	67	33	100
	Vaishali	17	1	18	94	6	100
	Nawada	23		23	100	0	100
	Patna	5	29	34	15	85	100
	<i>Total Bihar</i>	47	32	79	59	41	100
Andhra Pradesh	Anantapur		7	7	0	100	100
	Chittoor	4	32	36	11	89	100
	Guntur	7	39	46	15	85	100
	Khammam		4	4	0	100	100
	Kurnool		8	8	0	100	100
	Mahaboobnagar	2	15	17	12	88	100
	Nalgonda	6	19	25	24	76	100
	Nizamabad		5	5	0	100	100
	Warangal		10	10	0	100	100
	West Godavari		14	14	0	100	100
	<i>Total Andhra Pradesh</i>	19	153	172	11	89	100
Tamil Nadu	Dindigul	9	1	10	90	10	100
	Kanyakumari		5	5	0	100	100
	Madurai	1	18	19	5	95	100
	Sivagungai		10	10	0	100	100
	Thanjavur	1		1	100	0	100
	Theni	2	4	6	33	67	100
	Thiruvanamalai	8	10	18	44	56	100
	Tirunelveli	1	9	10	10	90	100
	Virudhinagar	3	17	20	15	85	100
	<i>Total Tamil Nadu</i>	25	74	99	25	75	100

#### IV. Concluding Summary of PDS Data

The Public Distribution System is arguably the strongest available tool with which poor and marginalized populations in India can at present actualize their Right to Food. Whether it is operated well or poorly can – indeed *does* – make the difference between sustenance and preventable starvation for SC and ST communities in certain areas. While the intent of the PDS is to bring the food from where it is most plentiful to where it is most needed, and to deliver it into the hands of those who need it most, there are problems with the system’s practical implementation, such that the food often ends up in other hands than those of the most needy. Avoidable starvation therefore does occur in India today. The IIDS study examines Dalits’ experience of the PDS to identify, locate and measure the points of caste discrimination and exclusion that cripple the PDS and keep it from fulfilling its intended purpose.

Dalit access to the PDS is first contingent on the existence of nearby, functioning, PDS shops. In this regard, IIDS survey data is, for India as a whole, mostly positive. A national average of 87% of respondent villages have at least one functioning PDS shop. Uttar Pradesh, however, in which 39% of respondent villages have no PDS shop, needs to address this issue. Bihar also, with 16% of villages without PDS shops, needs work. Andhra Pradesh can perhaps offer advice, as 44% of its respondent villages have more than one PDS shop per village, potentially increasing access for all.

Access is then conditioned by the location in which the PDS shop is situated. Nationally, 17% of respondent villages have PDS shops located in Dalit localities, while over four times that percentage are located in dominant caste localities, and the rest are located elsewhere. In individual states the picture is even more stark: Rajasthan has zero percent respondent villages with PDS shops in Dalit colonies, and 91% of PDS shops are located in dominant caste localities. Among Andhra Pradesh’s respondent villages, by contrast, 30% have PDS shops in a Dalit locality, 48% are in dominant caste localities, and 22% are located elsewhere.

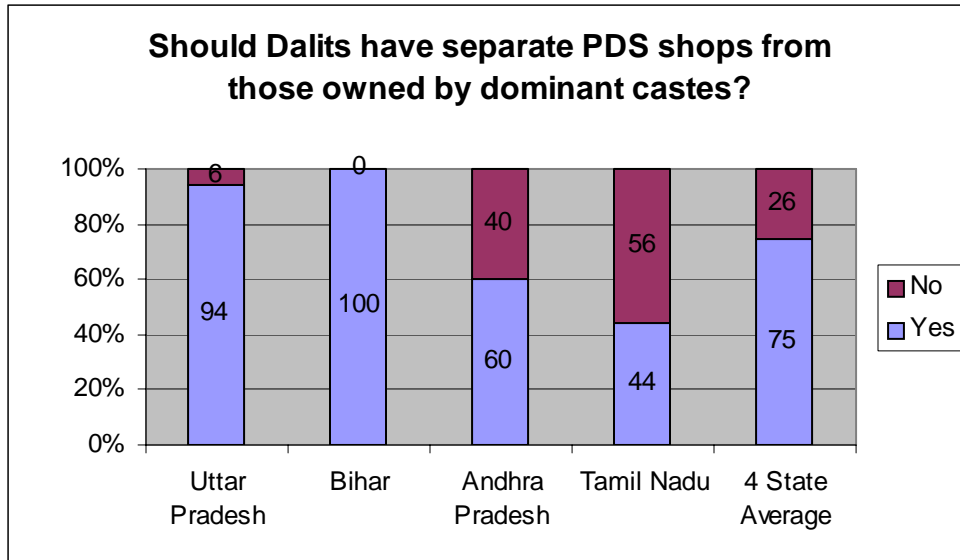
As a national average, the PDS shops of 81% of respondent villages are owned and run by dominant caste dealers. In Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu the percentage of dominant caste dealers is even higher, at 85%, 90% and 91%, respectively. Dalit participatory empowerment, then, as expressed through ownership of PDS shops, is quite low in most states, with the exception of Andhra Pradesh, where Dalits manage PDS shops in 32% of respondent villages.

