

## **Fact-finding Report on Implementation of RTE Act and ICDS programme in Tileibani Block of Deogarh district, Odisha**

### **Introduction**

Deogarh District which was created on 1.1.1994 being bifurcated from Sambalpur District is a Backward District domicile by ST people. As it is an industry less district, the people solely depend upon Agriculture. The District comprises one Municipality, one Tahasil & three Blocks like Barkot, Tileibani and Reamal consisting of 774 villages. The area of the District is 2781.66 sqkm with population 2,74,095 as per 2001 Census. Total no. of 47,610 Households are BPL people. Most of the people are still poor and eke out their livelihood from agriculture and forest. This district has been declared as naxal-prone area and getting special fund under Integrated Action Plan (IAP) scheme for the development of the area. Almost all development schemes and programme and food security programme are being implemented for socio-economic development of the people of the district.

In order to monitor the implementation of food security programme in Deogarh district and assess its impact on food security situation of the poor, a 3-Member Team comprises Prof. Jantrana Parikshit, Sri Pradip Pradhan and Sri Pradipta Nayak of **Child Rights Watch & Right to Food Campaign, Odisha** had visited Tileibani Block of Deogarh district on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2013. It needs to be mentioned here that last year, the team had visited same block and found a lot of irregularities and corruption in the implementation of ICDS and MDM programme and non-compliance of RTE Act by the district administration. The team had made a lot of recommendations to the Govt. for the effective implementation of the same. This time the team decided to concentrate on assessing compliance of the provisions of Right to Education Act by the administration and monitoring implementation of ICDS programme. RTE Act enacted in 2009 and got implemented since 2010 mandates to ensure infrastructure facilities like class room, kitchen, boundary of the school, latrine, playground, appointment of teachers in the schools within 3 years. **As per RTE Act 2009, three years cut off mark was fixed within which appropriate school with all infrastructural facilities shall be available for students.** As the time limit is over by March, 2013, the team members assessed whether the infrastructure facilities of the primary schools have been ensured. As three years of implementation of RTE Act is over by March, 2013, the team members assessed whether the infrastructure facilities of the primary schools have been ensured. The Team also monitored functioning of Anganwadi Centres in the Block. The magnitude of poverty and distress situation of the people is easily identified, when the team came across a distress woman with her two babies living in a makeshift under banyan tree in Srinibas Pur village. The Team made random visit to the villages, interacted with the villagers, school teachers, CRCC (Cluster Resource Coordinator), members of School Management Committee, Anganwadi Worker about functioning of the primary schools and Anganwadi centres and appraised Govt. officials including Collector, Sub-Collector-cum-District Project Coordinator, District Social Welfare Officer about the issues. The Team Members were Sri Pradip Pradhan, Sri Pradipta nayak, and Prof. Jantrana Parikhit.

### **Observation of the Team**

#### **1. Assessment about Implementation of Right to Education Act**

##### **1.1. Kaliakhamar Primary school**

During visit, the team came across half-constructed building of the Kaliakhamar Primary school under Dholapada Gram Panchayat. While interacting with the villagers, it was found that the building was sanctioned two years ago and the Head Master of the school is looking into the construction work. School Management Committee is not aware about the sanction of the fund and expenditure for construction of the building. There is no boundary and latrine in the school.

### **1.2.Sardhapur Project Primary school**

During visit to this school, it was found that Sri Madan Mohan Pradhan, Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC) was carrying out construction work of the school building by engaging labourers. On query about his presence in the school, he said that he was looking into the construction work of all school building. After interaction with the villagers and SMC member, the Team got convinced that Sri Pradhan, CRCC is the real contractor of the area and looking into all construction work by influencing the School Management Committee which is legally responsible for the construction of the building. It was also alleged that Sri Pradhan does not perform his work of monitoring the school but remained busy in the construction work of the school building as a bonafide contractor.

### **1.2.Bhaliadiha U.G.U.P. School**

The Team met Jadumani Biswal, Head Master-In-charge of Bhaliadiha U.G.U.P. School of Talkundi Gram Panchayat. During interaction about the problem of the school, he said that an amount of Rs. 4.10 lakh has been sanctioned for the school building. As SMC has the mandate to look into the construction of the building, he took initiative to start the work by calling the meeting of SMC. Sri Chhabila Dehuri, president of the School demanded Rs. 20,000/- as bribe from him, if he takes up the work. The Head Master declined to do it. Now President, SMC has handed over the construction of building to Sri Madan Pradhan, CRCC. Sri Pradhan has taken the responsibility of the work as contractor. The Head master also said that rice is not supplied regularly for MDM.

