



NEWSLETTER ANTRIEP

Vol. 29 No. 2, July - December 2023

Bi-annual

Addressing Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes

The current issue of the newsletter focuses on 'Addressing Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes'. This issue includes articles written in this context by various experts and researchers from different member-institutions, such as Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. In addition to the articles, the issue also includes a section on important news and events in the context of these member-institutions.

In this Issue...

School Meal Programmes in Bangladesh	3
China Vigorously Promotes the Nutrition Improvement Programme	5
PM POSHAN Abhiyan and School Leadership in India	6
Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes in Pakistan	8
Addressing Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes in Pakistan	9
Philippine Initiatives in Nurturing Healthy Basic Education Learners	11
Strong Foundation of a Child's Future: Promoting Maternal Health and Child Nutrition for Disadvantaged Population in the Philippines	13
News from ANTRIEP Member Institutions	14

The first article discusses the national school feeding programme in Bangladesh, which was launched in 2010, with the World Food Programme (WFP) as a key partner. The author notes that by 2022, more than 3 million children in 104 sub-districts had been reached with fortified biscuits and, in some locations, hot meals. This has translated to tangible results, with the enrollment rate of children at the primary level rising up to a satisfactory level. Following up on this positive impact, the government of Bangladesh approved the National School Meal Policy, which, according to the author, has achieved its targets successfully, thereby positioning Bangladesh as an example in the context of school meal programmes and high rate of students' enrollment in pre-primary and primary levels of education.

The situation in China, and the measures that the Chinese government undertook in this regard have been discussed in the second article. The author notes that China vigorously promotes the Nutrition Improvement Programme and thereby continues to improve the nutritional status of rural students. The country started its journey along this path in 2011 by implementing the Nutrition Improvement Programme for Rural Students in Compulsory Education, which provides nutritional meal subsidies to students in less developed areas. In an attempt to expand its reach and efficacy, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education have taken further steps, including increasing the financial outlay from the part of the government.

The third article, in the Indian context, elaborates on the recently adapted Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN), which is one of the schemes under the National Food Security Act 2013 in India. Being one of the pioneering nations in terms of introducing school meal programmes, India has been seeking and making further forays into this scheme so as to widen its network and strengthen its efficacy at the ground level. Towards that direction, the role of school leadership has been recognised. The school leadership can create a sustainable learning environment while addressing the major challenges that have arisen over the past decades by ensuring involvement of all the stakeholders, especially the parents and the community, to secure regular participation of children in schools and thereby enhancing the enrolment ratio as well as learning outcomes.

In the fourth article, the author underlines the necessity of a school meal programme in Pakistan, since the country does not have any operational governmental scheme in this regard. The school meal programmes can provide Pakistani students with the basic nutrients they require, which help them have a better, healthier, and more hopeful future. The subsequent article reiterates these points whilst adding that even as there is no governmental involvement as of now, there are some academic institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that run small-level nutritional programmes which provide free healthy school meals and create nutritional awareness. Most of these programmes are self-financed or rely on philanthropists.

Written in the context of the Philippines, the sixth article discusses various efforts undertaken in the Philippines to nurture healthy learners. The Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced the School-Based Feeding Programme (SBFP), which is complemented by

Central Kitchens, Vegetable Gardens in Schools, Global School Meals Coalition Initiatives, and Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger. An act was introduced to institutionalise a National Feeding Programme for under-nourished children in public daycare, Kindergarten and Elementary Schools in order to combat hunger and under-nutrition among children. In a similar vein, the next article adds that the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2017-22 was implemented with the goal of improving the nutritional status of the country to achieve quality human resources, reduce inequalities, and bring down child and maternal mortality. The plan gives priority to low-income families and communities who have scant access to resources and services. The programmes under the plan are designed to reach geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, indigenous people, and urban poor.

The articles incorporated in the current issue have chalked out the issue at hand on a broad level—both in terms of underlining the imperative nature and acute need for a school meal programme as well as charting the course of action towards implementing it effectively so as to counter and eliminate malnutrition and under-nutrition among children. Several measures and policies have been planned and commenced by each country to alleviate these issues. While the results of these initiatives have been varying in their rate of success, the fact remains that a concise discussion of these policies, as done here, will allow the stakeholders to juxtapose their approaches and fine-tuning them as per their own respective contexts.

