

**Allocation and Utilisation of Resources for Social Sector Programmes in Purulia District
(with special reference to programmes for women and children)**

Funding Agency: UNICEF

Coordinator: Achin Chakraborty

A study of the reasons for poor utilization of resources meant for social sector programmes in backward districts like Purulia in West Bengal was carried out by a team from IDSK led by Achin Chakraborty along with Subrata Mukherjee and Subhanil Banerjee, with funding support by the UNICEF.

The report analyses allocation and utilisation of financial resources for the social sector in West Bengal, focusing on Purulia. The state's rather modest record in providing basic needs – minimum levels of education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation – stands in contrast to the vast amount of resources allocated through central schemes to provide the basic services.

A somewhat incomplete list of Centrally Sponsored Schemes for the social sector that the study took into account received an allocation of roughly Rs. 250 crore in a typical recent year. This indicates that the problem is not one of limited resources, but political priorities and incentives at the local level.

In recent years, the Government of India has increased its allocation to child-specific programmes. The three most important programmes in terms of the quantum of resources allocated are in the areas of nutrition and child development (ICDS), elementary education (DPEP-SSA and Mid-day Meal Scheme) and child health (RCH). In Purulia, Rs. 59 crore was available in 2005-06 for spending in the first two areas, but only 40 percent of the amount could be spent during the year.

The generic problems of the central schemes lie in the flawed presumptions based on which the schemes are designed, which in turn creates problems for the implementing agencies. Most of the explanations of non-utilisation of funds in Purulia therefore may not be unique to the district. Only the intensity of the problem is different because of the district's backwardness in terms of certain basic indicators of human development, such as literacy.

The state's attempts to provide targeted benefits to the poor and disadvantaged have been severely hampered by its inability to provide generic skills through mass education and literacy in districts like Purulia. Based on the findings of the study, a number of policy suggestions have been made. The final report was submitted in February 2007.