

**Brief Report of the
National Seminar on 'Feeding the Child'**

**India International Center,
New Delhi**

26th Feb. 2008

**Organized by the
Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute (SSMI)
Road No 31 East Avenue Punjabi Bagh (East) New Delhi 110026**

I Summing up - Mr. S.P. Shukla¹

The programmes of Mid Day Meals and ICDS, at its core, deal with the phenomenon of hunger as much as with nutrition and school absenteeism. Therefore, there is a need for political consensus. Prosperity at one pole and hunger at the other was not sustainable.

The tragedy today is that social welfare programmes are becoming an opportunity for big corporates to make profits. This is not only in areas like child feeding, but also in areas like agricultural credit where front agents of commercial banks and other non-banking institutions are operating. In welfare schemes while the margins, say Rs. 2 per child in ICDS, may be small, the turnover is large and that is what makes them commercially attractive.

There are many shortcomings in the delivery mechanism. It is true that the problems of reducing anemia and malnutrition have not been greatly impacted and the drastic mitigation of the problem observed. There are problems with Mid Day Meals as an incentive to prevent school dropouts. Despite these shortcomings all such schemes need to be expanded and intensified rather than curtailed.

There are problems at the operational levels as has been reported by the administrators and the service provider NGOs. At the same time there have been reports of efforts being made by various agencies to overcome the problems and set role models. The experience and the methods developed by the two models presented here – the Maharashtra Model and the Jahangirpuri, Delhi Model are commendable and need to be replicated. Similarly, the example set by Uttar Pradesh of providing financial support to Self help Groups by way of two months advance credit facilitation is an excellent example deserving serious examination by the other states bogged down by age old traditions and inflexible systems.

The need for evolving a suitable mechanism has been recognized today. The experience of NACO as an institutional arrangement where at the apex level the organization was located within the Ministry while maintaining a degree of operational autonomy and flexibility with implementation of programs through societies was discussed. There are other administrative mechanisms that can be examined

The administrators of the programmes of Mid-Day and ICDS, the service provider NGOs and the representatives of the commissioners appointed by Hon'ble Supreme Court have repeatedly stressed the importance of the Supreme Court orders in executing the programmes. The Court orders have enabled the lobby of the contractors to be kept at bay; it has given a sense of direction. There was considerable agreement that there is a need for a greater degree of institutionalization backed by legislation.

II Inaugural Address - Dr.(Ms.) Syeda Hameed²

The ICDS is one of the most important programmes of the Government of India. The Planning Commission has made a provision of Rs. 52,000 Crores during the 11th plan.

¹ Former, Member, Planning Commission and former Secretary Women and Child Development Govt. of India

² Member, Planning Commission

The Prime Minister has described malnutrition as the worst curse (sabse bada dhhaba) of the nation. The policy perspective of the Planning Commission was outlined:

1. Provision of hot cooked made from locally procured food items.
2. Continuation of the system of 'take home rations' for lactating mothers with mothers with children below three years age.
3. Special supplements for severely mal nutritioned
4. Health, sanitation and nutrition societies in states at all levels.
5. Anganwadis to perform multiple tasks besides feeding – inoculation, breast feeding campaigns, maternity support programmes
6. Joint financial control between the self-help group, representatives of beneficiaries and Anganwadi workers.
7. Flexible funding to Anganwadi for urgent and necessary activities.
8. Opening of Anganwadis on demand.
9. Strengthening early education.
10. Monitoring and supervision to be strengthened.
11. Views of the Planning Commission are different from that of the Ministry of women and child.