Madhumita Bandyopadhyay
Editor, ANTRIEP Newsletter

School Meal Programmes in Bangladesh

The health and well-being of the students is one of the main issues to ensure the quality of education. Like other countries in the world, Bangladesh considers it as one of the important areas in the field of education. Bangladesh is a highly populated country where more than 21 million children are studying in Primary Level Education, and as many as 88,89,674 students have been studying in secondary level (Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021, 2022). Bangladesh faces multiple challenges to ensure quality education in the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education. The dropout rate at the primary school level is 14.15 per cent, and that of Secondary level is 35.98 per cent. There are several reasons behind this situation, among which poverty is the most crucial one.

Many countries around the world addressed the children's nutritional needs seriously and took different initiatives. Initiation of School Meal Programme is one of them. India's mid-day meal scheme for school students is the largest school meal programme in the world. As of 2022, around 89 per cent of schools in rural areas of India had a kitchen shed for cooking mid-day meals. The mid-day meal programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in the primary and upper primary classes.

Realising the importance of this issue and taking inspiration from the best practices that have been

initiated by other countries, especially neighboring countries like India, the government of Bangladesh has been investing in the national school feeding programme since 2010, with World Food Programme (WFP) as a key partner. By 2022, more than 3 million children in 104 sub-districts had been reached with fortified biscuits, and in some locations, hot meals. To its continuation, the government of Bangladesh approved the National School Meal Policy that aimed at providing 30 per cent of the nutritional needs of every primary school student in the country. It aimed to ensure that 14 million children, aged between 3 and 12 years across Bangladesh, would receive school feeding by 2023 and it has almost achieved its goal successfully.

Recently, the Finance Minister said that the school feeding programme (2023-26) is going to start soon again broadly. The government intends to allocate 34 thousand 722 crore for primary and mass education in the financial year 2023-24, which was 31 thousand 761 crore in the year 2022-23. Further, the government has taken the 'School Feeding Programme' very seriously and this is probably one of the reasons why the budget for primary and mass education has been increased more than last time. By this initiative, great progress will be made in ensuring quality primary education by preventing students' dropout, meeting nutritional deficiencies of children, ensuring

For Editorial correspondence, please contact:

The Editor

ANTRIEP Newsletter

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)

(Deemed to be University)

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110 016, India

Tel:(+ 91 11) 26544800, 26565600, Fax: (+ 91 11) 26853041, 26865180

Email: antriep@gmail.com; madhumita@niepa.ac.in Website: www.niepa.ac.in

100 per cent enrollment in schools, and essentially preventing learning deficits through regular school attendance.

Under the national school feeding programme, pre-primary and primary school children usually got formulated nutritious 75 grams of biscuits. Later, the government took the initiative to increase its length, and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education finalised a draft policy. According to the new policy, students in every pre-primary and primary school will get mid-day meal. This is in addition to the 75 grams of specially formulated nutritious biscuits will be provided per student. In some schools, experimentally cooked meals are provided to students. Besides it has been decided that cooked meals will also be provided to other schools in the country soon. The new policy has specified the types of meals that will be provided to students. The list of food included *rice, khichuri* i.e. *rice mixed with beans and dal (lentil), dal, vegetables*, etc. The food will be delivered to local communities in rural areas and appropriate institutions in urban areas. Sometimes, processed foods like *bread, dry fruits, milk*, etc. will be provided to students. Geographical environment has been taken into account in preparing the food list. Water stricken areas (*Haor-Baor*) and hilly areas have been assigned special consideration.

The government will allocate the initial fund to launch this programme and then search for various donor agencies to continue such meaningful programme. Besides, money will also be mobilised from local government funds, corporate social responsibility, private voluntary organisations, community-based organisations and participation of parents. The main base of human resource development of the country is the child population, who are studying at the pre-primary and primary levels. If they are given

food aid, malnutrition will be eliminated and dropout rate will be reduced automatically. The government is planning to set up a cell under the Directorate of Primary Education to implement this programme.

