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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION & LITERACY
SHASTRI BHAVAN
NEW DELHI-110 115

D.O. No. 3-1/2013-EE.5(MDM 1-2)

Dated the 23rd September, 2013

Dear *Amarjit*,

The 5th Joint Review Mission visited Bihar from 21st to 30th August, 2013 to review the implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) and assess the nutritional status of the beneficiary children, in two poorly performing districts – Vaishali and Jehanabad as per the prescribed Terms of Reference (ToRs). The JRM team was headed by Dr.(Mrs) Neelam Grewal, Director, Directorate of Research on Women in Agriculture, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Bhubaneswar. Other members of the team were - representatives from MHRD and Government of Bihar; Office of the Supreme Court Commissioner for MDMS and the Monitoring Institute for the scheme in Bihar. A Professor and Research Fellows from College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana and Consultants from Ed CIL's Technical Support Group for Mid-Day Meal Scheme assisted the JRM. A total of 28 schools and 561 children were surveyed.

The JRM team was appreciative of the Best Practices like timely distribution of food grains and cooking cost as well as the trough used for keeping cooked rice. The fact that Bihar is among very few States of the country where dedicated staff is available for implementation, management and monitoring of the Mid Day Meal scheme at all levels was also appreciated. Size of serving in the VSS schools was found to be adequate and the children were encouraged to have another serving which was praiseworthy. The sensory quality of the meals was either good or very good in all the surveyed schools.

The Body Mass Index (BMI), an indicator of the nutritional status of selected children, was calculated after taking their anthropometric measurements. Analysis of these using WHO criteria (Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition, WHO, 2006) revealed that in district Jehanabad, 28.98 and 18.96 % of the total children were underweight and stunted, respectively. A gender difference was observed in underweight children in Jehanabad, as it was 25.90% in boys and 32.16% in girls. Stunting was more prevalent among girls (boys:16.32% vs girls:21.68%). The incidence of underweight and stunting was higher in district Vaishali, the percentage of underweight children being 35.56% among boys and 42.65% in girls and stunting being 20.74% in boys and 26.47% in girls. As in Jehanabad, stunting was more prevalent in girls in this district too. The deficiency symptoms of protein, vitamin A, B complex and iron deficiency anemia were observed in the surveyed children. Water of 07 of the 26 schools was found to be potable.



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Mid Day Meal Scheme

Based on these observations, the JRM team has made the following recommendations:

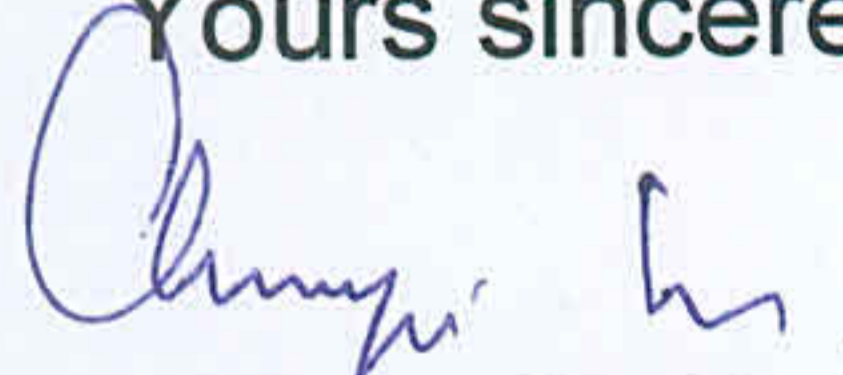
1. The State Government needs to start an extensive community mobilization program for restoring the faith of community in MDMS. The efforts need to undergo a qualitative shift by taking RTE norms into consideration whereby communities are also empowered to monitor the implementation of mid-day-meal scheme. The training of SMC should also reflect specific needs and concerns of mid- day-meal scheme.
2. The meals should be made more nutrient dense and nutritionally balanced and include higher amounts of non tuber vegetables, especially the green leafy ones, to overcome deficiencies
3. The JRM team recommended that to improve their nutritional status, the undernourished children should be identified by periodical health checkups, dewormed and be given special care during MDM.
4. Drinking water may be tested for any type of biological contamination and remedial purification be done accordingly.
5. Better convergence with the School Health program is essential to overcome malnourishment. There is a need for the regular health monitoring. Vitamin A, Iron and Folic Acid supplements and deworming tablets should be provided on a regular basis to the schools. Further, proper instructions regarding their dosage should be given to the teachers. Health cards, with duly filled record of each child need to be maintained and updated regularly in all the schools.
6. Use of weighing balance and proper weightments and measurements is recommended for weighing raw ingredients so that children receive prescribed amounts of nutrients.
7. Kitchen sheds in many places have roofs made of reed. Being a breeding place for lizards and cow webs that may fall into the meal being cooked. Immediate replacement or alternative remedial measures for this are imperative. The State also needs to ensure that the remaining unfinished kitchen-cum-stores are finished early.
8. Health and Nutrition Education (HNE) is required for children, parents, teachers, cooks and caretakers. Feeding program along with HNE may prove more effective in improving the health and nutritional status of the children.
9. The State Govt. should engage adequate number of cook-cum-helpers in the schools as per norms. The rights and entitlement of children, menu, MDM logo, and emergency contact numbers should be displayed prominently on the outside wall of the schools.
10. Considering that the scheme is not properly monitored in the State, State may ensure that all the parameters related to MDMS be properly monitored through a structured format. A State Review Mission to review the Scheme in a district on quarterly basis is required to be set up.

11. All centralized kitchens must follow the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) to ensure that compromised quality food products are not prepared and food related hazards do not occur.
12. The primary (bulk) containers should be sterilized before packing food. This would minimize the risk of food infection outbreaks especially during rainy season.
13. A duty roaster for periodic cleaning of kitchen fixtures/equipment etc. must be prepared and put up on a wall outside kitchen.
14. The gunny bags used for food grains can be auctioned and the amount can be utilized for better implementation of MDMS.
15. Periodic feedback may be obtained for further improvement of from the stakeholders and other concerned officials/teachers who are engaged at the gross root level.
16. It is recommended that a Grievance Redressal Mechanism be evolved at various levels. Further, a Suggestion box / complaint register should be kept at a convenient place in the school to enable the visitors to give their suggestion and views for improving the scheme.
17. A Toll Free Number may be installed for lodging complaints and giving suggestions and it may be widely publicized.

The complete report is being enclosed. In addition, the State may kindly act on the detailed guidelines issued on 22nd July, 2013 for effective implementation of the Mid Day Meal Scheme. We need to ensure that there is an emergency health plan for taking care of any untoward incident. Please also ensure that the cooking area is fully segregated and care is taken that no child goes near the cooking vessels while cooking is taken place.

It will be appreciated if you could send an action taken report on the above within 3 months. A little concerted effort on your part will ensure that no child in a school remains hungry in your state.

With regards.

Yours sincerely,

(Amarjit Singh)

Shri Amarjeet Sinha
Principal Secretary
Government of Bihar
Patna
Bihar