III Need for Legislation and Institutional mechanism

Ms. Sujatha Rao³

The experience of NACO as an institutional arrangement where at the apex level the organization was located within the Ministry while maintaining a degree of operational autonomy and flexibility by implementing its programs through societies established at the state level. This models addresses two concerns – preventing disconnect between the Ministry and NCAO while at the same time ensuring a sharp focus to the mission. All stake holders, including the 20 foreign donor organizations like the Gates Foundation, the World Bank etc. participated in drawing up a vision plan called the National AIDS Control Plan (NACP). There are 140 programme indicators to monitor the implementation of this plan. Offers of fresh donations have to be at par with this plan this ensures no duplication, diversions and dilution of attention and resources. NACO also has about 20 Technical Resource Groups that help access about 250 experts to advise and review the NACO strategies and policies. NACO has about 5000 counselors. In addition there is focus to using peer leaders for prevention and advocacy purposes. For example, to ensure truck drivers access information about prevention and condoms, truck drivers who are HIV positive are used. Such peer led strategies are seen to be very powerful.

Though there are an estimated 20 to 30 lakh infected, there is such a strong institutional mechanism to implement the strategies. This experience shows that for a more widely spread concern like malnutrition which affects some 200 million children; there is a need to establish suitable institutional mechanisms. Such is the experience of mobilization of women too which has had a phenomenal success in AP through the VELUGU project under which over 8 million women are organized and have a turn over of nearly Rs. 6500 crores. The women, mostly illiterate, appoint accountants, program managers etc to help administers a host of activities like - micro-credit; Mid Day Meals and SNP under the

³ Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health Govt. of India and Director General National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO)

ICDS, health insurance, marketing of farm produce etc. Such social mobilization requires appropriate institutional mechanism to give direction and focus to the achievement of the laid down objectives.

Not only should there be a suitable institutional mechanism to ensure delivery but also oversight by civil society organizations such as OMBUDSMEN to ensure the enforcement of the rights of the beneficiaries. In NACO we are thinking of creating OMBUDSMEN.

Ms. Rewa Nayyar⁴

The then Prime Minister Mr. Vajpayee had announced a National Nutrition Mission (NNM) to focus on removal of malnutrition. That National Nutrition Mission was to be chaired by the Prime Minister with the state Chief Ministers as its members. But unfortunately, more than five years have passed and there has not been a single meeting despite the fact that all the preparatory work like the preparation of the agenda and other details had been worked out. What was lacking was leadership and commitment. Women in Panchayats must play an important role. Now that we are moving into the election year we must use it to put pressure, to provide services, on those who come to get elected people

The Integrate Child Development Scheme was not just about providing food, it was also about mother and child. Support to the pregnant women. Home visits. Communications and sharing of experience, counseling of mother was at the core of the programme. There is an urgent need for expansion of the programme. Only 6 Crore children out of 16 Crore children are registered under the Anganwadi programme.

Mr. K. Ashok Rao⁵

The Hon'ble Supreme Court's orders are very explicit

- That cooked food must be served to the child and
- That decentralized micro and small enterprises of local women and community organizations should be the service providers.

Any process of cooking transforms raw material into a finished product by adding value. This makes it an enterprise - a micro enterprise. But the Government does not consider the women's self-help groups or Mahila Mandals working in the area of preparation of Mid Day Meals or supplementary nutrition under ICDS as micro enterprises and therefore they do not get the benefits given to micro-enterprises or funds from the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh. It makes no sense to argue that if a self help group or a co-operative of women or village Panchayat produces soap, shoes or even processed food like papad, achar and cakes would be considered an enterprise, but if it produces cooked food under the Mid-Day or ICDS it would not be entitled to the status of a micro enterprise.

⁴ Former, Secretary Women and Child Development Govt. of India

⁵ General Secretary, Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute New Delhi

The second schedule (rule 3) –of the allocation of business of the Government of India that specifies the subjects amongst the various departments has no mention of either Mid Day Meals or the ICDS. The 'Mid Day Meals ' has to be read into the entry elementary education. That a programme with a financial outlay of about Rs. 7000 Crores (Rs. Seven Thousand Crores) does not merit even a separate mention speaks volumes through its omission.

