

ROTI BHAAT SATYAGRAH

TO DEMAND FOR

A UNIVERSAL PDS

From 1st November 2011 onwards

Right to Food Campaign

A report[#] of the Satyagrah of 15 November 2011

(Special focus on Children's Right to Food)



[#]Prepared by Right to Food Campaign Secretariat and CFAR

Introduction

The Right to Food Campaign launched the Roti Bhaat Satyagrah on 1 November to demand for a universal PDS and other food security measures, towards guaranteeing people of India's access to food. The main demands of the Satyagrahis are –

- A Universal PDS, so that all especially the food insecure, the vulnerable, and the deprived get included.
- Remunerative MSPs and decentralised procurement of rice, wheat and millets that will give farmers a decent income and enhance wage and employment opportunities for the agricultural labourers.
- Removal of poverty ratio based caps in allocation of resources by central government
- Universalisation with quality of ICDS including the provision of nutritious locally prepared food for all children.
- Entitlements including social security pensions for vulnerable persons – the aged, single women, and persons with disabilities, maternity entitlements, and community kitchens in urban areas must be ensured.

Brief of Satyagrah on 1 and 8 November

The Satyagraha made an upbeat start on 1 November with people from NAPM (National Alliance for People's Movements), Uttar Pradesh and representatives from Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar. A press conference was held at Jantar Mantar and the group marched in a "Khali Thali Rally" towards the Parliament striking empty plates with steel spoons. They were stopped by the police, after which everyone courted arrest and 2 delegations left to submit the signed memorandum - one to PMO and the other to Planning Commission

The second Satyagraha took place on 8 November, when a 98 member contingent of NTUI, representatives from Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan and women from the jhuggis of Delhi protested at Krishi Bhawan and the Yojana Bhawan demanding a universal PDS and an end to the BPL. Memoranda were submitted to Shri KV Thomas, Food Minister and Shri Abhijit Sen, Member of Planning Commission. On both days the satgrahis courted arrest.

15 November 2011

The Satyagraha Continued with its third round of protest on Tuesday ,15 November 2011. On 15th November, a day after Children's day was celebrated, children's right to food groups took the lead, and, there was special focus towards ensuring food and nutrition security of children and the growing problem of malnutrition.

The Satyagraha consisted of various groups such as Action India, Alwar- Mewar Shiksha Evam Vikas Sansthan, Bhalaswa Lok Shakti Manch, Forces, HAQ:Centre for Child rights, Mahila Pragati Samiti (New Seemapuri), Mobile Crèches, Nav Shristi, Prerna Mahila Samiti, Satark Nagarik Sangathan, Trilokpuri Jagriti Samuh. The protest was led By Anjali Bhardwaj, Devika Singh, Dipa Sinha, Radha Holla and Vandana Prasad.

The group staged a dharna outside Shahstri Bhawan, for about an hour, some of the slogans resonating were





Goddamo mey sarey anaaj
Phir bhi bachche bhookhey
aaj

Desh kaisey aagay barhega
Bachcha jab bhookha rahega

Khali peth Bhare Godaam

Songs and Slogans were followed by a street play performed by Mobile Creches on the dismantling of the PDS in favour of direct cash transfers.



When the delegation comprising of Devika Singh, Dipa Sinha and Vandana Prasad went to meet the minister Krishna Tirath, the minister was absent and so they met Joint Secretary Dr. Shreeranjana who is in charge of ICDS. His main thrust was that they were keen not to have legal entitlements for food and nutrition security for children because they are not ready to fulfill them with the poor support the ICDS currently has. The delegation said that since the act was coming anyway, leaving kids out of it was not helpful in any way. He said he would communicate the memorandum (See Appendix 1) to Ms. Krishna Tirath.