In terms of treatment of Dalits in the PDS, caste discrimination in various manifestations is reported commonly, if not overwhelmingly, throughout the states. Caste-based favoritism toward their own communities by dominant caste PDS dealers (and inversely proportional dis-favoritism toward Dalits) is the most frequently reported problem nationally at 48%. Discrimination against Dalits in the quantity of goods given at the PDS shop is second most common, at 40%, followed by discrimination in price, at 28%. A national average of 26% of respondent villages per state reports that dominant caste PDS dealers practice “untouchability” in the physical act of distribution of PDS goods.

So long as the intended beneficiaries of the PDS are kept out of the decision-making and implementation process, the corruption and discrimination for which the PDS

has become notorious should continue to flourish. 70% of PDS shops are located in dominant caste localities, where Dalits are necessarily on the defensive. 81% of PDS shopkeepers are dominant caste, and more than one in four PDS shopkeepers continue to practice “untouchability” when dealing with Dalit customers. When asked in the IIDS survey “Do you feel that SCs/STs should have separate PDS shops from those owned by the dominant castes?” a national average<sup>9</sup> of 75% of respondent villages responded in the affirmative (in Bihar, 100% replied in the affirmative). See Table 35.

Table 35



As with the MMS, so also here, Andhra Pradesh’s levels of reported caste discrimination in the PDS are relatively low in comparison to most other states. The increased degree of participation by Dalits in PDS implementation – through PDS ownership – seems to have helped decrease levels of discrimination, and increase accountability in the government machinery. A higher percentage of PDS shops located in Dalit colonies also seems to have increased Dalit access to the PDS and decreased scope for practicing “untouchability”. Empowerment through participation and ownership, as well as empowerment through sensitive relocation into Dalit areas, emerge from the data as potentialities currently being realized in Andhra Pradesh, and that can be realized also in other states.

<sup>9</sup> Rajasthan is left out of this national average, as all but four respondents in Rajasthan skipped this question.

## **Concluding Recommendations**

### **I. Midday Meal Scheme**

- Keeping in mind the Dwacra model as an imperfect but suggestive paradigm, state governments should involve NGOs, CBOs and people's movements that have Dalit leadership – particularly Dalit women's leadership – and representation and grassroots support, in implementing, running and monitoring the MMS.
- Reserve MMS cooking positions for Dalits, and enforce the reservation where it is already in place but faces local dominant caste resistance.
- Promote Dalit teachers, PDS dealers and Panchayat members to organize and manage the MMS.
- Enforce the law, particularly by arresting and trying perpetrators of exclusion and open discrimination against Dalit children.
- Where new MMSs are to be begun, or where an old space is no longer feasible, locate the MMS center in a Dalit colony.

### **II. Public Distribution System**

- Offer incentives and subsidies (government loans, grants, land grants or support in building the physical shop) for Dalits to start their own PDS shops.
- Locate PDS shops in Dalit colonies.
- Wherever villages have no PDS shop, start one. Where Dalits have to travel further than 1km to the nearest PDS shop, start one in the Dalit colony.
- Enforce the law vis-à-vis “untouchability” practices, all of which are illegal.

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**Appendix I:  
Survey Questionnaire Plus Code Key<sup>10</sup>**

**STATE**

- 1 Rajasthan
- 2 Uttar Pradesh
- 3 Bihar
- 4 Andhra Pradesh

**DISTRICT**

Varies from state to state

**BLOCK**

Varies from state to state

**PANCHAYAT**

Varies from state to state

**VILLAGE**

Varies from state to state

**INVESTIGATOR**

Name of investigator/conductor of survey

**ORGANISATION**

Name of organization to which investigator is responsible

**MIDDAY MEAL SCHEME**

**MMS (1): Is there a Midday Meal Scheme in your village?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 There was, but it was closed

