

NOTE ON MID-DAY MEALS

The mid-day meal mandate

"A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme funded mainly by the central government, will be introduced in primary and secondary schools. An appropriate mechanism for quality checks will also set up."

- Common minimum programme of the UPA government

"All such States and Union Territories who have not fully complied with the order dated 28th November, 2001 shall comply with the said directions fully in respect of the entire State/Union Territory, preferably, on the re-opening of the primary schools after a long vacation of 2004 and, in any case, not later than 1st September, 2004."

"The Central Government shall make provisions for construction of kitchen sheds and shall also allocate funds to meet with the conversion costs of food-grains into cooked mid-day meals. It shall also periodically monitor the low take off of the food-grains."

- Supreme Court of India (an order dated 20 April 2004)

Central finances for the mid-day meal programme (2004-05)¹

- * Rs. 1, 675 budget allocation, to continue the free provision of foodgrain for MDMs.
- * A proposal for GOI support to cooked mid-day meals has been drawn up by the MoHRD. This involves assistance for cooking costs up to Class 5 from 1 September 2004, and extension to Class 8 from 2 October 2004. Estimated cost: Rs 2,600 crores over and above the resources already available to the Ministry.
- * Rs 1,232 tentatively allocated by Planning Commission from 'CMP Additionality'.
- * Education Cess: ??? (The MoHRD claims that this is paid to the Consolidated Fund of GOI and has effectively become general budget support.)
- * Further limited funds available (e.g. to build cooking sheds) under centrally-sponsored schemes such as SGRY and PMGY.

Recommendations for immediate action

- * Free grain for mid-day meals from Government of India should be continued – no "transfer to states" should be permitted.
- * Financial support to ensure that all states meet the conversion cost norm of Rs. 2 per child per day. The new norm should be met latest by 2 October 2004 by all states. Government of India should facilitate the process of meeting this norm by providing whatever additional finances are required for each state to meet this norm. i.e. if a state is currently providing Rs. 1.25 per child per day, GoI should provide the extra Re. 0.75 required to meet the two-rupee norm. From 2005-06 onwards, the two-rupee should

¹ As per discussion with Shri. K M Acharya (Ministry of Human Resource Development), 13 August 2004 and Prof. Abhijit Sen, Member Planning Commission.

apply throughout the country with 50-50 sharing between GOI and States. Estimated cost for 2004-5: Rs 1,400 crores.

- * Provide a matching contribution for building critical infrastructure for mid-day meals at the school level. 75 % of the contribution should be by Government of India and 25 % by the State governments. Estimated cost: Rs 1,200 crores.

Recommendations for medium-term

- * Initiate a national programme of micronutrient supplementation in mid-day meals fully funded by Government of India.
- * Initiate a programme of special nutrition enhancement for all schools located in Dalit and Tribal habitations.
- Form/activate National Nutrition Mission (?).
- Expert group to thoroughly review the "National Programme of Nutritional Support for Primary Education" in the light of SC orders and recent experiences. To formulate minimum quality norms, monitoring arrangements, detailed guidelines, etc.