### **1.3.Taldihi Primary School**

Taldihi Primary school of Kendejuri Gram Panchayat was found half-constructed without any door, window and no boundary wall. The Team met Sri Fakir Kishan, President of School Management Committee and wanted to know the situation of the school building. He said *“total amount of Rs. 6, 60,000/- has been sanctioned for construction of the building since 2008-09. He is neither informed nor consulted in respect of progress of the construction work and expenditure of the fund. The Head Master took his signature in withdrawal form for withdrawal of the money sanctioned for construction of the school building. The Head Master gave all money to Sri Dileswar Samarth, CRCC who looks into the construction activities of the school building. Sri Dileswar has become the contractor in our area”*.

### **1.4.Asanlata Upper Primary School**

This Primary School comes under Kendejuri Gram Panchayat. The new building was sanctioned in 2011 with allocation of Rs. 6, 60,000/-. The Team found the school building and latrine half-constructed. When the villagers were asked about the situation of the building, they said that Sri Dileswar Samarth, CRCC had taken the responsibility for the construction of the work. It was found that neither the villagers nor the members of SMC are in the field of decision-making process of the construction of the building. The CRCC has ample clout over the villagers whom nobody can point out anything nor find fault with him.

The Team Members have curiosity to meet the CRCC in person who is accused of misappropriating fund sanctioned for school building and nobody dared to ask any explanation for delay in completion of the building. The Team met Sri Dileswar in his village and wanted to know his role as CRCC in the area and his involvement in the construction of the building. He accepted that he was looking into construction of all the school buildings which are under construction. On query about long delay in completion of the building, he remained silence and after few minutes said that he had not been paid rest amount of Rs. 60,000 which is required to finish the work. Query was made how he would finish the such a huge work with just small amount of Rs. 60,000/-. He could not respond but preferred silence. The Team members found his statement as bluff and got convinced that he had misused the sanctioned amount.

## 2. Functioning of Anganwadi Centres

2.1. There are two Anganwadi centres in Kaliakhamar village of Dholapada Gram Panchayat. **Anganwadi Centre (1)** does not have the building. Anganwadi Helper Smt. Urbashi Bag was seen managing the centre in her house. There are 19 children enrolled in the centre and taking food every day. On query about release of money and rice for the centre, she alleged about non-supply of the rice for last four months. She was managing food from her own pocket. According to the villagers, building for the centre has been sanctioned by Govt. since last three years. But the building has remained half-constructed. When the Contractor Sri Raising Gadia was asked about the delay in the construction, he said that total budget for the building is Rs. 4.25 lakh. But he has been given 8 quintal rod and 100 bag of cement with sanction of Rs. 1, 14, 933/- . He has already utilized this money and materials for construction of the centre. Though he has made several requests, the BDO has not released the rest of amount to finish the work. From the records, it was found that the work order which was issued to the contractor on 27.1.10 had a provision of time limit of 6 months for completion of the building.

2.2. The **Kaliakhamar Centre (2)** is managed by Kabitarani Patra, Anganwadi Worker (AWW). Total number of 15 children within the age group of 3 to 6 years are enrolled in the centre and taking daily food. Total number of 19 children, pregnant and lactating women are being distributed Chhatua in the centre. During visit, it was found that the centre is being used for residence of the labourers of a Contractor named Jagdish Panda of Sambal Pur who is undertaking road construction work in the village. The children were seen sitting in the verandah of the centre and taking meals. Having seen it, the Team members strongly reacted and asked the AWW to immediately throw out the bag and baggage of the labourers and vacate the room. The Anganwadi Worker did it immediately and asked apology for the mistake. There is no instrument for pre-school education in the centre. AWW does not impart pre-school education to the children.

2.3. Similarly, **Hetkhamar Anganwadi Centre (AWC) of Dholapada GP** was found half-constructed, though the building has been sanctioned since 2011. Smt. Debaki Nag, AWW who got posting in April, 2012 is running centre in the school. According to her, she is always facing shortage of rice because it is not supplied regularly by the Transport Agent.