**MMS\_WHEN (2): If yes, then in what year did the Midday Meal Scheme begin?**

- 1 before 2000
- 2 2000
- 3 2001
- 4 2002
- 5 2003

**MMS\_CLOSED (3): If there was, but it was closed, then what is the reason?**

- 1 Dominant castes opposed the scheme because it would benefit SC/ST children
- 2 Dominant castes opposed the scheme because Dalit and dominant caste children would have to sit together for the midday meal
- 3 No initiative or no leadership for the scheme
- 4 Problem with funding
- 5 Problem with food supply
- 6 Other

**MMS\_DAYS (4): Is the midday meal actually served every day? If not, then how many days per month is the midday meal actually provided?**

- 1 All days**

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<sup>10</sup> Includes both answer options provided in the questionnaire and codes for unanticipated answers frequently received.

**2 All days except Saturdays and Sundays**

**3 All days except public holidays**

**4 Other (please explain)**

**MMS\_TYPE (5): Are the midday meals hot, cooked meals, or uncooked meals?**

1 Cooked meals

2 Uncooked meals

3 Other/both (please explain)

**COOK\_CASTE (6A): What is the caste and gender of the cook for the Midday Meal Scheme?**

1 SC

2 ST

3 Non-SC/ST (dominant caste)

4 one SC and one non-SC/ST

5 one SC, one ST, one non-SC/ST

6 one SC and one ST

7 one ST and one non-SC/ST

**COOK\_SEX (6B):**

1 Male

2 Female

3 One male, one female

**ORGANIZER\_CASTE (7A) What is the caste and gender of the organizer/in-charge for the Midday Meal Scheme?**

1 SC

2 ST

3 Non-SC/ST (dominant caste)

4 one SC and one non-SC/ST

5 one SC, one ST, one non-SC/ST

6 one SC and one ST

7 one ST and one non-SC/ST

**ORGANIZER\_SEX (7B)**

1 Male

2 Female

3 One male, one female

**ORGANIZER\_STATUS (8): What is the status of the organizer/in-charge in the village?**

1 Teacher

2 Sarpanch

3 Panchayat member

4 Other (please identify)

5 Teacher and Sarpanch both

**MMS\_WHERE (9): Where is the midday meal held?**

1 School

2 Temple

3 Public building (please identify)

4 Other (please identify)

**MMS\_PLACE (10): Where is this space located?**

1 SC colony

2 Dominant caste village

3 Other (please identify)

4 One in SC colony, one in dominant caste village

EATERS\_CASTE\_SC (11A): Please list the caste of the children who eat in the Midday Meal Scheme.

Numeric, with “50” indicating “some” when only “some” are indicated

EATERS\_CASTE\_ST (11B)

Numeric, with “50” indicating “some” when only “some” are indicated

EATERS\_CASTE\_BC (11C)

Numeric, with “50” indicating “some” when only “some” are indicated

EATERS\_CASTE\_OC (11D)

Numeric, with “50” indicating “some” when only “some” are indicated

LEFT\_OUT\_WHY (13A): Are there any children left out of the Midday Meal Scheme?

If so, why?

**1 Migration**

**2 Child labour (children who would be eating in MMS are labouring instead)**

**3 Negligence of parents**

**4 Graft (manipulation by teacher/in-charge, excluding some children)**

**5 Caste discrimination and Untouchability**

**6 “Economic illiteracy” (lack of information/awareness about MMS)**

**7 Water scarcity in school and midday meal served in sun (poor MMS conditions)**

**8 School is far from SC children’s homes (distance)**

**9 Rich and dominant caste children “left out” in the sense that they elect to attend non-governmental schools to avoid the shared midday meal**

**LEFT\_OUT\_NUMBER (13B): How many children are left out?**

Numeric, with “1001” indicating “some” when only “some” are indicated

MMS\_DISCRIMINATION (14): Is there caste-based discrimination in the Midday Meal Scheme?

1 Yes

2 No

**MMS\_DIC\_HOW (15): If yes, then how?**

1 Separate seating for SC children and non-SC children

2 Separate meals altogether for SC and non-SC children

3 When cook is SC, non-SC students refuse to eat

4 Inferior or insufficient food given to SC students

5 Other (please explain)

6 Separate meals and refusal to eat from SC cook (2 and 3 both)

7 Refusal to eat from SC cook and inferior/insufficient food (3 and 4 both)

8 Separate seating, refusal to eat from SC cook, and inferior food (1, 3, and 4 all)

9 Separate seating and refusal to eat from SC cook (1 and 3 both)

10 Separate seating and separate meals (1 and 2 both)

MMS\_DISC\_PROBLEM (16) Have you ever had a problem with the Midday Meal Scheme because of caste discrimination?