Two Ministries - the Human Resource Development and the Women and Child Development control the two schemes that have a budget outlay of Rs. 12,000 Crores. In reality the two Ministries are more like funding agencies but without any co-ordination between themselves and it is the service provider that actually links the two schemes. Under Mid Day Meals scheme rice and wheat are provided free and in the ICDS scheme the service provider is paid for providing rice and wheat. Due to lack of co-ordination there is no mechanism to investigate if the rice and wheat provided free under the Mid-Day Meals scheme is being used by the common service provider in the ICDS scheme

The systems, for the Mid Day Meals and ICDS, that are followed today are similar to what is meant for any Government procurement be it civil works or supply of equipment or services, complete with the expression of interest, two part tender, security deposits and payment as the Government may so please. (For example, in one of the states studied by the author the service providers for ICDS have not been paid since Oct 2008. Can any self help group provide the Government a supplier's credit of about 140 days, or a bank guarantee equivalent to three months billing to get a start up advance?)

An important concern is that neither the Government nor the Hon'ble Supreme Court has defined who is a contractor. Does the word "contractor" mean only petty contractor and not corporates or the trusts floated and controlled by the corporates. Akshay Parta providing 8.3 lakh Mid Day Meals (at a conversion cost of Rs 2.50 per meal and 200 days a year this is an enterprise with a turnover of more than Rs. 42 Crores per year and Naandi Foundation that provides mid-day to more than a thousand government schools in Andhra Pradesh and about a thousand in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Are these organizations contractors?

The Union Minister for Women and Child Development is quoted *"But, still there are some gaps, which could be filled through the participation of other stakeholders of the society, especially private industry."* This statement has to be read with that of the official of the Asian Development Bank Ms. Christine Wallich from the Asian Development Bank makes matters clear: *"The private sector has been the vehicle for improving the quality of widely consumed foods in the industrialized countries, with the public sector creating a fair and transparent regulatory frame. Unless there is an enabling environment for the private sector to improve dietary quality through market-based solutions, the problem will persist and place a chronic drag on economic growth. The key is to create an environment in which private companies can see the economic potential of food fortification programs and capture some of the vast benefits their participation helps create.The international framework is equally important. What do the codes of international business practice and the new rules of trade under the WTO*

mean to the food producer and consumer in today's global marketplace?" and the translation of this understanding by the World Bank that along with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) has launched a Public-Private Partnership to improve nutrition in Developing Countries under the banner of Business Alliance for Food Fortification (BAFF). **The first co-chairs of the BAFF are Coca-Cola, Danone and Unilever.** The issue is not the merits or demerits of fortification. but the apprehension that once cooked food is replaced by processed food, the Hon'ble Supreme Court's orders effectively nullified and the Government funding increased (to become compatible with the cost and profits of the multinationals), the entire "feeding the child" programme could become a market for the MNCs and their Indian affiliates and partners.

If the Hon'ble Supreme Court's orders are to be translated to ensure that "*garib ki joru, garib ke bachai ko khilayi*" (the poor child be fed by the poor man's wife) is the paradigm for food processing under the feed the child programmes, as opposed to commercializing then it is essential that specific legislation be enacted. The legislation should be backed with providing the women and community enterprises with an institutional- physical, training and financial infrastructure. The architecture of the legislation should be such that not only are there enabling clauses and penal clauses but also an appellant mechanism that would enable the disenfranchised beneficiaries to seek redressal and punishment for being short changed. A comparison would illustrate the urgency and need for institutionalization. In order to address the concerns for 2 lakh AIDS patients (or giving to international pressure and funding conditions) the Government of India has set up an organization called National Aids Control Organisations. Surely then, 46 % of children who are malnourished and 40% of those children who enroll in the primary school and drop out before class X, merit a dedicated administrative mechanism.

