



Right to Food Campaign

(Secretariat)

24, Block A, Adhchini, Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi – 110017, India

6th August, 2020

Kind attention

Ms. Smriti Zubin Irani

Hon'ble Minister for Women & Child Development

Subject: Restarting hot cooked meals and other services under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

Respected Madam,

On behalf of the Right to Food campaign, we write this letter to express our concerns and grievances about the denial of the right to food of women and children during this pandemic. While most services for them have been shut down since March, we believe it is time to urgently revive these as essential services.

To put things into perspective, we looked at the data submitted by the MWCD in response to the unstarred question number 2669 on 6th March, 2020. The response noted that the anganwadi services operate through a network of 7075 fully operational projects and 13.79 lakh AWCs, as on 30.09.2019. These services cater to 7.96 crore beneficiaries of which 6.40 crore are children under six years of age (3.6 crore children from 6 months - 3 years, and 2.7 crore children from 3 years to 6 years) and 1.56 crore are pregnant women and lactating mothers. At the moment, these are the very least of the staggering figures of denial of right to food of women and children. Without cooked meals in both schools and anganwadis, the numbers only skyrocket further.

The extended lockdown periods owing to the pandemic had resulted in temporary closure of anganwadis and led to a discontinuation of hot cooked meals, take home rations and immunisation support, counselling, growth monitoring, and so on. The discontinuation of growth monitoring services in this extraordinary time of hunger is depriving a high number of malnourished children from receiving the extra provision of SNP through ICDS. We have received

reports from across the country that the supplementary nutrition provided through ICDS, which was supposed to continue during the lockdown through home delivery, is not being delivered in most places.

Maternity entitlements under the PMMVY have been disturbingly disrupted. Additionally, the repeated announcements of relief packages - both at the national and state levels - too, have not included the specific schemes and programmes for women and children to be a priority and thereby added to the systemic denials and exclusions.

While the nation is now slowly stepping into the unlock phases of the pandemic management, it is these crucial food, nutrition, and health support mechanisms for women and children that still remain abysmally affected. It must be emphasised that the ICDS is, after all, a pivotal programme to ascertain the rights and ensure the wellbeing of women and children through state-sponsored mechanisms. In that vein, given the high burden of malnutrition and maternal and child mortality in India, **we urge the MWCD to take immediate cognisance and ensure proper implementation of the Integrated Child Development Services across all states.**

In addition, we strongly recommend:

1. Universal and unconditional application - Hot cooked meals, and take-home rations must be regularised and made available for all enrolled children, without any added conditionalities whatsoever. Depending on local conditions arrangements can be made for spot-feeding or home delivery.
2. Proper Implementation – Ensure urgent decentralised grievance redressal mechanisms, monitoring framework and penalties for non-implementation so that those who are not getting their entitlements can register their complaints and get a timely response.
3. Protection for the frontline workers - It is of paramount importance to provide relevant PPE and safety gears to the frontline workers like the AWW, AWH, ASHA, ANMs and mid-day meal cooks. They must be encouraged in their endeavors in these distressing times. Plus, it is high time that they are provided with proper health insurance to effectively deal with the pandemic.
4. SNP for food security - Due to the economic slowdown being faced because of the pandemic as well as the migrant crisis, there is widespread hunger being reported from across the country. In such circumstances, it is not enough to just provide the usual supplementary nutrition rather more substantial nutrition needs to be provided for the groups that are covered under the ICDS, including pregnant and lactating mothers, children under six and adolescent girls. We suggest that a comprehensive package of cooked food and dry rations including cereals, pulses, oil and eggs be provided through the period of the pandemic.
5. Eggs for children - Eggs are a crucial source of protein as well as micronutrients, and they go a long way in improving the diets of children. The need to add eggs in hot cooked meals and take home rations has only become all the more pressing in these times.

6. Anti-discrimination provisions – The lockdown periods have proven to be a hotbed for myriad forms of discriminations on the basis of caste, class, ethnicity, and religion. There must be an immediate halt to this, and all children must be able to access their due meals.

We request you to consider these suggestions at the earliest and allow a timely implementation of the same. We would be glad to discuss this further with you, as and when needed.