More photos of the event can be accessed at

<http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.305921939420433.84663.100000078896186&type=1&l=b8f3eae919>

**Appendix 1: Memorandum submitted to the Ms. Krishna Tirath (WCD) on 15
November**

Right to Food Campaign (Secretariat)

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To
Ms. Krishna Tirath
Minister for Women and Child Development
Government of India

15th November 2011

Dear Madam,

On behalf of the Right to Food Campaign we write to you with some of our concerns regarding the entitlements for children in the proposed National Food Security Bill (NFSB). We are appalled by the scant regard for children in the draft NFSB that has been put up on the website of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. Not only does this draft do grave injustice to people's food security in general, it does not ascertain the right of children to food security. It appears that the government does not consider the specific issues related to the food security of children or the vast problem of malnutrition among them, to have any significance. Although this government keeps talking about malnutrition as a big problem, words have not come to any action in the last few years. The total allocation for children (who constitute 44% of the population) in the budget is still only about 4% percent of the total expenditure.

In this context, the national food security bill could have played a significant role in at least providing some minimum guarantees for children to have some food security. Alas, it doesn't even do that. Though the draft Bill begins with the laudable objective "...to provide food and nutritional security, in human life cycle approach" this is defeated almost entirely in its definitions and provisions. The 'life cycle' starts at birth, and the recommended 'food' for babies under the age of six months is breast milk alone. How does the Bill support this critical age which forms the foundation of the child's entire physical, cognitive and social development and is also the phase in which malnutrition tends to set in? The provision of maternity entitlements as social support to breast feeding is available for women working in the central government in the

form of maternity leave for 6 months at full pay. By providing for maternity entitlements, the NAC draft recognised this as a critical legal entitlement for over 15 crore women working in the informal sector and the food security of very young children. However, the draft of the Ministry has entirely struck it off.

Similarly, the current legal guarantee of 'hot cooked meals' for children attending anganwadis has been diluted by providing the option of 'Ready to Eat Meals' in this draft which suggests that the Bill is more about creating markets and protecting corporate interests than the interests of children. The requirement that take home rations be "...fortified with micronutrients as per 50% of RDA" (Schedule II) and that "*Meals shall be prepared in accordance with the prevailing Food Laws*" (Schedule II) opens the doors for centralised production and distribution contradicting Supreme Court orders for banning of private contractors and encouraging decentralised production by SHGs, women's groups, panchayats etc.

Other important entitlements related to management of severe malnutrition, nutritional counselling and other programmatic issues requiring legal guarantees have also been wholly omitted. What has been retained is just lip service to some cursory and ill defined entitlements to additional food.

In summary, the draft Bill goes out of its way to minimize the government's responsibilities, restrict children's entitlements, and avoid any accountability. We demand that any Food Bill must lead to total food and nutrition security of ALL children. Specifically, the following must be included in the Bill:

- Universalisation of all services of ICDS for all children, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls. In opening of anganwadi centres, preference should be given to SC/ST habitations to ensure that every Dalit and Adivasi habitation has an ICDS centre. (in accordance with Supreme Court orders)
- Improvement in quality of services provided through ICDS (through improved norms for infrastructure, supplementary nutrition, training and capacity building, provision of second anganwadi worker etc.)
- Prevention of interference of commercial interests through 'packaged' or 'ready to eat' food or 'public private partnerships' in government programmes for child health and nutrition.
- Provisions for management of all forms of malnutrition including additional nutritional supplements, health care and appropriate treatment
- Universal maternity entitlements for at least a period of six months at minimum wages
- Crèche facilities for children of working women

This is the opportunity for the Government of India to fulfill children's right to food, and overcome the scourge of malnutrition which has become a national shame and should have been

an important focus of the Bill. We hope that as the Minister for Women and Child Development you will ensure that a commitment of children's right to food gets reflected in the NFSB.