Mr. Viraj Patnaik⁶

In 2004, the Supreme Court banned contractors from supplying food to Anganwadis under ICDS, but barely six states complied. The ruling came in the right-to-food case filed by the activist group People's Union for Civil Liberties in 2001. Chief Secretaries of several states have appeared before the court for violation of the law. Uttar Pradesh invited tenders for contracts after the 2004 order and the contracts extend up to 2010. On December 13, 2006, the apex court ordered Chief Secretaries of States and Union Territories to submit affidavits giving details of the steps taken towards complying with its 2004 orders. It also told Chief Secretaries to give a timeframe within which decentralization of the supply of food under Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) would be completed.

Until 2006 the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) of ICDS was completely state-funded, and each state's secretary to the Department of Women and Child Development would invite tenders for contracts to procure and supply food, especially for younger children. The fact that these contracts are often sizeable—ranging between Rs 25 Crore and Rs 250 Crore—makes them prone to corruption. Over time tenders for

⁶ Principal Advisor to the Office of the Food Commissioners appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court

these contracts have been drawn to favour key players (contractors) and irregularities remain the norm rather than the exception,

Nine states and union territories still used private traders. Some states have come up with clever ways of bypassing court orders. Chhattisgarh calls its contractors “manufacturers” and Maharashtra, while ordering removal of contractors and handing over of SNP to Mahila Mandals and self-help groups, inserted a clause allowing cooperative federations to supply in areas where such organizations were not present. Since federations source all the supplies through private traders, this allowed contractors a back door entry to the ICDS system.

In September last year, food commissioners Mr. N.C. Saxena and Mr. Harsh Mander wrote to the prime minister that the “entire feeding programme was riddled with corruption and leakages since the supply of food, the ready to eat food powders, had passed into the hands of private contractors. Not only were these calorifically inadequate and culturally inappropriate, most of the time they never even reached the beneficiaries”.

Ms. Renuka Chowdhury, Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development, is very keen on public-private partnership. Public-private partnership will only increase contractors’ role. Contractor Raj does not allow for monitoring to be decentralized or for the community or panchayats to exercise any control whatsoever on the nature and quality of food given at the Anganwadi, or even whether it reached the centre at all.

For quite some time the Ministry of Women and Child Development has been pushing for ‘ready-to-eat’ packaged food. It was very mischievous of the ministry to ask for ‘home-cooked food’ to contain the exact micronutrient specified. The ministry knows it wouldn’t be possible to maintain the minute specifications in cooked meal and the recourse would be ‘ready-to-eat’ food.

The Women and Child Development minister, however, seems to be pulling all strings possible to introduce centrally procured packaged food. The Ministry has commissioned a survey of Anganwadis providing cooked to study the scheme’s functioning. According to sources involved in the monitoring of the ICDS, the survey is being conducted to give credence to the claims that the hot cooked meal has failed to address malnutrition.

In March 2007, the Ministry had submitted an affidavit in the Supreme Court questioning the logic of decentralizing the procurement of food grain and banning contractors, wholesalers and manufacturers. The judgement in the right-to-food case was not going in the ministry’s favor so in November last year, the ministry took away the ICDS case from additional solicitor general Mr. Mohan Parasharan — who was till then handling all the nine food schemes under the supreme court’s purview — and gave it to Vikas Singh.

Mr. Shiv Kumar⁷

The Supplementary Nutrition and Mid Day Meals programmes are more than feeding the child, they are the rights of the child. Merely because the Government has so far failed to

⁷ Consultant UNICEF

universalize the schemes the right does not get diluted. There is a strong case for a legislative framework to enforce the right.

Mr. Vijay Panjwani⁸

It would be desirable to have legislation for enforcing the right and regulating the "feeding the child" but legislation is a time consuming and long drawn process. The enforcement of the rights need not wait for legislation the same effect can be obtained by notifications issued by the executive by way of subordinate legislation. The orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court should be given a firm base to enable effective operationalisation.