2.4. The Team visited **Khajuri darah Anganwadi centre** of Dudhianali Gram Panchayat and found the building of the centre under construction. The AWW is running the centre in the village. According to the villagers, the building was sanctioned two years back. But the contractor Sri Chandrasekhar Padhan has not completed the building. Total number of 25 children are enrolled in the centre. On question about any difficulty faced by the AWW, she alleged about shortage of rice for which she always borrows rice from local shop to feed the children. While inspecting the records, it was found that the Anganwadi worker always withdraws total amount from the account sanctioned for food after making a resolution in the register of Mothers' Committee. When asked about reason for withdrawal of total sanctioned amount from the account at a time, she said that the Ward Member who is the one of the signatories in the account always demand of Rs. 100/- for every withdrawal of money from the account. To avoid it, she withdraws the total amount at a time. Her logic does not satisfy the team. The Team felt that this is a strategy to withdraw big amount of Rs. 15,000/- to Rs. 20,000/- and invest this amount for her personal purpose.

2.5. The Team came across a Mini Centre running in Mahuldah village under Talkundi Gram Panchayat since 24.4.12. Only 8 no. of children enrolled in the centre are coming to take food. There are 8 pregnant and lactating women and children getting THR i.e., Chhatua. There is no building for mini centre. Fund is not regularly disbursed to the account of the centre (Ac No.- 04020110022047). On 27.3.13, the CDPO has released Rs. 10,000/- after one year. She has not received salary since one year.

2.6. **Anganwadi Centre of Saradhapur village** under Talkundi Gram Panchayat was found used by the workers of Contractor as their residence. On query about the reason for handing over the centre to Contractor

for their stay, Anganwadi worker could not give any satisfactory response. She accepted her mistake and assured the team to oust their bag and baggage from the centre. She also requested the team members not to make complaint to higher authority about it. Total no. of 16 children are taking breakfast and food in the centre every day. Rice is not supplied regularly. She manages it by borrowing rice. While inspecting resolution register of Janch Committee, it was found that resolution has been made only for withdrawing money from Bank and no discussion about management of centre or quantity or quality of the food served to the children is noticed in the resolution. It was also found that resolution has been made to withdraw total fund amounting Rs. 15, 000 once which was sanctioned for six months. The latrine of the centre was found defunct.

2.7. While visiting **Bhaliadihi Anganwadi centre of Talkundi Gram Panchayat**, the Team witnessed that 18 children are taking food in the centre and 21 beneficiaries getting Chhatua (Take Home Ration). Anganwadi Worker Niranjani Ranjit said that Salary is not being paid for 7 to 9 months. Fund for preparation of food is not released regularly.

2.8. During visit to Kunjabahal Anganwadi Centre under Kendejuri GP, the Team came across Chanchala Nikhandia, AWW serving breakfast to the children. The building of the centre was found dilapidated with no roof as it got destroyed by cyclonic storm on 30.4.13. When asked about preparation of food for lunch of the children, she politely said that food would not be prepared to day as the helper is absent and she could not cook as she is dalit. The children will not take food if it is prepared by her. She also said that this building has got damaged several times which has been communicated to BDO, CDPO about it. The contractors engaged to repair the building do not do it properly for which the building is at collapsing stage.

### **2.9. Distribution of rotten Chhatua**

During interaction with the villagers, Janch Committee and Anganwadi Workers, it was found that Chhatua which is being distributed to the centres was found prepared by one Ma Siteswari SHG, village-Ratanpur, Block-Tileibani, Dist-Deogarh. This SHG has been given responsibility to distribute Chhatua to all the above mentioned centres visited by the Team. While verifying the quality and quantity of Chhatua, it was found that there is no date of manufacturing / packing of chhatua in any packet. Secondly, the quality of chhatua is very low and gives bad smell. The villagers of Kaliakhamar and Hetakhmar made complaint to the team about low quality of chhatua which is not eatable. The President of Ma Siteswari SHG was called to the spot and appraised about low quality of Chhatua. The villagers also showed it and how rotten Chhatua is given to them for consumption of the baby. It was also found that though there is huge complaint on quality of chhatua, the resolution of Janch committee shows no such discussion about it.

