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Ines Reinhard, Dedo Geinitz

Mid-day Meal for School Children

INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME
TRINCOMALEE

42 Huskison Street
31000 Trincomalee
Sri Lanka

phone 026-22023
22687
fax 026-22296
e-mail ifspsl@sri.lanka.net
internet www.ifsp-srilanka.org

MID-DAY MEAL FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN (ILLAI KANCHI / KOLA KANTHA)

Why are we supporting a mid-day meal for school children?

Malnutrition is a major problem among school children in Trincomalee district, especially in remote areas. Main reasons for malnutrition are household food shortage and a poor variety in the daily diet, lack of safe drinking water, poor hygiene and poor health facilities. Family diet mainly consists of rice, sambal and leafy vegetables. Most families and family members do not consume healthy food items such as eggs, fish, vegetables and fruits often enough and in sufficient quantity.

The effects of malnutrition on school children are serious:

- Due to lack of proper meals, children faint during lessons
- Children can not concentrate well and their learning progress is slow
- Many children do not attend school since they have to help their parents in money earning or cultivation
- Children's nutritional status is poor, their bodily growth is slow and their intellectual development is endangered.

A pilot programme to test the mid-day meal programme was launched with St. Mary's College in Trincomalee town in late 1999, addressing children from girls homes and poor and displaced families. The programme was progressing very well thanks to the dedicated principal of St. Mary's. IFSP extended the mid-day meal to poor villages and rural schools in Trincomalee district.

What has been achieved to date?

Since late 1999 until mid 2001 about 5,000 children in 40 schools have been benefiting from the mid-day meal. For the year 2001 it is planned to extend the programme to 70 schools in 8 DS Divisions. In total about 10,000 children will benefit. The mid-day meal contributes to a significant increase in attendance. This in turn will result in a better education. The costs for the mid-day meal programme 2001 are expected to reach Rs. 5.5 million. To provide the daily mid-day meal to one child an amount of Rs. 80 to 85 per month or Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per day will be required.

What are the objectives?

- Provide one healthy additional meal to school children in remote areas
- Increase the regular attendance of school children
- Contribute to an adequate education, which is very important for the future development of the children, and besides a fundamental human right
- Reduce the suffering of the children from hunger and weakness during school period
- Improve their nutritional status.

How does the mid-day meal work?

Who is benefiting and how to select the schools?

All school children living in poor villages should be included in the programme. The criteria for including applications from schools and villages are as follows:

- Villages should be covered by a participatory needs assessment prior to commence the mid-day meal programme (PNA village).¹ However, other villages (non PNA villages) could joint under the condition that they meet the eligibility criteria below.
- Priority shall be given to villages suffering from a high degree of war affectedness and food deficit and show a high degree of poverty (poverty code 5). Villages which show a lesser degree of poverty (poverty code 4) could join with a higher local contribution (phase 2). Villages under an even lower poverty ranking (poverty codes 3 to 1) have to contribute more (phase 3).
- Schools showing low students' attendance and a high dropout rate.
- Schools with a high malnutrition rate according to a nutrition assessment done.
- Ethnic balance to be considered as far as this is appropriate.

What are the procedures for implementation?

Illai Kanchi / Kola Kantha should be provided every day the children are attending school but not during holiday periods. In total 10 month of the school year of 12 month are covered.

The process and procedure to implement the mid-day meal are as follows:

- Receiving an application from the school and/or the village community. This would require awareness for the mid-day meal. The Community Mobilisers² of IFSP and the IFSP Health Team and the Department of Education have to co-operate closely.
- Discussions to be held with the principal and relevant teachers and explain the IFSP concept/package for the mid-day meal. Zonal Directors of Education are expected to encourage principals and teachers.
- Awareness meeting with the parents and school development society (SDS) regarding the importance of the mid-day meal are to be arranged and conducted by the IFSP health team (PHI and midwife)³.
- Explanation what is expected as contribution from the villagers in either cash or kind and how they have to prepare the mid-day meal.
- Contribution from the villagers is to be decided and agreed upon according to the village infrastructure: access to the village, isolated location or close to markets, living conditions of families, family income, resources from farming etc.
- A contribution plan is to be worked out during a village meeting with the principal, teachers, parents and the SDS.

If the village benefits from other support under IFSP (e.g. rehabilitation of minor tanks, food-for-work for development of the village infrastructure, promotion of fishing and livestock, income generating activities etc.) this has to be made a source for contribution to the mid- day meal.

¹ PNA Field Guide, IFSP Technical Paper 7, April 2001; IFSP *news* 3, April 2000 and IFSP *news* 11, April/May 2001

² Social Mobilisation Concept for IFSP, Working Paper 28, April 2000

³ IFSP *news* 5, June 2000 and IFSP *news* 9, December 2000

- Before signing the agreement all conditions have to be well explained to the principal, teachers, parents and SDS.
- Complementary activities, which are related to the mid-day meal preparation e.g. coconut cultivation and school gardening should be included. The Zonal Directors of Education are expected to address how to incorporate the mid-day meal into the curricula and syllabi.

What is the contribution of the parents, the children and the village community?