1 Yes

2 No



**MMS\_DISC\_WHEN (17A) If yes, then when?**

Year (2001, 2003, etc)

**MMS\_DISC\_WHAT (17B) What was the nature of the problem?**

- 1 Caste discrimination generally
- 2 Practice of untouchability: “chuachut”
- 3 Poverty and caste combined
- 4 Teacher does not give the same to some or all SC children
- 5 Non-SC children’s parents withdraw their children or forbid their children to eat because the MMS cook is SC
- 6 Separate seating for SC and non-SC children

**MMS\_DISC\_SOLVED (17C): How was it (the problem) solved?**

- 1 Panchayat meeting
- 2 Civil confrontation
- 3 Through administration (RDO, police, etc)
- 4 “Compromise”
- 5 Switched schools

**MMS\_DISC\_JUSTICE (17D): Were Dalits able to obtain justice?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**PDS – PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

**PDS\_NUMBER (1): How many PDS shops are there in your village?**

Numeric

**DEALER\_CASTE (2): What are the castes of the PDS dealers?**

- 1 SC
- 2 ST
- 3 Non-SC/ST (dominant caste)
- 4 One SC, one non-SC/ST
- 5 One ST, one non-SC/ST
- 6 One SC, one ST, one non-SC/ST (one of each)
- 7 One SC and one ST

**HELPER\_NUMBER (3A): How many helpers are there in the PDS shops, and what are their castes?**

Numeric

**HELPER\_CASTE (3B):**

- 1 SC
- 2 ST
- 3 Non-SC/ST (dominant caste)
- 4 One SC, one non-SC/ST
- 5 One ST, one non-SC/ST
- 6 One SC, one ST, one non-SC/ST (one of each)
- 7 One SC and one ST

**PDS\_SEPARATE (4): Are there separate PDS shops for SCs and non-SCs?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**PDS\_WHERE (5): Where are the PDS fair price shops located?**

- 1 SC colony
- 2 Dominant caste village
- 3 Elsewhere (please identify)
- 4 One in SC colony, one in dominant caste village (one in each)

**PDS\_DISTANCE (5A):** (NOTE – this question is not on survey, but frequently enough commented by investigators to warrant a data entry) How far is the PDS fair price shop from the Dalit colony?

- 1 “Far” or outside our village entirely (must go to another village for PDS shop)
- 2 “Nearby” or less than one kilometer away
- 3 1-2 kilometers away
- 4 More than 2 kilometers away

**FULL\_RATION (6): Do SCs/STs receive the full legal ration from the PDS shops?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DISC\_QUANTITY (7): Is there caste discrimination in the *quantity of food* given at PDS shops?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DISC\_PRICE (8): Is there caste discrimination in the *price* given at PDS shops?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DEALER\_FAVOUR (9):** If the owner of the PDS shop is non-SC/ST, does he favor his own caste-people in distribution?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**DEALER\_UNTOUCHABILITY (10):** If the owner of the PDS shop is a non-SC/ST, does he practice untouchability in supplying goods?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**PDS\_WANT\_SEPARATE (11):** Do you feel that SCs/STs should have separate PDS shops from those owned by the dominant castes?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**PDS\_HELP (12): What sort of help would you prefer in managing a PDS shop?**

- 1 Government credit
- 2 Government loan
- 3 Shop provided free
- 4 Other

**PDS\_PROBLEM (13): Have you ever had a problem with the PDS shop?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**PDS\_PROB\_WHEN (14A): If yes, then when?**

- 1 Always
- Otherwise, year given (2001, 2003, etc.)

**PDS\_PROB\_WHAT (14B): What type of problem?**

- 1 PDS shopkeeper favors dominant castes and disfavors Dalits
- 2 PDS shopkeeper treats Dalits with disrespect/contempt during distribution
- 3 Dalits given less than others during distribution
- 4 Caste discrimination and Untouchability
- 5 PDS items, instead of being made available to Dalits, are sold on black market or simply stolen by PDS dealer and his accomplices
- 6 PDS dealer refuses to give items to Dalits
- 7 Dalits forbidden from entering or approaching PDS shop while dominant castes allowed
- 8 Dalits denied coupons, not given rations regularly
- 9 PDS shop is too far away (distance)

**PDS\_PROB\_SOLVED (14C): How was the problem solved?**

- 1 Panchayat meeting
- 2 Through Dalit education/awareness
- 3 Through administration (MRO, police, etc.)
- 4 Organized, community confrontation with PDS shopkeeper
- 5 "People's support"
- 6 "Compromise"

**PDS\_PROB\_JUSTICE (14D): Were Dalits able to achieve justice?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

**BPL – BELOW POVERTY LINE RATION CARD SYSTEM**

**BPL (1): Is there a BPL scheme in your village?**

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

BPL\_SC\_TRUE (2): How many SC households are legitimately BPL? (How many SC households live below the government-determined Poverty Line?)