Yours Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the Right to Food Campaign:

Annie Raja (National Federation for Indian Women), Anuradha Talwar, Gautam Modi and Madhuri Krishnaswamy (*New Trade Union Initiative*), Arun Gupta and Radha Holla (*Breast Feeding Promotion Network of India*), Arundhati Dhuru and Ulka Mahajan (*National Alliance of People's Movements*), Asha Mishra and Vinod Raina (*Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti*), Aruna Roy, Anjali Bharadwaj and Nikhil Dey (*National Campaign for People's Right to Information*), Ashok Bharti (*National Conference of Dalit Organizations*), Colin Gonsalves (*Human Rights Law Network*), G V Ramanjaneyulu (*Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture*), Kavita Srivastava and Binayak Sen (*People's Union for Civil Liberties*), Lali Dhakar, Sarawasti Singh, Shilpa Dey and Radha Raghwal (*National Forum for Single Women's Rights*), Mira Shiva and Vandana Prasad (*Jan Swasthya Abhiyan*), Paul Divakar and Asha Kowtal (*National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights*), Prahlad Ray and Anand Malakar (*Rashtriya Viklang Manch*), Subhash Bhatnagar (*National Campaign Committee for Unorganized Sector workers*), Jean Dreze and V.B Rawat (*Former Support group to the Campaign*), Ritu Priya (JNU)

Representatives of Right to Food (State campaigns):

Veena Shatrugna, M Kodandram and Rama Melkote (Andhra Pradesh), Saito Basumaatary and Sunil Kaul (Assam), Rupesh (Bihar), Gangabhai and Sameer Garg (Chhattisgarh), Pushpa, Dharmender, Ramendra, Yogesh, Vimla and Sarita (Delhi), Sejal Dand and Sumitra Thakkar (Gujarat), Abhay Kumar and Clifton (Karnataka), Balram, Gurjeet Singh and James Herenj (Jharkhand), Sachin Jain (Madhya Pradesh), Mukta Srivastava and Suresh Sawant (Maharashtra), Tarun Bharatiya (Meghalaya), Chingmak Chang (Nagaland) Bidyut Mohanty and Raj Kishore Mishra, Vidhya Das, Manas Ranjan (Orissa), Ashok Khandelwal, Bhanwar Singh and Vijay Lakshmi (Rajasthan), V Suresh (Tamil Nadu), Arundhati Dhuru and Bindu Singh (Uttar Pradesh),

Appendix 2: Press coverage

Activists demand nutrition security for all children

November 15th, 2011 - 10:19 pm ICT by IANS

New Delhi, Nov 15 (IANS) The Right to Food campaign Tuesday charged the draft National Food Security Bill (NFSB) with ignoring the food security needs of children or the growing problem of malnutrition.

The Right to Food campaign activists charged that the draft bill, which is in the public domain, aims to minimise government's responsibilities, restrict children's entitlements and avoid accountability. They have written to union Minister of State for Women and Child Development Krishna Tirath to ensure food and nutrition security of all children.

"Not only does the draft Bill do grave injustice to people's food security in general, it does not ascertain the right of children to food security," said the letter from the Right to Food campaign to Krishna Tirath.

"It appears the government does not consider the specific issues related to the food security of children or the vast problem of malnutrition among them, to have any significance."

According to the campaign activists, the total allocation for children (who constitute 44 percent of the population) in the Budget 2011-12 is still only about four percent of the total expenditure.

They alleged that though the draft food security bill of the National Advisory Council recognised the need for a legal entitlement for over 15 crore women working in the informal sector and the food security of very young children, the draft Bill of the food ministry has struck it off.

The campaign activists alleged the current legal guarantee of 'hot cooked meals' for children attending anganwadis in the NAC draft has been diluted in the government bill by providing the option of 'Ready to Eat Meals'.

"It appears the government Bill is more about creating markets and protecting corporate interests than the interests of children," said the letter.

Activists slam draft food security bill

The Times of India, 16 November 2011

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Activists-slam-draft-food-security-bill/articleshow/10747516.cms>

NEW DELHI: The Right to Food activists on Tuesday charged the draft [National Food Security Bill](#) ([NFSB](#)) with ignoring the food security needs of children, and trying to promote packaged and ready-to-eat food.