School feeding programmes will definitely provide parents and students with awareness and general understanding of life and nutrition. They will be made aware of the nutritional value of food and food intake. Even today, a large number of children in Bangladesh cannot go to school; even if they can, they can hardly concentrate on their studies due to lack of food. A child, who comes to the school without proper breakfast in the morning, cannot concentrate in school studies. School feeding programmes for providing nutritious food has had a positive impact on children. Research-based statistics show that schools where mid-day meals are served have higher attendance rates. Food suppresses their appetite so they can focus on studies. One of the significant achievements that Bangladesh has made in the recent years is raising the enrollment rate of children at the primary level to a satisfactory level.

In conclusion, it can be said that these achievements have given Bangladesh a new identity in the global context. Bangladesh is considered as an example in the context of school meal programmes and high rate of students' enrollment in pre-primary and primary level education.

Rokshana Bilkis
and

Md. Masud Rana
NAEM, Bangladesh

Email: rokshana.naem@gmail.com
tmasud.naem@gmail.com

China Vigorously Promotes the Nutrition Improvement Programme

The Party Central Committee and the State Council of China place a high priority on the implementation of nutritional meals to improve the health condition of rural students. In recent years, the central finance has earnestly implemented the central government's decisions and deployment, continuously optimising policies and measures, and increasing investment towards this direction. In September 2021, the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, issued the Notice on the In-depth Implementation of the Nutrition Improvement Programme for Rural Compulsory Education Students (hereinafter referred to as the "Notice"), aiming to further increase the national basic standard for nutritional dietary subsidies for students (hereinafter referred to as the "diet subsidy standards"), guide and supervise local governments to strengthen school food management, effectively implement local expenditure responsibilities, strictly regulate the use of funds, and ensure this people-benefiting policy is implemented continuously, orderly and effectively.

China started to implement a Nutrition Improvement Programme for Rural Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as the "Nutrition Improvement Programme") in the fall semester of 2011, based on subsidy standards uniformly set by the central government, which provides nutritional meal subsidies to students in less-developed areas. The central government bears the costs of national pilot areas; the local governments bear the costs of local pilot areas; and the central government provides a fixed amount of subsidies, equivalent to 3 Yuan per student per day, once the local governments have put the diet subsidy standards into effect. The Nutrition Improvement Programme has covered 1,552 counties spread over 28 provinces in the whole country by 2021, benefiting approximately 37.95 million

students each year, including 20.92 million in national pilot regions, and 17.03 million in local pilot regions.

Ever since the Nutrition Improvement Programme was launched, rural students in less developed areas no longer have to carry dry food to school and cook over street fires. The dilemma of eating only two meals per day has changed, and the pass rate of rural students' physical fitness and health increased from 70.3 per cent in 2012 to 86.7 per cent in 2021, narrowing to 5 percentage points compared with the national pass rate, which has been broadly praised by parents and all sectors of the society.

The Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education released a notice to improve the policy's effectiveness and the nutritional status of rural kids on an ongoing basis. It was explicitly stated that the diet subsidy standard for rural compulsory education students has been raised from 4 Yuan to 5 Yuan per student per day, beginning in the fall semester of 2021. The national government will continue to bear the entire cost of the funds required for national pilot areas; the local government will bear the cost of the funds required for pilot areas at the local level; and the central government will provide a fixed amount of subsidies based on the daily cost of the diet, up to 4 Yuan per student, once the local government has implemented the standards.