Numeric

BPL\_SC\_DESIGNATED (3): How many SC households does the local BPL list actually recognize?

Numeric

BPL\_SC\_LEFTOUT (4): Are there SC households eligible for BPL that are left off of the BPL list due to caste discrimination?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

BPL\_NONSC\_TRUE (5): How many non-SC households are legitimately BPL? (How many non-SC households live below the government-determined Poverty Line?)

Numeric

BPL\_NSC\_DESIGNATED (6): How many non-SC households does the local BPL list actually recognize?

Numeric

BPL\_NSC\_BOGUS (7): Are there non-SCs who do *not* meet legitimate BPL criteria but who are nonetheless on the BPL list?

1 Yes

2 No

BPL\_COMM\_SCST (8): Are there SCs/STs on the BPL identification committee?

1 Yes

2 No

BPL\_DISC (9): Is there caste discrimination and exclusion of legitimate BPL people of SC/ST background by the identification committee?

1 Yes

2 No

**BPL\_DISC\_WHY (10): If yes, then what is the reason?**

1 Committee is dominated by dominant caste people

2 Bribery by unqualified dominant caste people to get onto BPL list

3 Other reasons (please specify)

4 Both 1 and 2 (domination of committee and bribery)

BPL\_REVISSED (11): In your opinion, how should the method of BPL identification be revised?

No code. Answers, where given, collected in author's notes.

BPL\_SUFFICIENT (12): Is BPL assistance sufficient?

1 Yes

2 No

BPL\_LIST (13): Has the Government announced or publicly posted the BPL list?

1 Yes

2 No

BPL\_LIST\_SEEN (14): Have you ever seen the BPL list?

1 Yes

2 No

**BPL\_COPY (15): Who has a copy of the BPL list?**

1 Sarpanch

2 PDS shopkeeper

3 Government official (please specify)

4 Other (please specify)

**STARVATION: Please give a list of starvation deaths in this village for the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 to date. The list should identify the caste (SC, ST, OBC, etc.), gender, age and economic background of the starvation victims, and the date of death.**

Numeric for number of starvation deaths in the village, when reported (rarely). For more details, see original survey forms.

**Appendix II:  
Surveys excluded from IIDS Study, after original data entry:**

**Original Data Entry:** total number of surveys per state:

Rajasthan 26  
Uttar Pradesh 134  
Bihar 101  
Andhra Pradesh 212  
Tamil Nadu 100

**Bad Apples:** surveys excluded for lack of information/incomplete questionnaires, suspect data or departure from methodology (i.e. reliance on non-Dalit sources):

Rajasthan 0  
Uttar Pradesh 4  
Bihar 6  
Andhra Pradesh 32  
Tamil Nadu 0

**Final Data:** total number of surveys per state after excluding bad apples:

Rajasthan 26  
Uttar Pradesh 130  
Bihar 95  
Andhra Pradesh 180  
Tamil Nadu 100

**Excluded Surveys (Bad Apples):**

State	Survey number (on numbering system as per original data entry)	Why Excluded
Uttar Pradesh	33	Skimpy information (mostly blank)
Uttar Pradesh	95	Skimpy information
Uttar Pradesh	97	Skimpy information
Uttar Pradesh	105	Skimpy information
Bihar	13-17	Suspect data (exact same information for every village)
Bihar	24	Suspect data (double of another village's data)
Andhra Pradesh	2	Sarpanch source (departed from methodology)
Andhra Pradesh	9	PDS dealer source
Andhra Pradesh	48	Secretary source and Skimpy information
Andhra Pradesh	97	Skimpy information
Andhra Pradesh	141	No source cited and Skimpy

Andhra Pradesh	143-144	No source and Skimpy
Andhra Pradesh	163-171	No source, Sarpanch source and Skimpy
Andhra Pradesh	174-175	Secretary source
Andhra Pradesh	182-185	No source and Skimpy
Andhra Pradesh	188-192	Sarpanch source, Ward Member source, Secretary source
Andhra Pradesh	194, 196, 203	Ward Member source
Andhra Pradesh	204	Vidya Committee Member source