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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: 69713/2011

Dated: 15th November 2011

Dear *Anima*,

I write to you in connection with the recent visit of the third Review Mission constituted by the Government of India to review the implementation of the Mid Day Meal Scheme in the State. The Mission presented its report to the State Government on 20th October 2011 after visiting the two selected districts of Dhar and Khandwa.

The mission appreciates the exemplary role of the teachers/headmasters observed in Government school at Baggad in Distt Dhar and Desh Gaon and Rajur in Distt Khandwa. The convergence with MNREGA to provide soak pits for the installed hand pumps and provision of smokeless chulhas needs to be widely replicated. The use of resources from the Tribal Welfare department for construction of dining hall for the children can also be up-scaled at the state level. (Photographs of the concerned schools are being enclosed). These teachers and headmasters could be suitably rewarded and used as role models for motivating other functionaries in MDMS. Similarly the role of community involvement in effective implementation of the MDMS in Baggad needs to be showcased to other PRIs in the state. The function at Khandwa on the occasion of the Global Hand Washing day was well organised and the participation of children was very encouraging. The handwashing campaign should be on an ongoing basis.

The following issues, however, need your immediate personal attention:

1. The mission took serious note of the large number of vacancies in crucial positions of Project Managers for Child Health, Gender, Equity, and Community development, Media Officer, System Analyst and MIS Manager and Quality Monitor at state level. These posts are required to be filled on an immediate basis. The situation in the districts is also disturbing with posts of 20 Task Managers, 49 Quality Monitors and 13 Computer Operators lying vacant. The State must initiate immediate action for filling up these vacant positions in a time bound manner. The decision of the state government to appoint block level co-ordinators from the MME component is appreciated; however, action for appointment of these co-ordinators may be expedited in the interest of effective implementation of MDMS in the state.
2. The mission was concerned at the lack of a computer based Financial Management Information System (FMIS). The state needs to have a time bound action plan initiated for the same during the current financial year itself. This will help the state in monitoring the expenditure which currently is very low under all the major heads of the scheme. The delay in release of funds by the state, to the districts, under the transportation head by over 3 months and for MME by 5-6 months is a case in point, that needs to be addressed.
3. The mission members observed that large quantity of food grains were being lifted by the SHGs on account of State government's order on advance lifting of food grains. In certain places there were considerably excess stocks as against the MDM guidelines for a buffer stock of one month only. The Mission noted the trend of storage of the MDM food grains in the private premises (houses) of the SHG members for security reasons; this raises concerns about safety of food grains. Further the mission had pointed out a difference in the data on



lifting of food grains in district Khandwa wherein as per the figure of lifting provided by the State Civil Supplies Corporation (SCSC) Ltd., for the period April to September 2011, the amount indicated was 1910.2 MTs (643.6 MT for Primary+ 1266.6 MT for Upper Primary); whereas the figure submitted by District Manager (SCSC) for the same period based on the allocation and lifting of the food grains by the nine lead societies in the district was 1710.8 MTs. This needs to be reconciled and a report on this discrepancy in the data may please be furnished to us at the earliest.

4. The quality of grain in the schools was found to be of a poor quality in the majority of the visited schools. As per MDM guidelines 2006, the quality of Foodgrains supplied by the FCI should be at least FAQ quality.
5. The mission observed that the coverage of school health program is not universal with only 72% schools covered State wide in 2010-11. School health check up is done once in a year and not biannually as proposed in the State NRHM plan, this was seen in both the districts that were visited, although biannual de-worming is being carried out in many schools. It was felt by the mission that the school health program was being implemented by districts in an ad hoc manner and needed strategic planning with focus on quality and needs of children. Teachers should be oriented regarding IFA supplementation protocols and regular supply of IFA tablets from health department should be ensured. Supply of weighing machine, eye examination charts and height scale to schools under NRHM should be considered. It is important to ensure school health program does not work in isolation and opportunity of convergence with ARSH, VHND and other health program should be used optimally. On the day of VHND health worker can visit school for health education and counselling; similarly in fifteen SABLA districts health check-up component can be integrated.
6. The situation in the Aastha Ashram(NCLP) school needs immediate attention as the surroundings were unhygienic and the size of the classrooms where children were sitting was very small and that too without any ventilation and electricity. The kitchen attached with the Aastha Ashram was so small that even 2-3 persons could not stand there. Teachers were not aware of the menu and were not involved in the monitoring/supervision of MDM in both the schools. It has also been observed that no official from any department paid any visit to these schools and hence the schools were lacking even the basic infrastructure. District Labour Officer informed the members of the mission that he has recently joined and prior to that only one Labour Inspector was posted in the district due to which proper monitoring of these schools was not being done.
7. The majority of the observed kitchen sheds were very poorly ventilated. In many instances, firewood was being used as a fuel for cooking the MDM, thus leading to a smoky kitchen shed. In one of the schools the fire extinguisher though available was placed in the room of the headmaster. In a few kitchens it was observed that the gas cylinders were placed besides the firewood chulhas. In view of the high prevalence of fire wood chulhas as a mode of cooking in the rural areas action may be initiated to provide fire extinguishers in the schools as per the directions of the Supreme Court. Similarly, eco-friendly chulhas (Nirdhum chullahs) may be used.
8. During the visit to schools/madarasa, the review mission observed that quality of food is not satisfactory. The Mission also found that the quantity of meal served by NAANDI was less. In all the schools/madarasas visited by the mission a general complaint was about the quality of chapatties being made available by the Naandi Foundation. The chapatties made by machines become hard and students find it very difficult to eat. In such a situation several children do not take the chapatties and have been bringing tiffins from their respective homes. This is defeating the very basic purpose of MDM and at the same time the chapatties are wasted. Quantity of chapatties and vegetables being made available in the schools was also less considering the attendance of students in the schools.
9. The mission had also pointed out violations of the terms of the MOU between the Bhopal Nagar Nigam and Naandi Foundation for supply of MDM in para 7.2 of the report. They need to be looked into immediately. There seems to be little supervisory control over such supplies;

this needs to be addressed immediately and concerned NGOs made accountable for their performance. The presence of flour (atta) sacks from a private mill (photograph enclosed) in the centralised kitchen operating in Khandwa, calls for an immediate enquiry and appropriate action.

10. In case of meal served by centralised kitchens to the children of the school, there is a provision of engagement of cook-cum-helper at school level to serve the meal to the children. However it was observed by the mission that no such provision of cook-cum-helpers was being made in the city of Bhopal and Khandwa, where the schools were being catered MDM through centralised kitchen.
11. The Review Mission found that in the Government Primary School (Ganesh Ganj, Khandwa) food plates for primary children had not been purchased; as a result all girls in this school bring food from their home. This may please be addressed.

I shall appreciate if you kindly look into the matter and ensure appropriate action is taken 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 school. Do remember, ***this is truly God's own work, which we all are privileged to carry out.*** Please feel free to write if there is anything I can do at this end for effective implementation of the MDMS in your State.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Amarjit Singh)

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