In order to alleviate the pressure of local expenditure, the central finance allocated the necessary funds in advance to improve the standards of local pilot areas during the autumn semester of 2021, explicitly requested the implementation of the nutrition improvement plan within the existing pilot framework, and no longer expanded the scope of the pilot. The central finance issued 3.034 billion Yuan of funds to raise the standard of students' nutritional dietary subsidies, and granted a total of 26.034 billion Yuan for students' nutritional

diet subsidies for the entire year of 2021, a 12.9 per cent increase over the previous year. Since the year 2011, the central finance has cumulatively allocated 196.734 billion Yuan for students' nutritional diet subsidies. At the same time, the Notice also guides and urges local authorities to effectively implement normalised epidemic prevention and control measures, continuously strengthen school feeding management, improve the quality of feeding, and resolutely stop food and beverage wastefulness; strengthen provincial-level coordination, fulfil local expenditure responsibilities, and strengthen fund management to ensure that nutritional diet subsidies are in place in a timely and sufficient manner and students are provided with high-quality food of equal value.

The Ministry of Finance will keep following the requirements of the Party Central Committee and the State Council, as well as collaborating with the Ministry of Education to guide localities in the implementation of the Nutrition Improvement Programme, to boost the nutritional status of rural students in less-developed areas, and to create a favourable environment for the healthy growth of students.

Xiaoli Du

SAES, China

Email: dxli@cnsaes.org.cn

PM POSHAN Abhiyan and School Leadership in India

The recently adapted Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) is one of the schemes under the National Food Security Act 2013 in India. India has attempted many reforms to bring about changes at the grass root levels of the school system. The range of vital changes includes professional development of teachers, overhauling of school infrastructure, and increasing enrolment of children in schools. Apart from these, the most significant one was providing nutrition to children for successful completion of schooling. The importance of health and nutrition in India was acknowledged long back as the Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM) was implemented in the Union Territory of Puducherry under the French Administration since 1930. Post-independence, the Mid-day Meal Scheme was first launched in Tamil Nadu in the early 1960s. The Supreme Court of India, in 2002, ordered the implementation of the scheme in all of the states. To further enhance the health management and nutritional status of children, the MDM has been reformed as PM POSHAN ABHIYAN

in 2018, which includes the holistic health assessment and provision of nutrition to the child in school till Class VIII.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAOs) latest report on Asia and the Pacific-Regional overview of Food Security and Nutrition has drawn attention to hunger and under-nutrition faced by a large section of population in the region, especially in South Asia which has a significant under-nourished population. In India, the National Family Health Survey has shown improvement in infant and child mortality rates over the years. However one needs to look outside the box to understand the scenario in the context of schools. Schools, being the secondary socialising agency, have always played a significant role in shaping the nations' future. Post-independence, across the decades, several commissions and committees proposed reforms to rebuild the school system in India. However, the issue of improved health and nutrition for the child was always missing.

The diverse socio-economic landscape in India with around 70 per cent rural population and high urban migration rate, the PM POSHAN ABHIYAN certainly aids towards building an enhanced learning environment amongst children, as it ensures their maximum participation within the school premises. It is the responsibility of the school leaders to use this situation and convert this enhanced learning environment to involve the children in actual learning.

The school leaders can use the PM POSHAN ABHIYAN to create a schooling mechanism in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 1: Zero Hunger, and SDG 4: Quality Education, by ensuring involvement of all the stakeholders, especially the parents and the community to secure regular participation of children in schools, thereby enhancing the enrolment ratio as well as learning outcomes. Various initiatives can be undertaken at the school level to ensure better participation of all the stakeholders. This may include practices like involving parents in deciding the menu; celebrating special days as Tithi Bhojan, involving children in nurturing the kitchen gardens, etc. These examples are some of the best practices of the school leaders documented across India.

Malnutrition can negatively impact a child's learning, consequently deterring the chances for employment and his/her overall socio-economic development. Investing in nutrition from an early stage of development is an essential aspect for a robust education system. In India, where there is cultural, socio-economic and geographical diversity, it is imperative to look for the 'context specific' nutritional needs of the child. The daily nutrition for the child should be designed keeping in mind the locally available food-items and the specific regional food habit which is also culture-sensitive. Further, school authorities must initiate community participation through community leadership to make initiative like PM POSHAN ABHIYAN successful at grass root level. This would result in holistic development of child and ensure better learning in schools.

