

URGENT ACTION



India: right to food of children still not implemented in Uttar Pradesh

India 13.07.2010

Despite recommendations from local authorities Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is still not implemented in village Jalapur of Uttar Pradesh thereby threatening the right to food of children and women in the village. ICDS programmes address the health and nutrition needs of children under the age of six and also extend to adolescent girls, pregnant women and nursing mothers. ICDS is provided through a network of centers called "Anganwadis" (AWC). It is mandatory for the state to provide AWC for every settlement with forty children. However, in Jalapur where 300 families reside, including 100 children, the state has failed to establish AWC, thereby making children and women susceptible to hunger and under nourishment.

CALL TO ACTION

An international action is urgently needed to ensure that the state provides ICDS in Jalapur so that children and women can receive supplementary nutrition and health care. Please write polite letters to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, requesting her to meet the obligations under the human right to adequate food.

BACKGROUND

In India, 16 percent of the population is below six years of age and every second child is underweight. In Uttar Pradesh, according to the Sample Registration Service (SRS) 47 percent of the children under 3 are underweight. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), established in India in 1975, is the major national program addressing the health and nutritional needs of children under the age of six. It seeks to provide infants and young children with an integrated package of services, including supplementary nutrition, health care and pre-school education. Since the needs of a child cannot be addressed in isolation from those of his or her mother, the program also extends to adolescent girls, pregnant women and nursing mothers. ICDS services are provided through a vast network of ICDS centers, better known as "Anganwadis" (AWC). It is mandatory for the state government to provide an AWC to every settlement with 40 children. The supplementary nutrition currently provided is cereal based and does not take into consideration the protein and vitamin requirements of the children and young women. However, the Supplementary Nutrition Programme, rendered under the ICDS, is one of its prime services that provide nutritious food to the children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Priority is given to the families living below the poverty line.

Although the ICDS scheme has been working for over 30 years, the number of malnourished children is still very high. In many settlements, particularly slums or rural areas, children are still excluded from the benefits of the scheme. The situation in Jalapur village is a case in point. The village of Jalapur is located in Lakhimpur district in Uttar Pradesh and the home to around 300 families. Most of them belong to the Dalit caste. The main source of food for the locals is rice that lacks a variety of vitamins or proteins. There are around 100 children in the village, but there is no AWC or school despite the fact that it is mandatory for the state government to set up an AWC for each settlement with at least 40 children. FIAN has already intervened in this case in 2009 with UIND 0912, and as a result the local authorities have recommended that AWC be set up in Jalapur. But district and state authority have not taken any decision till now in this regard. Given the high level of undernutrition the implementation of such social programmes is necessary - but insufficient to deal with the problem of exclusion of Dalits and other sectors of Indian society from resources and income. Economic policies need to be geared towards the needs of these families such as agrarian reforms and mass generation of suitable self- or wage-employment.

India is a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore it is duty bound under international law to fulfill its people's right to food. By failing to effectively implement the ICDS and an AWC in the village of Jalalpur, the state of Uttar Pradesh, and hence India, violates the right to food and breaches its international obligations under the Covenant. As a consequence children and women there are denied nutritional and health benefits they are entitled to. Lack of nutritional benefits makes them susceptible to hunger and under nourishment and prone to illnesses.

ADDRESSES

Ms. Mayavati
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Smt. Krishna Tirath
Minister of State The Ministry of Women and
Child Development

Mr. Chandra Prakash
Director Child Development and Nutrition

TRANSLATION OF THE MODELL LETTER**END OF ACTION****12 of September, 2010** 

Please inform **FIAN International**
about any response you receive to your
faxes and letters.

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Hon'ble Chief Minister,

It was recently brought to my attention that Jalalpur village in Uttar Pradesh does not have Anganwadi centers (AWC), and the Integrated Child Development Services are not implemented. Although it is mandatory to have an AWC in settlements with 40 children, an AWC has yet to be established for the 100 children in Jalalpur. The ICDS are implemented through AWC, which is a major national program that addresses the health and nutrition needs of children under the age of six. It seeks to provide infants and young children with proper nutrition and health care. Since the needs of a child cannot be addressed in isolation from those of his or her mother, the program also extends to adolescent girls, pregnant women, and nursing mothers.

Over the past few years, the inhabitants of Jalalpur have begun to organize and with the help of the local community based organizations and human rights organisations they wrote a letter to local authorities in October 2008. The local authorities had called for the implementation of ICDS and for an AWC in Jalalpur. However, till date no steps have been taken by the state authorities to implement ICDS and establish AWC in Jalalpur.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, India and therefore Uttar Pradesh, is duty-bound under international law to fulfill the children's and women's right to adequate food. Under UN General Comment 12 (1999), states are obliged to provide the right directly for persons unable to fend for themselves for reasons beyond their control, such as children. As a person working internationally for the implementation of the economic, social, and cultural rights, I would like to ask you to,

1. Take immediate steps to implement ICDS in Jalalpur and establish an AWC.
2. Ensure access to ICDS for all children under six and for all eligible mothers.
3. Provide hot cooked nutritious meals instead of only cereal based supplementary nutrition.
4. Take measures to enhance the income generation by the affected family through measures like agrarian reform, and mass oriented employment policies.

Please keep me informed of the action you plan to take in this regard.

Sincerely,