Dr. Satinder Bajaj⁹

Delivery of services is the weakest link of the ICDS program. This has been brought out in nearly all the evaluations. Delivery of services is an exercise of management, it is important therefore to train ICDS functionaries in managing their resource. It is important also to converge the resources of similar health, and development projects with personnel of these projects receiving training to work in tandem. The food service is not only a feeding program, it was planned to work alongside health and nutrition education which is one of the six services of the ICDS. NIPCCD is the technical arm of the ministry of social welfare; it has the entire infrastructure to train and guide the programme.

Ms. Shalini Prasad¹⁰

Mid Day Meals as incentive to prevent school dropouts and increase attendance in schools need to be examined seriously. For example there are problems with the timing of the meal since many children have only two in twenty four hours and that forces them to stay hungry in the morning till the Mid Day Meals . It has also been noticed that after the meal children 25 % of the children tend to leave the schools thereby diluting the impact of the Mid Day Meals in improving school attendance. Another issue that deserves attention is the cultural eating patterns like for example people of Bihar prefer Satu to say rice.

Mr. Arvind Suri¹¹

The example of *Mithanins* of Chattisgarh is commendable. It is an effort to mobilize the community for the purpose of both implementation and monitoring of Mid Day Meals. *Mithanins* are volunteers based in village/ habitation levels. The involvement of *Mithanins* have also contributed to reduction of teacher absenteeism and misbehavior of teachers in the schools The state health resources center (SHRC) in collaboration with the State Government provides the training not only in areas of prevention and promotive aspects of health and nutrition but also in implementing and monitoring ICDS and Mid Day Meals schemes.

⁸ Advocate Delhi High Court.

⁹ Vice Chancellor EIILM (Eastern Institute for Integrated Learning in Management University, Sikkim)

¹⁰ Secretary, National Commission on Child Rights

¹¹ Director Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

Ms. Tejmeet Rakhi¹²

There is a relationship between the amount paid towards conversion charges and the quality. There was a strong case for the conversion charges to be increased. The quality of wheat and rice grain being supplied under the Mid Day Meals was so bad that there was 24 % wastage. When rice is of poor quality the cooked food becomes lumpy or sticky. It is important to enforce quality control on the grain being supplied.

IV Case Studies

Maharashtra: Mr. Ujjwal Uke¹³

There are 451 projects in Maharashtra out of which 297 projects are in rural areas, 66 projects are in tribal areas and 88 projects are in urban slums. There are 75693 AWCs functioning in the state.

The fundamental change came with the change in perspective in the administration in the treatment of supplementary nutrition provision to the beneficiaries from - a Dole to a Right. Consequently, a slogan was coined “*providing nutrition with love & affection to small children*” and the concept of .Aapli Anganwadi (our Anganwadi) was introduced.

In keeping with the letter and spirit of the Hon’ble Supreme Court orders, the entire scheme in urban, rural and tribal areas is strictly based on the service providers being women’s groups (Mahila Mandals) or Self- Help Groups of women. The benefits observed as a result of this strategy are

1. Children get hot and fresh food.
2. Rate of per child is fixed so that competition of rate is not there. Before this, contractors were filing very low rates due to competition and used to supply less quantity and poor quality. That is avoided in this system.
3. Now District Level Committee can change the recipe any time as per local availability of food and food habits of local beneficiaries.
4. This system does not require any deposit money.
5. Local women participate in this, and they provide food to their local children.
6. Money reaches the village level and circulates, boosting the economy and women’s empowerment.
7. Leakages are reduced.

The system of selection is as given below

- All AWCs from Rural / Tribal / Urban projects should be supplied Supplementary Nutrition by SHG / MM.
- No tenders or contracts.
- In Rural / Tribal areas, SHGs should be selected by the Gramsabha.
- In Urban areas applications to be invited from SHG/MMs.
- Wherever the number of MM / SHG is less than AWCs, maximum 5 AWCs should be given to one MM / SHG. In Urban areas, the AWCs to be equally distributed.
- In Rural & Tribal area preference should be given to SHGs.

¹² Professor DU

¹³ Commissioner ICDS, Govt. of Maharashtra

- Fresh allotments to be made after one year.
- Districtwise Data showing monthly progress of SHGs supplying Supplementary Nutrition to AWCs was posted on the ICDS website.