Rashmi Mishra
and
Santwana G. Mishra
NIEPA, India
Email: rashmi@niepa.ac.in
santwana@niepa.ac.in

For further details on ANTRIEP activities, please contact

Dr. Muriel Poisson
**International Institute for Educational
Planning (IIEP)**
7-9 Rue Eugene- Delacroix
75116 PARIS, France
Fax: + (33) 1 40728366
Email: m.poisson@iiep.unesco.org

Dr. Madhumita Bandyopadhyay
**National Institute of Educational Planning
and Administration (NIEPA)**
(Deemed to be University)
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg,
NEW DELHI-110016, India
Fax: + (91 11) 26853041, 26865180
Email: madhumita@niepa.ac.in

Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes in Pakistan

Proper nutrition is essential for the physical and cognitive development of the body, and a significant synergistic relationship exists between nutrition and disease. Therefore, good nutrition is essential for the prevention, control, and treatment of diet-related diseases. Food insecurity, poverty, and all forms of malnutrition are big challenges in Pakistan, which is the nation with the highest rate of child malnutrition (ranked 99 out of 129), and has a Global Hunger Index (2022) score of 26.1 (severity of hunger classified as "serious"). This indicator, which measures whether a nation is meeting the Sustainable Development Goals connected to hunger, is derived from national statistics on malnourishment, including child mortality, child wasting (low weight for height), and child stunting (low height for age). About 40 per cent of children are stunted, according to the most current National Nutrition Survey (NNS) statistics, and the situation is frequently worse in highly marginalised populations. The World Food Programme estimates that 60 per cent of Pakistanis experience food insecurity. As per a recent study, 8 out of 10 children in Pakistan do not have access to the right kind of food, due to which around 10 million Pakistani children suffer from stunted growth. Children in underprivileged neighbourhoods often struggle to obtain adequate nutrition. This leads to malnourishment, causing frequent illnesses that prevent them from attending school. On top of that, going to school with an empty stomach does not help either. Hunger can result in frustration and irritability which adversely impact a child's behaviour.

Providing wholesome school meals to kids makes them feel happier and more in control of their emotions. Eating a nutritious meal also helps students behave better in the classroom. A youngster who eats well can also focus more intently on his/her schoolwork and engage in constructive interactions with peers and teachers. This benefits the entire school community by fostering

a more peaceful learning environment. Students get ample opportunity to interact with their friends and form relationships during the course of having school meals. A positive school culture can be fostered by encouraging a feeling of camaraderie and belonging through meal sharing. Pupils are more inclined to act politely and cooperatively when they sense a connection to their classmates. School meals serve as a shield, guaranteeing that children get the nutrition they need to grow up strong and healthy. Kids gain the energy and nutrients they need, to stay active, focused, and strong for the day when they eat wholesome, delectable school lunches. If these meals are stuffed with whole grains, proteins, fruits, and vegetables, they can significantly improve their health. By strengthening their immune systems, this amazing diet lowers their risk of catching illness.

Pakistan currently has no operational school food programme at the national or provincial level. The Tawana Pakistan Project (TPP), a joint venture funded by the government from September 2002 to June 2005, was the last substantial step towards school meals launched in 4035 girls' primary schools in the rural areas of the poorest districts of Pakistan identified from the list provided by the government.

The role of NGOs and other volunteering organisations can be considered in this regard. Various NGOs in Pakistan, such as The Citizens Foundation (TCF), Fortify Education Foundation (FEF), Ek Plate Biryani, and Akhuwat Foundation, also run school meal programmes as part of their efforts to support education and alleviate poverty. These programmes play a crucial role in addressing children's nutritional needs, reducing hunger, and promoting school enrolment and attendance. The most prominent of the NGOs is Allah Walay Trust (AWT). AWT has been working on Food and Nutrition in Pakistan since 2010. It has provided

free food (cooked & dry rations) to needy/low-income families for over 13 years. The Trust is feeding 47,184 meals daily with healthy, nutritious and quality food in different schools in Lahore, Islamabad, Gilgit, Skardu, Chillas and Faisalabad.

