

# DISCUSSION ON

## Focus on Child Health

There is a need to improve access to child health services. The Ministry of Health is focusing on promoting child health through appropriate interventions.

Presently, the Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD addresses the nutritional needs of school going children in the age group of 6-14 years are being taken care of by the Mid- Day Meal (MDM) Scheme. With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among primary school children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education was launched in August 1995. During 2008-09, the Scheme was extended to cover children in upper primary classes and the Scheme was renamed as 'National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools'. The programme aims at (i) improving the nutritional status of children in Classes I-VIII, (ii) encouraging poor children belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend schools more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities, and (iii) providing nutritional support to children at elementary stage of education in drought-affected areas during summer vacation. The National Programme of MidDay Meal in Schools is now covering all children studying in Classes I-VIII in Government, Government-aided and Local Body schools. Yet malnutrition, hunger and poor health remain core problems, which comprehensively affect attendance and performance in classes. The principal public initiative for ECCE



is the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of M/o Women and Child Development which aims at responding to the challenge of providing pre-school education, on one hand, and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality, on the other. The ICDS seeks to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-5+ years; lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child; reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout; achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education. There is, however, a need to synergize the multi-sectoral interventions taken by the relevant GOI Ministries.

- What are the results of the schemes aimed at child health by the M/o Health, WCD & SEL?
- Are the existing schemes under the different well-coordinated and synergized for optimum and holistic outcomes? If not, how can this be resolved.
- What other steps can be taken to have greater focus on child health? Any State experiences that can be replicated and upscaled at the national level.
- How can individual child health be tracked in the SE system and real-time information be available to State and Centre?