Important innovations made in Maharashtra are

- A systematic training programme of sensitization particularly of the CDPOs;
- Kitchen addresses placed on website to improve transparency
- Mothers' Committee formed for each Anganwadi to check the quantity and quality of food. Committee had a mother of 0-3 yr, one of 3-6 yr, a pregnant lady, a lactating lady, one SC lady, one ST lady, a lady school teacher. Payment of SN bill to be made on the satisfactory report of Mothers committee. Mothers Committee report is to be attached to the bill for payment.
- Communication was tightened
- Circulars issued to ensure that sub-contracting is avoided, and genuine women groups provide the food rather than bogus fronts of contractors.
- All Chief Executive Officers of Zilla Parishads were told to implement the rules. in toto. In Urban areas, Collectors were made committee heads with menu decentralisation. In the ICDS Commissionerate, one Dy. Commissioner was allotted one Division to monitor the implementation.

As reported from several other states, the Contractor lobby opposed this policy. Last year they filed two writ petitions in Mumbai High Court. This year again, the contractors masquerading as Mahila Mandals have filed three writ petitions in Mumbai High Court, one in Nagpur bench and one in Aurangabad bench. Commissionerate has strongly opposed to this petitions. All of them except the Aurangabad writ petitions have been dismissed by the Hon'ble Courts.

Delhi Ms. Sunita Bhasin¹⁴

The final scheme that the Govt. of Delhi formulated envisages that contracts will be awarded to NPOs. The food processing and distribution system established by the NPOs would in 27 months be transferred to SHGs which would then "take over" from the partner NPO. This is to be achieved through four stages:

Stage 1: NPOs shall procure, prepare, transport and deliver to Anganwadis the supplementary nutrition items as prescribed. Simultaneously they would organize and train SHGs, through master trainers, for a period of three months. The training would include group cohesiveness, conducting weekly meetings, recording minutes, keeping accounts, procuring raw material, preparing supplementary nutrition and maintain quality.

Stage 2: The NPO shall continue to procure and prepare the supplementary nutrition with the assistance of the SHG and the SHG will transport and distribute. The NPO will also help the SHG in identifying the sites from which, SHGs will operate.

¹⁴ Director, Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute, Delhi

Stage 3: SHG will take over the jobs of raw material procurement and preparation of supplementary nutrition and the NPO will be responsible for the distribution to the Anganwadi centers.

Stage 4 The SHG will take over the entire job of procurement, preparation, transportation and distribution of supplementary nutrition items.

The Government's scheme envisages that once the SHG becomes self sufficient and capable the NPO will withdraw smoothly and in a planned way and thereafter the SHG will partner with the Government.

The SHG is envisaged to be of a size between 10 to 15 members with only one per family preferably from the economically weaker section of society.. They must be from Mahila Mandals associated with Anganwadi centers and the group need not be registered.

The Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute (SSMI) was allotted the area of Jahangirpuri. consisting of about forty five thousand beneficiaries. However the Institute opted to take only about fourteen thousand. The Institute's primary concern is empowerment of women and therefore the management felt that the emphasis of their operations should be to developing a system of women's empowerment that could act as a template. And that the template should be based on the following: components:

1. Set up decentralized kitchens and ensure that the service providers are members of the local community
2. Enhance both the community participation and accountability by ensuring transparency.
3. Create self-help groups centered around the decentralized kitchens.
4. Augment the self-help groups to become enterprises by ensuring that there is economy of scale and the turnover of such self-decentralized SHG do not result in losses or marginal incomes but ensure sustainable operations with growth..

Two kitchens have been set up in typical 25 Sq yd slum house in the resettlement colony. The system design - layout, level of investment, selection of equipment etc. was informed by the criteria

- That a self-help group from low-income families should be able to establish and sustain the effort.
- Recruitment of the staff has been from amongst the residents (some being mothers of the beneficiary children).