The school meal programmes can provide Pakistani students with the basic nutrients they require, which help them have a better, healthier, and more hopeful future. With every healthy mouthful, these kids are sowing the seeds for a better future. Thus, addressing the pressing issues of child hunger, under-nourishment, and academic disadvantage may benefit from a sustainable

national school meal programme that is well-funded, regularly monitored, and actively maintained. Pakistan can improve its efforts to address children's nutritional needs, prevent classroom hunger, increase enrolment and attendance in schools, and strengthen school meal programmes for better health outcomes and overall well-being by concentrating on these important areas and putting evidence-based strategies into practice.

Shaista Bano

PIE, Pakistan

Email: shaistabano2992@gmail.com

Addressing Children's Nutritional Needs and School Meal Programmes in Pakistan

School-age is an important phase of a child's life reflecting rapid physical growth and cognitive development. This is the age when food and dietary habits are formed. Nutritional attitudes are strongly influenced by family practices and socio-cultural factors. Family size and income together-with parent's knowledge and education are all factors involved in forming a child's feeding patterns thereby influencing his/her nutrition status. Nutritional status has an impact on child's growth, development, and school performance.

Literatures provide evidences that, in general, dietary practices of school children are unhealthy. In Pakistan, children living in rural as well as urban areas have low intake of fruits and vegetables. School children from major cities report high consumption of bakery items, fast foods, and sugary drinks. Current lifestyles show a shift in dietary preferences from traditional healthy home-cooked foods to processed "Low Nutrient Density

Foods" (LNDF). More popularly known as "junk food", LNDF represent foods which are nutrient poor but calorie dense, usually containing high levels of sugar, salt, saturated fat, trans fat, and food additives. Intensive marketing of LNDF, especially targeting children, has contributed towards affecting people's perception of foods and changing dietary behaviour. LNDF and excess sugar consumption are markers of an unhealthy lifestyle and poor dietary patterns.

Pakistan's high rate of child under-nutrition has remained unchanged over decades, with a significant portion of the child population still suffering from various nutritional deficiencies, stunted growth, micro-nutrient deficiencies, and under-weight. According to Pakistan National Nutrition Survey (NNS 2018), more than half of the Pakistani children, aged 5-19 years, are anaemic (53.7 per cent) and Vitamin-A deficient (51.5 per cent). The implications of malnutrition extend

beyond immediate health concerns, affecting children's educational achievements and their future economic productivity. Cultural taboos on consumption of some available foods, and restricting food during illness have adversely affected the quantity and diversity of food in children's diet. Economic recession, inflation, food and water scarcity, and natural disasters have worsened the living conditions and forced people to opt for food that costs less money, fuel, and time. Climate change as well as changes in ecological conditions have implications related to food availability, and food scarcity is becoming an issue. Combating hunger and malnutrition is no more a moral duty or a policy choice; it is a legally binding human rights obligation.

Addressing the nutritional needs of children is fundamental to improving quality of life in the nation's future. School meal programmes emerge as an essential intervention in the battle against child malnutrition, especially in the underprivileged settings. By guaranteeing at least one nutritious meal per day, these initiatives not only help mitigate hunger but also serve as platforms for promoting nutritional education and cultivating healthy eating habits. These programmes can address the nutritional divide, aiming to nurture a healthier and more robust generation. Sustainable behaviour change in school children requires building children's knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy, together with physical and socio-cultural changes in their environment. The adoption of school meal programmes is a promising solution which can support in meeting the critical nutritional needs of children. It can also be a means to instill healthy eating habits, and well-planned meals can help in increasing dietary diversity for young children.

The benefits of school meal programmes are manifold, including improvements in children's academic performance and overall health, due to the intrinsic link between adequate nutrition and cognitive function. Children with access to nutritious meals tend to exhibit better concentration, memory retention, and

academic outcomes. Moreover, the provision of regular meals can enhance school attendance rates, as the prospect of receiving food encourages children to attend the schools. The implementation of school meal programmes in Pakistan holds significant promise for addressing the critical nutritional needs of its children. These programmes stand as vital tools for improving physical and cognitive development, paving the way for a healthier and more educated generation.

