

There should also be a political will to manufacture essential vaccines indigenously.

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MFC annual meet 2002: Nutrition and food security

The recent developments in Orissa have again brought into focus the fact that food security in India is, at the best of times, precarious. All too often, the familiar picture of overflowing grain stores and starving people is invoked. India by all accounts appears to have attained self-sufficiency in food production with overflowing food stocks and the ability to avert large-scale famines. Yet, apart from crises during which there are severe food shortages and deaths, there is evidence that a large proportion of children are malnourished and that there has been little improvement in the nutritional status of vast sections of people. Policy changes over the last decade — liberalisation and WTO requirements including measures such as removal of quota restrictions, changes in cropping patterns — are likely to significantly affect food security. There are fears that such policies will aggravate the situation of poverty and unemployment, diminishing people's capacity to feed themselves adequately. This raises many issues that impinge on many disciplines, necessitating debate that cuts across a range of sectors and activities.

In order to bring together the evidence and enable discussion, the Medico Friend Circle (MFC) has organised a meeting on this theme. The Annual Meet-2002 of the MFC to be held at Sewagram, Wardha on **January 24-26, 2002**, will focus on **nutrition and food security**.

MFC is an all-India group of socially conscious individuals from diverse backgrounds, who come together because of a common concern about the health problems in the country. MFC includes medical, public health and social science professionals as well as researchers and students, community health and gender activists. It is a loosely knit and informal national organisation. Annual meetings usually on a theme have been a regular feature of its activities. MFC does not receive any funding and is funded and managed entirely by its members on a voluntary basis.

The Annual Meet 2002 will focus on the following issues:

1. Status of nutrition/malnutrition in India: evidence from recent data; **2.** Health impact of under-nutrition and inadequate nutrition; **3.** Review of nutrition interventions and related public policy issues: Public distribution system, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-Day meal schemes, etc.; **4.** Review of nutrition education in India; **5.** Wages and employment and issues in nutrition; **6.** Issues in investigating and documenting under-nutrition, starvation and suspected starvation-related deaths; **7.** Politics of food and food security including impact of WTO, new technology, etc., on people, and **8.** Food security as a rights issue and related Public Interest Litigation in courts.

We invite papers based on the above themes. All relevant papers will be published in the Medico Friend Circle Bulletin and tabled at the meet. For details about submission of papers and participation in the meet, please contact:

S.Srinivasan, Convener, Organising Committee, 1 Tejas Apartments, 53 Haribhakti Colony, Old Padra Road, Vadodara, Gujarat 390007, Phone: (0265) 340223. E-mail: chinus@email.com, chinu@wilnetonline.net

The emphasis will be on field level studies and empirical evidence from different parts of the country as much as on issues emerging from more formal research studies. The object of this meet as in other MFC meets will be to facilitate understanding which participants can 'take back' from the meet and apply in their immediate work.

However, written papers/paper presentation is not a prerequisite for participation at MFC meets. We would like to invite all interested activists, scholars, professionals and students to attend the meet.

Neha Madhiwalla, B/3 Fariyas, 143 August Kranti Marg, Mumbai 400 036.

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