### **3. Disstress condition of woman with two babies**

Prior to visit to Deogarh district, it was reported by our friend Sri Dillip Das, Human Rights Activist and Member of Child Rights Watch, Odisha that a woman in distress condition along with her two babies was residing under a tree at head of the village Srinibas Pur of Chheplapali Gram Panchayat under Tileibani Block. On 2<sup>nd</sup> day, the Team visited to the village and identified the women living with her two babies (one is two years old and another is 6 months old) under the tree covering old dirty sari at end of village. The place is very dirty, not hygienic. While interacting with the villagers, it was found that she had got married but her husband has died. She has no land, no house, and no homestead land. Her old father looks after her. She is not getting two square meal per day and lives in hunger. When enquired about quantity of Chhatua received by her, she said that she was receiving one packet Chhatua per month from Anganwadi Worker (each beneficiary is entitled to get two packet of Chhatua per month). All the villagers also alleged same way. The Team members got disturbed having heard it and contacted Anganwadi Worker Shantilata Guru who was brought to the spot. When she was asked about the reason of distribution of one packet chhatua, she remained silence and started crying accepting his mistake and selling Chhatua in the market. However, she

assured to give two packet Chhatua to all beneficiaries including this women in distress condition. The Team members assured women and the villagers to take up this issue with the District Collector, Deogarh.

#### **4. Meeting with District Administration**

The Team met District Collector, Sub-collector-cum- District Project Coordinator, Sarba Sikhya Abhijan, District Social welfare Officer in a meeting called in the collector's chamber. The Collector and other officials were appraised about distribution of rotten Chhatua, misuse of Anganwadi centre, delay in release of payment to AWW, misappropriation of fund meant for school building by CRCC, half-constructed school building work etc. The Collector instructed Sub-collector-cum-DPC to make an enquiry about it and take action against the CRCC. DSWO was instructed to verify and examine quantity of Chhatua and if necessary, cancel the agreement with Ma Siteswari women SHG. Regarding delay in release of fund to the centre, DSWO said that as MIS system is in the process of operationalisation, it is getting late. But it will be sorted out very soon. The Collector was also appraised about distress condition of a woman living in wretched condition at the entry point of Srinibas Pur village. The Collector assured the team to make an enquiry into the matter and take steps accordingly.

#### **Key Issues**

A. Though deadline of three years to comply basic provisions of RTE Act was over, the District administration could not observe the mandate of the Act. It was found that most of the schools still lack basic infrastructure facilities like building, latrine, boundary wall, kitchen room, play ground etc. The children are found reading in the half-constructed building and sometimes under open sky.

B. Though the fund has been sanctioned for school building, its completion gets delayed for years together due to corruption and misappropriation of fund by the teachers and Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC). As per the guideline issued by the State Govt. the School Management Committee will look into the construction activities. The objective of this arrangement is to ensure participation of the villagers in the management of the school. But this objective is found defeated here. SMC remains dysfunctional. The members are hardly aware about their role and responsibility. The Teaching community which needs to be ideal before the villagers and the students, gets entangled in corrupt practices and stands as biggest exploiter before the common people. Their indulgence to accumulate money through contractry work has destroyed the primary education system in these areas.

C. Chhatua i.e, Take Home Ration which is viewed as nutritious food for the women and children under ICDS programme is found rotten, old stock one and not eatable. Chhatua which is considered as life –saving device to protect children from hunger and malnutrition has become an instrument for killing new born baby. Chhatua prepared by Ma Siteswari Women SHG against which we found a number of complaints is not being monitored properly by the ICDS officials. The Team presumed that there exists unholy alliance of the manufacturer of Chhatua and the officials in this district for which the women SHG dared to distribute rough and rotten Chhatua to the children. This trend needs to be checked and curbed at all costs in the greater interest of the children i.e, future of the nation.

D. Delay in release of fund meant for preparation of food from CDPO office to Angawadi centre was found very bad practice. Though DSWO pointed out some other reason like MIS SYSTEM, but the team felt it as deliberate attempt by the CDPO to make long delay in release of fund. The reason may be accumulating the interest money from the fund deposited in the Bank. It requires thorough investigation at appropriate level about the reason of delay of 5 to 9 months in the matter of release of fund to Anganwadi Centre.

E. Similarly the salary of the Anganwadi worker is not paid regularly. One Anganwadi Worker told that she had not received the money for one year. This is gross negligence of the CDPO of Tileibani Block.