However, the path to implementing school meal programmes is fraught with obstacles. Financial constraints pose a significant barrier, as the costs associated with establishing and maintaining these initiatives can be daunting for a low-income country. Additionally, logistical challenges, such as the absence of infrastructure for safe and hygienic meal preparation and distribution, complicate these efforts. Cultural preferences and dietary restrictions also demand careful consideration in ensuring success and acceptance of school meals. It is crucial to design meals that are not only nutritious but also culturally appropriate and appealing to children across diverse regions. This requires an in-depth understanding of local food systems, preferences, and nutritional needs, which may vary markedly from one area to another.

An ideal example of a school lunch programme was the Tawana Pakistan Project. This multifaceted project aimed to improve the nutritional status and school enrolment of primary school age girls and, at the same time, empower village women to take collective decisions. Funded by the Government of Pakistan and implemented in 4035 rural government girls' schools by Aga Khan University team and local NGO's, the project functioned during 2002-2005. Through a reflective learning process, women learnt to plan balanced menus, purchase food, prepare and serve a noon meal at school from locally available foods at nominal costs the project trained field workers, community organisers, school teachers, and rural women in relation to nutrition. Child anthropometry was recorded at baseline and every six months thereafter.

Wasting, under-weightage and stunting decreased by 45 per cent, 22 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. School enrolment increased by 40 per cent and women's ability to plan balanced meals improved. This pilot project demonstrated great promise and success but, at the same time, it faced bureaucratic issues and challenges.

Presently, in Pakistan, some academic institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) run small level nutritional programmes which provide free healthy school meals and create nutritional awareness. Most of these programmes are self-financed or rely on philanthropists. Some work in collaboration with

either the international organisations like World Health Organization, UNICEF, etc., or with the government. Nonetheless, the success of these initiatives hinges on overcoming substantial challenges through innovative solutions, community involvement, and collaborative efforts. By uniting health professionals, policymakers, and community stakeholders, there is potential of transforming the nutritional landscape for children in Pakistan and similar low-income countries.

Ayesha Zahid Khan

AKU, Pakistan

Email: ayesha.khan@aku.edu

Philippine Initiatives in Nurturing Healthy Basic Education Learners

In pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 - ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all - education systems around the world contend with complex realities. Quality education is deemed as attained when learning outcomes are high. In the Philippines, there are various efforts to nurture healthy learners. The School-Based Feeding Programme (SBFP) of the Department of Education (DepEd) is complemented by Central Kitchens, Gulayan sa Paaralan Programme (GPP - Vegetable Gardens in Schools), Global School Meals Coalition initiatives, and Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger. The Republic Act 11037, institutionalised a National Feeding Programme for Undernourished Children in Public Day Care, Kindergarten and Elementary Schools to Combat Hunger and Undernutrition among Filipino Children, that was ratified on 20 June, 2018, constitutes the primary statutory basis for the implementation of SBFP. The law aims to implement programmes that sustain and improve the health of school children through the SBFP.

The SBFP is one of the major programmes of DepEd with a budget allocation of P11.7 B for the Fiscal Year 2024. With the launching of the MATATAG (Resilient Education) Agenda, DepEd is earnest in taking good care of learners by promoting inclusive education and learner well-being. For the coming school year 2024-25, the feeding days and the budget per food commodities increased from 120 days to 220 days for the regular component (hot meals) with the budget of P25.00 per learner per day and 55 days for the milk component with the budget of P22.00 per learner. By targeting the severely wasted (SW) and wasted (W) Kindergarten to Grade 6 learners, for the coming school year, the programme plans to feed more than 1.6 million severely wasted and wasted learners.

The extension of feeding days from 120 days to 220 days will address the under-nourishment which results in repeater beneficiaries after 120-feeding days for six months are finished, and the remaining six months leave them without meals. This ensures that the learners will

be continuously provided with healthy meals throughout the school year.

Reported best practices in implementing SBFP include augmentation from canteen funds and GPP produce in preparing enhanced meals; systematic distribution of food packs using an app; and presence of parent volunteers in cooking and distributing hot meals.

