

# Mobilising professionals for eliminating hunger

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Tamil Nadu is the first State in the country to introduce a Nutritious Noon Meal Programme in all the schools of the State since 1981. The multiple benefits which flowed from this visionary political decision are now well known. In 1996, the State took the next major step to fulfil the goal of "Food for All", when the Chief Minister announced the initiation of a Hunger-Free Area Programme (HFAP) to eradicate poverty-induced hunger. At the instance of the Department of Social Welfare of Tamil Nadu, seven Universities and Institutions in the State prepared during 1996-97 detailed operational blueprints for initiating HFAP in the following blocks representing different agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions.

	Institution	Block	District
(1)	Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai	Mangalur	South Arcot Vallalar
(2)	Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram	Vedasandur	Dindigal mannar Thirumalai
(3)	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore	Tiruppulani	Ramanathapuram
(4)	M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai	Pennagaram	Dharmapuri
(5)	Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore	Kothagiri	Nilgiris
(6)	Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli	Kuruthangode	Kanyakumari
(7)	Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli	Budalur	Thanjavur

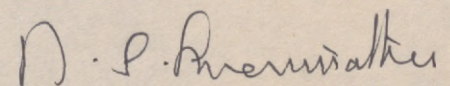
The HFAP strategy consists of the following seven steps

1. Identification of the ultra-poor by the village/urban communities.

2. *Information empowerment* through a *Household Entitlements Card* containing information on the Government programmes available to the family differentiated according to gender and age.
3. *Eliminating protein-calorie undernutrition* through improving the delivery of the public distribution system.
4. *Eliminating silent hunger* arising from micro-nutrient deficiencies through the identification of the missing elements in the diet and ensuring their intake by the most feasible methods.
5. *Improving the biological absorption and retention* of food through the provision of safe drinking water and improved environmental hygiene.
6. *Improving the purchasing power* of the ultra-poor through *economically viable* micro-enterprises supported by micro-credit.
7. Ensuring that the special programmes intended for women and children reach the unreached, particularly those relating to work opportunities, reproductive health and the reduction of infant mortality rates.

Such an integrated hunger eliminating strategy designed to provide every child, woman and man an opportunity for a productive and healthy life, obviously needs for its successful implementation the wholehearted cooperation of Government Departments, *panchayati raj* institutions, organisations of the civil society, academic/research institutions and the mass media. Above all, it required the support of professionals with expertise in the various aspects of the HFAP strategy. The Tamil Nadu Council for Sustainable Livelihood Security, which is a coalition of all concerned with the elimination of hunger, proposes to establish a **Voluntary Professional Support Service** to assist the HFAP programme initiated by the State Government in the seven blocks mentioned earlier. The *Support Service* will be a voluntary network consisting of retired and serving professionals who are willing to give their time and talent in an honorary capacity. Professionals who volunteer themselves will help assist in the effective implementation of different components of HFAP.

Gandhiji considered that elimination of hunger and deprivation is the first and foremost duty of independent India. There is no greater task than achieving freedom from hunger to which professionals can lend their skills and time.



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