The contribution of the villagers has to increase according to four phases of six month each:

- Phase 1 (initial phase) 10% contribution (green leaves, firewood etc.)
- Phase 2 (established phase) 25% contribution (additionally: basic food items)
- Phase 3 (advanced phase) 50% contribution (more food items)
- Phase 4 (ownership phase) 100% contribution (full local contribution)

In phase 1 the parents of the school children provide the basics to the mid-day meal which would include:

- healthy food items which are available in the village itself (e.g. green leaves, coconut, cashew, fish, shrimps etc.)
- firewood (children should be encouraged to collect)
- cooking equipment as far as available
- labour to prepare and distribute the mid-day meal (volunteers to manage the procurement, cooking and distribution)

The children will be requested to supply some leaves or vegetables from their home garden or food items which are growing wild in the village and surroundings. Every day or week other children should be in charge of providing the leaves, e.g. one class could be in charge every week.

For the phases 2 to 4 the type of contribution (cash or kind) needs to be discussed and agreed upon between IFSP and the village community. It is expected that the local contribution is continuously increasing.

What is the contribution of IFSP?

IFSP is supporting the programme with the finances for red rice, green and white gram as well as some basic equipment for the cooking. Additionally, IFSP supports the preparation and local management of the mid-day meal:

- Two persons in charge of food preparation and distribution will be remunerated with food-for-work (10 kg rice per week).
- The person in charge of procurement will be remunerated with food-for-work (10 kg rice per month).
- **NOTE:** FFW is stopped as soon as SDS and parents take over at stage two.

How is the mid-day meal prepared?

Two mothers of the school children volunteer for cooking the meal and one person is in charge of buying the necessary ingredients. Two students will help in preparation

and cooking, so they will learn about healthy food items and food preparation. Boys and girls are equally expected to participate and to help.

Additional activities are suggested

The school should initiate to grow healthy leaves on a small plot at the school. This initiative could even be expanded to a school garden, as presently suggested by IFSP under the “school garden programme”⁴ supported by IFSP and implemented by the Departments of Agriculture and Education. Children will observe at the school gardens which are the leaves and vegetables to be used for the Illai Kanchi / Kola Kantha and how to grow and maintain them.

Responsibility and supervision

The school principle has the overall responsibility for the programme. His responsibilities are as follows:

- Ensure effective coordination between all persons and in fact, for the whole village community including parents and the SDS.
- Monthly progress review reports shall be send to IFSP and to the Zonal Directors of Education.
- Motivate and convince students, parents and teachers for the nutritional and educational value of the mid-day meal
- Include the mid-day meal into the teaching and curricula.
- Encourage students and parents to cultivate their home gardens.

The IFSP health team and the community mobilisers shall do the supervision in closest cooperation with the school principals and the Zonal Directors of Education. Reporting to IFSP and review of the mid-day meal programme is envisaged to be done in cooperation with the Secretaries of Education and Health. The Chief Secretary NEP shall be addressed to expand the mid-day meal programme to other districts.

What are the material, ingredients and how much does it cost?

Initial items and cost estimates

Cooking Items	Nos.	approx. Costs (Rs.)
Big aluminium pot for cooking of the basic items, e.g. rice	2	3,000
Small aluminium pot for cooking of the complementary items, e.g. leaves	2	1,000
Bucket with handle for distribution of the mid-day meal	1	100
Plastic jug for distribution to school children	1	150
Coconut scraper	1	250
Spoons	2-5	100
Unforeseen items according to local need		150
TOTAL		4,750

⁴ School Garden Programme, IFSP Technical Paper 1, update February 2001

Daily items and cost estimates for 100 school children per day

Ingredients	Quantity per child	Total quantity	Average price per unit (Rs.)	Total Costs (Rs.)	Remarks
Red rice	60 g	6.0 kg	25	150	
Green gram and/or white gram (Kadalai) and/or cow peas or other	15 g	1.5 kg	70	105	according to seasonal availability
Leaves, such as Mudakoththa Ponnankani Vallarai Pasali Murungai Lethakathai	15 g	1.5 kg	-		supplied by parents and/or children according to local and seasonal availability
Coconut	1 nut per 15 children	8nuts	15	105	
Jaggery	3 g	0.3 kg	40	12	
Salt (iodized)	1.5 g	0.15 kg	10	2	
Sugar	10 g	1.0 kg	35	35	
Costs					
per day				409	
per month				8,180	(20 days)
per year				81,800	(10 month)
per child/month				80 to 85	

Note: Costs are estimates; cheapest possible prices have to be assured.

How is the Illai Kanchi / Kola Kantha prepared:

- Boil water that is needed to boil the rice
- Add salt to the boiling water
- Wash the rice, green gram and Kadalai
- Put the rice, green gram and Kadalai into the boiling water
- Scrape the coconut, grind it and get the juice out of it
- Wash the leaves and put it into the grinder and take the juice out of it
- Keep the juice and milk in separate vessels
- After boiling the rice completely, pour the coconut milk into it
- Add the juice of coconut and leaves into the boiling rice
- Put sugar and Jaggery to add taste
- Finally stir the entire Kanchi and taste it

If everything is well prepared and tasty, distribute the Illai Kanchi / Kola Kantha to the students. About one hour is needed for preparation.