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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.11-12/2012 EE6-MDM-1

Dated 5th Oct. 2012

Dear *Mr. Fakhroo*,

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 J&K from 24th September to 30th September, 2012 through a Team comprising representatives from Government of India, Supreme Court Commissionerate for MDM and State Government of J&K. The Team covered 28 schools in two districts viz Gandarbal and Udhampur during the visit and presented its report to the State Government on 30th September 2012.

2. The Mission appreciates the steps taken by the state Government to ensure that the children get adequate quantity of good quality, hot cooked meal. The Team also appreciated the infrastructure built by the State Government, which includes well ventilated kitchen sheds equipped with fire extinguishers, and storage bins to store food-grains. This has helped the State to deliver good quality meal. The average attendance in all the visited schools was found to be good; all the children attending the schools during the visit were taking MDM. The data in respect of 28 schools covered by the Mission has revealed that the coverage of children against enrolment is 80.33%. However, the following issues need your personal attention:

3. Regularity of meal- The field observations have shown that there has been disruption in providing MDM in almost all schools of District Ganderbal and in some of the schools of Udhampur district. Details of disruption of MDM in schools has been indicated in the report. This disruption is primarily due to the non availability of foodgrains in schools. This indicates that there was systemic failure in providing foodgrains well in advance to the schools. As a result the buffer stock at the school level could not be maintained, this led to the disruption in the MDMS. Further, the Monitoring Institute had commented on Ganderbal District that the teacher had to close the school to go to collect food grains. The State may review the present multi-level transportation stages of food grains in place, and reduce the number of stages from the existing stages (FCI – CAPD – ZEO Stores – Schools) by entrusting the transportation of food grains to the schools directly the CAPD by reducing the level of ZEO stores. This will avoid the teachers' involvement in lifting of food grains.

4. Cooking Cost: The team observed shortage of funds for cooking cost in all the visited schools. In the Kashmir division, the cooking costs were not reimbursed from May 2012 onwards. In Jammu division, in some cases the reimbursement to teachers has been made after 6 months. The reimbursement was pending from April 2012 onwards, and amounted to



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almost up to Rs 20,000 in a few schools. This delayed re-imburement process would not only compromise the quality of meal provided in the schools but puts the entire responsibility of managing meals on the teachers. The State Government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced the Green Channel Scheme; under the scheme funds are made available without any interruption throughout the year for the MDMS. A copy of the scheme is enclosed. The State Government of J&K may consider introduction of a similar scheme in the State.

5. Appointment of Cooks-Cum-Helpers: The field observations revealed that cooks are not appointed as per norms. The MHRD norms provide that for one cook up to 25 children, two for 25 to 100 children, and an extra one for each addition of 100 children. In many schools with more than 100 children, the team found only one cook was appointed. As a result, the teachers and Village Education Committee members complained that the MDM has affected the teaching learning process.

6. Honorarium to Cooks: The field observation in both Ganderbal and Udhampur revealed that cooks are not provided their honorarium on time and there are huge delays. In Ganderbal, the cooks have not been paid their honorarium after May, 2012 and in Udhampur, the honorarium to cooks is pending from April 2012 onwards. In Udhampur, it was observed that cooks are provided their honorarium in cash, and considering their literacy levels, they fall vulnerable to cuts on their honorarium. It becomes worse when some of them have no idea about the amount of honorarium being paid to them. Therefore, it is important, that all cooks–helpers are paid honorarium regularly through account payee cheques/bank, so that any chance of their money being diverted is limited.

7. School Health programme: The Programme is not implemented properly in the state. In Ganderbal, only the schools near to urban centres had health checkups and schools located in interior areas and far-off areas are not visited by health teams. In Ganderbal district there was lack of clarity between School Education and Health Departments as to who will take the initiative first on account of which the Programme suffered badly. It is recommended that a Health calendar be prepared for each school, and each concerned PHC be provided a list of schools in its area. Similarly, Health cards should be maintained for all children and a record maintained in all schools about the visit of health team. Medicines, iron tablets and calcium should be made available to all children. The children needing follow-up care and referrals should be followed promptly.

8. Accountability and Transparency Issues: In some of the visited schools the records were not maintained properly. In several schools cooking cost is paid through Self/bearer cheque, and this increases the chances of money being siphoned off. It is important that an account is opened for all schools for managing MDM money in the school to reduce the chances of funds being diverted. Importantly, the teachers didn't have any idea about the period of time they were allocated food grains last time, which has resulted primarily because the coupons/challans provided to them by concerned ZEO office do not mention about the month/quarter for which food grains were provided. This has affected transparent functioning of the scheme in the state. Though officers of the Education Department pay visit to the school, there is no record of such visits and their observations. To promote transparency menu and logo should be displayed at the prominent places it should also give information about the stock of foodgrains and the utilization for a particular period. All records should be made available to the visiting stakeholders to ensure transparency in the use of public funds.

9. Monitoring and Community Involvement: The field observations revealed that there was limited community involvement. The V.E.C members or PRIs also played a restricted

role in monitoring of MDM in schools. Despite some efforts in Udhampur, since September 2012 onwards, no parent teacher meetings are organized to discuss about the MDM or any such activity in school.

10. Capacity Building: The field visits revealed that most of the teachers don't understand the broad vision and objectives of the MDM programme and entitlements under it. Therefore, it is important that an orientation/training is organised for all teachers looking after the MDMS, so that they understand the vision and purpose of MDM programme; identification of malnourished children and maintenance of records.

11. Rental Buildings: In Kashmir region hundreds of schools are located in rental buildings and State Government does not provide them with kitchen sheds. These schools do not have adequate space for preparing meal in hygienic conditions. The Government may consider setting up of cluster kitchens for supplying hot cooked meal to the children in rented school buildings.

12. The Scheme needs close monitoring by dedicated staff as there is shortage of staff for implementing the Scheme at all levels. State Project Management Unit may be set up with MBAs, Nutritionists, Accountants, Data Entry Operators at the appropriate levels from the MME funds to relieve the teachers from the burden of running the Scheme.

13. Some of these issues could have been addressed if the State Level Steering cum Monitoring Committee meets regularly to review these issues. We had requested you earlier in April, 2012 in this regard, unfortunately, even now the meeting has not been held. I shall appreciate if the SSMC meeting is held regularly to sort out the issues with other Departments and smooth implementation of the Scheme.

During 2012-13 we will be spending Rs. 11937 crore of public funds on the programme, not including the contribution of the states. A little effort on your part will ensure that no child remains hungry at school! We owe it to the people of J&K and the country as a whole. We are all privileged to be involved in this noble mission – God's very own work!

With regards,

Yours sincerely



(Amarjit Singh)

Shri Farooq Ahmed Fakhtoo,
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