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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.13-2/2013-MDM-2-1

Dated: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Dear *Sh. Pinda*,

I write this to apprise you of the findings of the Fourth Joint Review Mission on the Mid Day Meal Scheme for the State of Chhattisgarh, which visited your State from 26<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2013 through a Team comprising representatives from Government of India, State Government of Chhattisgarh, representative of Hon'ble Supreme Court Commissioner Office, and representative of UNICEF State Office. The Team covered 33 schools in two districts in Durg and Kanker during the visit and presented its report to the State Government on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2013.

2. The Mission appreciated the steps taken by the State Government to ensure regularity in serving mid day meal, full attendance of children in several schools especially in Kanker District, large number of cooks from Scheduled Caste in Durg District and no discrimination in the implementation of the Scheme. Similarly, adequate quantities of vegetables found in mid day meal especially in Kanker District, high level of Community participation in the scheme, hygienic environment in schools and kitchens in district Kanker and close convergence with other sectors through Mitanins and Village Health Nutrition Sanitation Committees.

3. The major findings / recommendations of the Review Mission on the basis of field visit in the selected districts are as under:

- (i) The team observed huge delay in releasing of cooking cost to the implementing agencies. The Panchayats who are the implementers of the scheme in several areas of Dhamdha Block of Durg District have to put in their own resources for 3 to 4 months for purchasing several items like vegetables, and oil on credit from nearby shops at higher rates. On account of paucity of funds quality of meals suffers in many schools. When Government of India is paying recurring assistance in three instalments to the State Governments, the State Government should also pay the cooking cost to the schools and cooks in advance. The state should develop a mechanism in this regard either by transferring the funds directly from the district to the schools by E-Transfer or any other reliable method. It is also suggested that the cooking agencies, especially, Panchayats may open separate bank account for transferring the MDM funds to avoid any confusion with other funds at a later date. The Finance Department of the State Government is already releasing funds in advance. It is not understood why there is huge delay in release of funds to the cooking agencies. The Department should take immediate corrective action to ensure advance release of funds to the cooking agencies and cook cum helpers especially in Durg district.



माध्याह्न भोजन योजना  
Mid Day Meal Scheme

- (i) It was observed in Durg District that the honorarium to the cook cum helpers is paid after a gap of 4-5 months. These cooks belong to poor and weaker sections of the society and are in constant need of funds, the delayed payment affects their motivation levels which affects the effectiveness of the scheme. The State Government during the briefing meeting showed a balance of Rs. 6277.71 lakh remaining with the state, reflecting that this is not an issue of lack of funds, but of poor management and negligence. Therefore this needs to be rectified at the earliest. Regular honorarium was somehow being given to cooks in Kanker district!
- (ii) During the JRM, the Team visited Bhilai, where Akshay Patra and Sakhi Saheli are the cooking agencies. It was observed that in schools that were provided MDM through centralized kitchens, the quantity of cooked meal supplied did not match with the attendance of children for the day. There were lots of complaints from the children against the food prepared by the SHG in Akhari Village of block Patan of Durg district. The Monitoring Institution of Chhattisgarh (RIE, Bhopal ) has also made adverse remarks against the quality of food in Durg district in its first Half Yearly Report for the period 1st October, 2010 to 31st March, 2011. It is obvious that corrective action has not been taken by the district authorities on the observations of the Monitoring Institute. The District should take immediate corrective action to improve the quality of Mid Day Meal.
- (iii) No menu has been prescribed for preparation of Mid Day Meal by the state Authorities at various levels as per laid down food norms. Further there is very little monitoring of the menu designed by the districts in the State. It may be relevant to mention in this connection that the representative of Supreme Court Commissionerate has worked out the cooking cost norm with a 7.5% increase in 2013-14 in the report and has shown how nutritious meals can be provided under the Scheme. You may recall that this issue was also raised by Shri Biraj Patnayak, Supreme Court Commissioner, in the meeting of the Programme Approval Board for Chattisgarh for the year 2013-14 held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at New Delhi. It is, therefore, suggested that the state should issue instructions for a nutritious menu containing prescribed food norms and ensure inclusion of green leafy vegetables and other nutritious components in it.
- (iv) Kitchen gardens or green squares can be introduced using the waste water from kitchen and hand washing of children. This can become innovative and creative school based activity for the participation of children and teachers. The nutrition education then can be one of the major activities for children and use of vegetables in MDM can also be ensured.
- (v) In all the schools visited, branded salt was used. The brand used was different in different schools. Salt used was refined and iodized (as per the label on the packet of salt). However, storage of salt in airtight containers was not observed. Training should be given to cook cum helpers on nutrition aspects including the use of double fortified salt.
- (vi) It was observed and reported in all schools that the practice of hand-washing prior to MDM was followed. However, this was done only with water. There was no provision of soap for hand-washing. In some schools, it was observed that children carried their own soap and used the same during the hand-washing. Monitoring Management and Evaluation (MME) Funds could be used for supplying soaps for washing hands and Phenyl for cleaning the toilets.