In serving about 15,000 beneficiaries SSMI has provided employment to twenty women and seven rickshaw pullers, besides three supervisory staff (and three houses to be increased to four shortly getting rent income). A total of nearly 34 low skilled families get income on an investment of less than Rs. 3.5 lakhs.

If this is extrapolated for the entire National Capital territory the SNP programme of ICDS should create atleast 1000 low skilled jobs It is important to stress women's employment since it creates an empowerment. Also women's employment is the best antidote to malnutrition.

The experience of SSMI has been that the entire work force did not need more than ten days of training in the operational aspects like cooking, transportation and delivery. The supervisory staff is capable of procurement of raw material and keeping accounts. What they cannot do is

- Planning for the future
- Arranging finances
- Obtain credit from the vendors,
- Getting bills passed from the Government and
- Maintain industrial harmony.

These are managerial functions. It is not that the SHG women cannot be trained to discharge them but their class character prevents them from being credit worthy or takes financial risks that are integral to any production process. And finally unlike in rural areas where there are institutions like the panchayat or just a group of elders within urban SHGs there are no conflict resolution mechanisms.

Ms. Sheela, Ms. Babli, Ms. Monica and Ms. Manju Sharma the women working in the SSMI kitchens in Jahangirpuri participated in the discussions. They felt that such decentralized kitchens within the community enabled community participation. For example when some person comes to the kitchen and challenges that carrots were not being regularly put or that the rice was not properly cleaned it was the women living in the neighbourhood of the kitchen who refuted the allegations more vigorously than the employees. In response to a question whether the scheme should be continued they responded that the poor do not have the money to provide their children nutritious food. They pointed out that they would explain to the mothers who came to the kitchen why carrots were important for the eyes. They said the Jahangirpuri model had disproved many apprehensions like the ability of women to cook for mass feeding using large 150 liter vessels producing about 170 Kg in one round. or that women engage in fights amongst themselves or that there is excess absenteeism. The women (complemented by the rickshaw pullers are capable of independently running the enterprise

Uttar Pradesh: Mr. Narendra Kumar¹⁵

In Uttar Pradesh there are 897 projects functioning, 75 in urban areas and 822 in rural area. One lakh, fifty one thousand, four hundred and sixty nine Anganwadis Kendras are functioning. In the year 2007, 270 projects have been decentralized; another 280 would be decentralized in this year and by end 2009 all the 897 will get decentralized. While creating the decentralized kitchens run by women's SHGs the problem of finances has been overcome by providing the SHGs two months advance credit. This financial flexibility has been the basis of the success of the SHGs. In local areas mothers committees have been formed. The lady member of the Panchayat has been made the Chairman of the Committee. The committee includes a member from the SC and Minority communities. Wherever mother committees are active and honest the scheme is functioning very well. The mother committees form the menus. The Chief Development

¹⁵ Dy. Director ICDS Govt. of Uttar Pradesh

Officer (CDO) finalizes the one menu for the whole project area. The wheat is not available in BPL and has to be locally procured and in this poses problem in maintaining uniformity. Like Mid Day Meals even ICDS should be given ration from FCI stocks. In U.P 90 % the Anganwadis have been shifted to primary schools. So far the facilities are not up to the mark. Separate Anganwadis are being set up. Training programmes are designed to sensitize the CDPOs. Like other states U.P. also faced a serious problems created due to the removal of the contractor lobby.

V Discussions

The Anganwadi

The problematic areas, particularly the poor infrastructure for the Anganwadis was highlighted. Ms. Rewa Nayyar pointed out that Anganwadis that do not have toilets, pacca buildings and. Clean drinking water was a major problem. Tamilnadu, due to the sustained political support, had overcome some of these problems and was an excellent example to emulate.. The consensus was that despite all these shortcomings there must be an expansion of Anganwadis to meet the norms laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court

Apprehension was expressed that the feeding programme was diluting the importance of early childhood education and other activities that were the mandate of the Anganwadis. The consensus was that once the decentralized kitchens, run by Self Help Groups and Mahila Mandals consisting of women from within the beneficiary community, were established and stabilized the Anganwadi worker and helper would be free to concentrate on other areas.. There was also consensus that a second worker was required in Anganwadis to take care of pre school education.

