

## MID-DAY MEAL FACTSHEET

1. Undernutrition levels in India are among the highest in the world. About half of all children are estimated to be undernourished, and one third of all babies are born with a low "birthweight".
2. In 1995, the central government introduced the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education. Under this programme, primary school children were supposed to receive 3 kgs of grain per month for free. Cooked mid-day meals were to be introduced within two years.
3. Five years later, few state governments had introduced cooked mid-day meals. Most were still giving monthly "dry rations" to school children.
4. On 28 November 2001, the Supreme Court ordered all state governments to introduce cooked mid-day meals in all primary schools within 6 months.
5. Today, many state governments are providing cooked mid-day meals in some or all districts: Rajasthan, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, among others. However, some state governments are yet to implement the Supreme Court orders, e.g. Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh.
6. In Uttar Pradesh, the government has shown no interest in mid-day meals so far. The aim of the "Mid-day Meal Campaign" is to build public pressure to ensure that mid-day meals are introduced in all primary schools at the earliest.
7. Mid-day meals are very important because: (a) they boost school attendance; (b) they protect children from hunger; and (c) they help to break caste prejudices, as children learn to sit together and share a meal.
8. A recent study found that girls' school attendance in Barmer district (Rajasthan) had increased by 35 per cent after the introduction of mid-day meals earlier this year.
9. A well-planned mid-day meal programme would cost about Re 1 per child per day to the state government, i.e. around Rs \*\*\* crores per year. The government of Uttar Pradesh claims that this is not affordable. However, it is a matter of priorities. The future of 20 million children is at stake.
10. On 14 November, a public rally will be held in Lucknow to demand the immediate introduction of cooked mid-day meals in all primary schools. Thousands of parents, children and teachers are expected to participate.