- (vii) Implementation of the Weekly IFA Supplementation program (for weekly IFA supplementation and biannual de worming) and the School Health Program needs to be planned with the Department of Health and Family Welfare. It had been brought to the notice of the teams in several schools of Durg district that Sickle Cell Anaemia is prevalent amongst tribal children in the state. One of the teams which went to Primary and Middle School at village Sankara in Dhamdha Block of District Durg, while examining the School Health Register, found that out of total 258 children studying in the 2 schools, 32 children were diagnosed with suspected 'sickle cell anaemia' (copy enclosed). Blood samples of these children were collected by a Health Team on 04.01.2012 and sent to Jawahar Lal Nehru Hospital in Raipur with which a Medical College is also attached. However, final report is still awaited from the Hospital even after gap of one year. None of the Authorities have followed up the matter!
- (viii) The cook cum helpers are generally cooking in firewood in small kitchen cum stores in highly polluted conditions due to heavy smoke emitted by the Chulhas with little scope of passage of smoke. This environment harms the health of the cook cum helpers as well as the school children. It is recommended that state should encourage the cooking agencies to cook with smoke less Chulhas or LPG.
- (ix) It is important that all schools are instructed to display MDM logo outside walls of kitchen premises as well on any other prominent place in school so that general public is aware of the MDM scheme being implemented in the school.
- (x) Though the community takes a lot of interest in the cooking of MDM yet they should be encouraged to invest in creation of infrastructure like rain water harvesting, and dining slabs through community participation. More encouragement should be given for community participation as the community itself is going to be benefited by such initiatives.
- (xi) There is shortage of staff for implementing the scheme at all levels. It is recommended that designated staff strictly for the Scheme should be engaged by setting up of State Project Management Unit (SPMU) out of MME funds. These could be MBAs, Nutritionists and Data Entry Operators at the appropriate levels. Further, the Department should prepare a MME plan and share it with the districts and blocks and ensure that 50 % of the MME Funds are spent at the school level as per the Government of India instructions on utilization of MME Funds.
- (xii) As Management Information System integrated with IVRS will become operational very soon the districts have to speed up the process of data feeding. To handle huge data and updating the data into the web portal regularly, data entry operators have to be engaged on a regular basis in every district.
- (xiii) Grievance Redressal Mechanisms needs to be strengthened for addressing grievances under the scheme. It is suggested that at least suggestion and complaint boxes may be placed in the School campus.
- (xiv) Other recommendations:
- Need for State level Review Mission for monitoring the implementation of scheme in poorly performing districts.
  - Orientation trainings for all cooks in engaged by the cooking agencies.

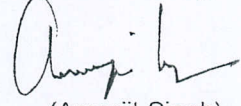
- Evaluation studies of the scheme should be conducted by the State Government through an external agency.

Kindly take necessary action on these issues as well.

4. I shall appreciate if you kindly look into the above recommendations of the Review Mission and take appropriate action in a time bound manner. A little effort on your part will go a long way to ensure that no child remains hungry in the schools. **Do remember, this is truly God's own work which we all are privileged to carry out.**

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Amarjit Singh)

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