Mr. Ashok Rao pointed out that there were several models available of decentralized kitchens in urban areas - one-woman kitchens for every Anganwadi as in being practiced in Tamilnadu; one kitchen for an average of 5 Anganwadis as in Maharashtra; and the Jahangirpuri model in Dedlhi were two kitchens were serving 116 Anganwadis. It is important to study if there were economies of scale? Mr. Uke responded that in Mumbai the number of kitchens had gone up from 40 to 800 and he felt that water has to find its own level. Ms. Rewa Nayyar pointed out that the idea of the Govt. of NCT of Delhi to give NGOs 27 months to train the women to set up SHGs capable of being independent service providers was a good idea and one needs to wait for the results of this experiment.

Weaning Food

Food safety was one of the concerns expressed about weaning food being made in a decentralized manner. The practice in Maharashtra was Pushtic Ahar that had been designed and developed by the National Institute of Nutrition Hyderabad. Representatives of the Food and Nutrition Board and the office of the Commissioner ICDS or divisional commissioner are conducting a massive training programme. Even the training wing of the Taj Group of Hotels have been involved. Only those SHGs that have undergone training are allowed to make Pushtic Ahar. Also monitoring has changed from quantitative to qualitative feedback.

Breast Feeding

Great stress was laid on the issue of anemia and malnutrition amongst girls and women, particularly lactating mothers. Breast-feeding was the safest and most nutritious feed for a child and its practice as well as duration should be encouraged. Anganwadi should be the agent of change. For this there was a need for specialized and focused training.

ASHA

There is no need to establish a strong institutional linkage between programmes of “feeding the child”, early education and health. Ms. Radha pointed out that in Chattisgarh health programmes have improved due to ASHA. Mr. Uke pointed out that in Maharashtra ASHA was adopted only in tribal areas. Mr. Viraj Patnaik said ASHA is different from *Mithanins* programme. Hamlet level workers are required. *Mithanins* was not a duplication of Anganwadi workers.

VI Consensus

1. That the “Feeding the Child Programmes” – Mid Day Meals and Supplementary Nutrition are not welfare activities of the Government but were in the nature of the State guaranteeing a right of the child as well as fulfilling its obligations under the various international treaties relating to Child Rights and universalisation of primary education.
2. That there is a need for close coordination between the various programmes through institutional and legal mechanisms.
3. There should be an integrated and holistic approach towards child feeding programmes, employment of women and early elementary and primary education.
4. That there should be strict adherence in letter and spirit for the implementation of the orders of the Hon’ble Supreme Court. The orders of the court should be incorporated into appropriate statutes.
5. Cooking of food must be recognized as micro enterprises of women and local communities. They should be given the administrative, training and financial support given to such enterprises.

VII List of Papers presented¹⁶

1. Towards institutionalizing ‘feeding the child’ – K. Ashok Rao
2. Reducing Malnutrition in India – N.C.Saxena
3. Decentralised food processing for supplementary nutrition under the ICDS – some concerns – K. Ashok Rao & Sunita Bhasin.
4. Note on Community Mobilisation: Mithanins of Chattisgarh – Dept. of School Education and Literacy, MDM Division, Ministry of HRD Govt. of India
5. Note on use of technology in decentralized kitchens – SSMI
6. Note on Child Nutrition and Provision of Food Bill 2008, a concept – SSMI

¹⁶ Those interested in obtaining a copy may please write to Ms. Sunita Bhasin Director SSMI, Road No 31 East Avenue Punjabi Bagh (East) New Delhi 110026 or email to ssmisunita@gmail.com.