F. The State Govt. has issued a circular for formation of Mothers' Committee in all the villages. This committee shall be responsible for monitoring the centre, checking quality and quantity of food. But while verifying the Resolution Register of the Committee, it was found that the resolution has been made only in respect of withdrawing money from the Bank. It was also found that without holding the meeting, Anganwadi worker has written the resolution and taken the signature of the members.

G. While going through resolution of the meeting of Mothers' Committee in three Anganwadi Centre as mentioned above, it was found that the whole money sanctioned for food for six months has been withdrawn in a single withdrawal form in a day by making resolution in the Mothers' Committee meeting. This practice shows the ulterior motive of the Anganwadi worker to use the money for her personal purpose. It needs to be stopped.

H. The Team got dismayed having seen the children of the Anganwadi centre taking food in someone's verandah or in a dilapidated building without roof. Many Angawadi Building are under construction for years together. There is no monitoring by higher authority in respect of any progress of the completion of the building as per the time line fixed by the Govt. Many buildings are also found in dilapidated condition.

### **Recommendation**

While critically looking into the above mentioned issues, the Team makes the following recommendations to the State Govt. as well as District administration for taking immediate step to ensure effective implementation of RTE Act and ICDS programme in the greater interest of the children of the distressed community of a backward region i.e., Tileibani Block of Deogarh district.

1. The progress of construction work of the new building sanctioned for Primary School or Anganwadi centre should be physically monitored by District level officials in order to ensure its completion within time limit. The Collector should invite report about progress of the work from time to time. Responsibility should be fixed on monitoring officer as well as the President, School Management Committee in respect of completion of the building.
2. The District Collector while inquiring into the allegation of involvement of CRCCs in the construction activities of school building should take stern action against the CRCCs who are responsible for misappropriating fund and causing delay in completion of the building.
3. Keeping in view dysfunctional of SMC, the Team strongly recommends to the State Govt. to organize orientation training programme for president and members of SMC not for once but from time to time. As the President and Members of SMCs are not sensitized, the Head Master and CRCCs are seen succeeded in demotivating them to take up the school building. The criteria for selection of president of the school building should be flexible.
4. It was found that the ICDS officials who are supposed to monitor the Anganwadi centre are hand in glove with the Women SHGs assigned for preparation of Chhatua. A special independent monitoring team at district level should be appointed by the Collector to monitor the ICDS centre mostly quality and quantity of Chhatua distributed in the centre. The Team will be responsible for monitoring all aspects of the centre including construction of the building, quality and quantity of Chhatua, foods served in the centre etc. Chhatua can be picked up randomly from the Centre and sent for quality testing.
5. The Team strongly recommends to the Govt. to cancel agreement with Ma Siteswari SHG for supplying rotten and old stock Chhatua to the Anganwadi centre. If it continues, it may bring disaster and health hazard in the area.

6. There should be orientation training programme for Mothers' Committee from time to time to make them sensitized about their role and responsibilities in respect of management of the centre. NGOs should be assigned to conduct the training programme.
7. Fund for food should be released to AWCs in each month and the Anganwadi Workers should be instructed not to draw the whole money at a stance. Action should be taken against the Anganwadi workers who have already withdrawn money from the Bank.
8. Salary of AWWs should be released in each month without any delay. The long delay in release of salary amount may lead to misappropriation of fund for food and rice meant for children by AWWs.
9. The dilapidated building of AWCs should be declared as dilapidated by Govt. and new building needs to be sanctioned. The new building which is under construction for years together should be completed immediately. The Collector should take steps accordingly.
10. Rotten Chhatua is not distributed only in the places visited by the Team. It is a common phenomenon across the district as alleged by the people. So the State Govt. should randomly pick up Chhatua from different centres of the district and send it to the OUAT for nutritional analysis and quality testing and action should be taken accordingly.

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**Women in distress condition living in makeshift at the entry of  
The village Srinibas Pur under Tileibani Block**



**Team Members inspecting rotten Chhatua in AWC**



**Dilapidated building of Kunjabahal AWC, Deogarh District**



**Half-constructed Building of Asanlata Upper Primary School, Deogarh district-Going on since four years**



Meeting of Team Members with the villagers



**AWC under construction since three years in Kaliakhamar village**