In a letter to women and child development minister [Krishna Tirath](#), activists said the draft bill aims to "minimize government's responsibilities, restrict children's entitlements and avoid accountability". They have asked the minister to ensure food and nutrition security of all children.

"Not only does the draft Bill do grave injustice to people's food security in general, it does not ascertain the right of children to food security...It appears the government does not consider the specific issues related to the food security of children or the vast problem of malnutrition among them, to have any significance," the letter said.

According to the campaign activists, the total allocation for children (who constitute 44% of the population) in budget (2011-12) is still about 4% of the total expenditure.

They alleged the legal guarantee of 'hot cooked meals' for children attending anganwadis in the NAC draft has been diluted in the government bill by providing the option of 'ready to eat meals'.

"It appears the government bill is more about creating markets and protecting corporate interests than the interests of children," said the letter.

They pointed out that though the draft food security bill of the [National Advisory Council](#) recognized the need for a legal entitlement for over 15 crore women working in the informal sector and the food security of very young children, the food ministry has struck it off.

Civil society groups slam 'dilution' by Govt

The Pioneer, 15 November 2011

<http://www.dailypioneer.com/nation/20699-civil-society-groups-slam-dilution-by-govt.html>

Civil society groups on Tuesday came out strongly against the Centre's draft National Food Security Bill, which has not incorporated the National Advisory Council's suggestion for providing maternity entitlements to about 15 crore women in the informal (non-Government) sector, as in the Central Government, thereby denying food security (breast feeding) to infants.

Similarly, the current legal guarantee of 'hot cooked meals' for children attending anganwadis has been diluted by providing the option of 'Ready to Eat Meals' in the draft which suggests that the Bill is more about creating markets and protecting corporate interests than the interests of children, the members, including Jean Dreze, Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey who are also in the NAC, alleged in their letter to Women and Child Development Minister Krishna Tirath.

Appalled by the scant regard for children in the draft NFSB put up on the website of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, they said that it not only does grave injustice to people's food security in general, but also does not ascertain the right of children to food security.

"The draft Bill goes out of its way to minimize the government's responsibilities, restrict children's entitlements, and avoid any accountability," the activists, steering the Right to Food Campaign, lamented and demanded that universal maternity entitlements for at least a period of six months at minimum wages and crèche facilities to children of working women should be given.

Pointing out the vast problem of malnutrition among children, they said the total allocation for children, who constitute 44% of the population, in the budget is still only about 4% percent of the total expenditure.

Also the requirement that take home rations be "...fortified with micronutrients as per 50% of RDA" and that "Meals shall be prepared in accordance with the prevailing Food Laws") opens the doors for centralised production and distribution contradicting Supreme Court orders for banning of private contractors and encouraging decentralised production by SHGs, women's groups, panchayats etc, they pointed out.

Other important entitlements related to management of severe malnutrition, nutritional counselling

and other programmatic issues requiring legal guarantees have also been wholly omitted, the civil society activists under the aegis of Right to Food Campaign said.

They demanded universalisation of all services of ICDS for all children, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls. In opening of anganwadi centres, preference should be given to SC/ST habitations to ensure that every Dalit and Adivasi habitation has an ICDS centre. They called for prevention of interference of commercial interests through 'packaged' or 'ready to eat' food or 'public private partnerships' in government programmes for child health and nutrition.

Other media reporting:

<http://www.inewsone.com/2011/11/15/activists-demand-nutrition-security-for-all-children/90258>

<http://pluzmedia.com/news/health-medicine/22576/activists-demand-nutrition-security-for-all-children>

http://digg.com/news/world_news/india_activists_demand_nutrition_security_for_all_children

http://tripolemarketing.com/2011/11/15/activists_demand_nutrition_security_for_all_children/

<http://www.newkerala.com/news.php>

<http://www.newsleaks.in/LatestNews/national-news/>

http://twocircles.net/2011nov15/activists_demand_nutrition_security_all_children.html

http://tripolemarketing.com/2011/11/15/activists_demand_nutrition_security_for_all_children/