Sincerely,

(Aysha and Gangaram Paikra)

On behalf of Steering Committee, Right to Food Campaign

Annexure
State wise list of ICDS, Anganwadi Centers and Beneficiaries

S.No	State/Uts	No. of ICDS Projects		No. of Anganwadi Centres		Beneficiaries of Supplementary Nutrition					Beneficiaries of Pre-school Education		
		Sanctioned	Operational	Sanctioned	Operational	Children (6 months - 3 years)	Children (3 - 6 years)	Total Children (6 months - 6 years)	Pregnant & lactating Mothers (P&LM)	Total Beneficiaries (Children 6 mo-6 years plus P&LM)	Boys (3 - 6 years)	Girls (3 - 6 years)	Total (3 - 6 years)
1	Andhra Pradesh	257	257	55607	55607	1409492	747200	2156692	636873	2793565	377298	378464	755762
2	Telangana	149	149	35700	35634	878795	440477	1319272	341212	1660484	294152	293408	587560
3	Arunachal Pradesh	98	98	6225	6225	44381	42739	87120	87120	174240	44381	42739	87120
4	Assam	231	231	62153	62153	957147	1020459	1977606	224169	2201775	511118	509341	1020459
5	Bihar	544	544	115009	105383	3141208	2963208	6104416	1375960	7480376	1777924	1185284	2963208
6	Chhattisgarh	220	220	52474	51414	926760	683602	1610362	383386	1993748	335762	347840	683602
7	Goa	11	11	1262	1262	35001	15360	50361	14601	64962	7631	7729	15360
8	Gujarat	336	336	53029	53029	1535885	1225072	2760957	664164	3425121	580371	569976	1150347
9	Haryana	148	148	25962	25962	563926	238712	802638	257481	1060119	119286	119426	238712
10	Himachal Pradesh	78	78	18925	18925	245765	122721	368486	95743	464229	39084	40033	79117
11	Jammu & Kashmir	141	141	31938	29599	361036	256726	617762	156894	774656	140140	134211	274351
12	Jharkhand	224	224	38432	38432	337360	326326	663686	136599	800285	442895	443232	886127
13	Karnataka	204	204	65911	65911	2141250	1339323	3480573	619672	4100245	707102	705454	1412556
14	Kerala	258	258	33318	33244	429204	368065	797269	237780	1035049	189213	178852	368065
15	Madhya Pradesh	453	453	97135	97135	3235719	2948939	6184658	1407225	7591883	1618173	1619142	3237315
16	Maharashtra	553	553	110486	110219	2519175	2293022	4812197	925791	5737988	1015946	994126	2010072
17	Manipur	43	43	11510	11510	149253	183272	332525	54954	387479	92162	90164	182326
18	Meghalaya	41	41	5896	5896	207245	243315	450560	74829	525389	96195	95278	191473

19	Mizoram	27	27	2244	2244	49123	35001	84124	20922	105046	22538	22545	45083
20	Nagaland	60	60	3980	3980	142072	145271	287343	50953	338296	73030	71222	144252
21	Odisha	338	338	74154	72587	1627011	1369265	2996276	666386	3662662	695120	693518	1388638
22	Punjab	155	155	27314	27291	424036	239237	663273	183167	846440	120269	117243	237512
23	Rajasthan	304	304	62010	61974	1632935	992631	2625566	830313	3455879	501380	490935	992315
24	Sikkim	13	13	1308	1308	9145	8093	17238	4126	21364	4164	3926	8090
25	Tamil Nadu	434	434	54439	54439	1813216	636819	2450035	715622	3165657	565779	548741	1114520

26	Tripura	56	56	10145	9911	147470	152174	299644	61069	360713	86523	83388	169911
27	Uttar Pradesh	897	897	190145	187997	8285267	5150829	13436096	3835154	17271250	2721650	2581307	5302957
28	Uttarakhand	105	105	20067	20067	375884	151623	527507	145027	672534	100902	102074	202976
29	West Bengal	576	576	119481	116382	2851673	2671982	5523655	1212400	6736055	1298763	1282497	2581260
30	A & N Islands	5	5	720	720	7454	3371	10825	3664	14489	1674	1663	3337
31	Chandigarh**	3	3	450	450	21409	27010	48419	6736	55155	14113	12897	27010
32	Delhi*	95	95	10897	10897	304604	118954	423558	113938	537496	58809	60147	118956
33	Dadra & N Haveli	2	2	302	302	8815	11240	20055	6960	27015	5572	5668	11240
34	Daman & Diu	2	2	107	107	2492	1750	4242	3369	7611	874	883	1757
35	Lakshadweep	9	9	107	107	2622	799	3421	1101	4522	417	382	799
36	Puducherry	5	5	855	855	23568	682	24250	9450	33700	347	335	682
All India		7075	7075	1399697 [1400000 sanction ed. by GOI]	1379158	36847398	27175269	64022667	15564810	79587477	14660757	13834070	28494827

Based on State/UTs level consolidated report.

*253 AWCs surrendered by NCT of Delhi accepted in MWCD vide order no11-33/2015-CD-I Dated 16 November 2018.

** 50 AWCs surrendered by Chandigarh Administration accepted in MWCD vide order no.11-33/2015-CD dated 21 Dec., 2018