To scale best practices, a recognition programme for best school implementers and parent volunteers is held; SBFP focal persons and other stakeholders are capacitated and given technical assistance; and advocacy and information drives are intensified.

When asked about the challenges hindering effective SBFP implementation, the focal persons identified the following: the heavy workload of teachers assigned to the programme; difficulty in transporting food supplies in remote areas; suppliers failing to deliver the purchased ingredients; changes in the SBFP focal persons at the school level; and delayed downloading of SBFP funds.

The challenges were addressed through the following initiatives: employing additional personnel to perform tasks related to SBFP implementation; adjusting the type of food commodities delivered in preparing local food/menu; strengthening linkages with LGUs; and intensifying coordination among SBFP implementers.

With regard to ideas on how to improve the implementation of SBFP, the focal persons interviewed recommended the following: hiring of additional personnel for SBFP, including nutritionists-dieticians for every School's Division Office, with upgraded positions; establishing fully operational central kitchens; integrating SBFP with GPP; providing standard weighing scales to monitor learners' weight; making available clean water facilities; and using local food/menu that are nutritious and fit for the beneficiaries' taste buds.

Just like any other country, the Philippines has been focusing on efforts to nurture healthy K-12 learners. SBFP is being expanded to ensure that school feeding happens longer. Schools have been able to enhance SBFP implementation by using additional resources and harnessing partnerships. Best practices are being scaled up. Implementers have been able to address the challenges. They are also aware of ways to further improve programme implementation.

Diosdado "Dads" SAN ANTONIO

SEAMEO INNOTECH, Philippines

Email: dads@seameo-innotech.org

The *January-June 2024* and the *July-December 2024* issues of the ANTRIEP Newsletter will focus on the themes '**Importance of Incentives in School Education**' and '**Shadow Education and its Implication on School Education**' respectively.

Strong Foundation of a Child's Future: Promoting Maternal Health and Child Nutrition for Disadvantaged Population in the Philippines

Proper nutrition plays a crucial role in a child's physical and cognitive development as it provides the foundation for his/her future health and well-being. Therefore, nutritional problems, in childhood, may lead to irreversible consequences in child development. Children, especially those in disadvantaged situations, are at an increased risk to malnutrition.

In ensuring the health of the child, maternal health is also an important aspect. According to the 2015 National Nutrition Survey, adolescent pregnant women, who are working, have poor educational attainment, and come from the poorest wealth index and have relatively higher levels of under-nutrition. The identified immediate causes of child and maternal under-nutrition include inadequate dietary intake and disease. These immediate causes are interrelated which include food insecurity, poor caring and feeding practices, and poor home environmental conditions and inadequate health services.

With the goal of improving the nutritional status of the country to achieve quality human resources, reduce inequalities, and bring down child and maternal mortality, the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2017-2022 was implemented in partnership with non-government organizations and other development partners. It gives priority to low-income families and communities who have less access to resources and services. The programmes as mentioned in PPAN 2017-2022 are designed to reach geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, indigenous people, and urban poor.

According to the National Nutrition Council (2017), a crucial component in the design of PPAN 2017-22 is the first 1000 days of a child. This covers pregnancy until the first two years of a child. Having poor nutrition at this stage of life would have irreversible effects to the

development of a child which impacts until adulthood. Therefore, the programmes and projects need to focus first on this life stage. The First 1000 Days Programme in ECCD is among the programmes promoted in local government units (LGUs) in order to deliver nutritional outcomes. Its implementation is supported by one of the identified priority concerns for legislation which is "Programme Strengthening and Institutionalisation of the First 1000 Days Programme".

Other programmes that intend to promote health and nutrition include nutrition-specific interventions and nutrition-sensitive programmes. The nutrition-specific programmes intend to produce nutritional outcomes directly. These include programmes on food and nutrition intake, behavioural change programmes, micro-nutrient and dietary supplementation, and mandatory food fortification, among others.

Promoting health and nutrition among children requires a holistic approach that gives emphasis to the first 1000 days of a child, including maternal health. The efforts in addressing under-nutrition need to cover not only the immediate causes but also the underlying and societal causes. In such an endeavour, it requires the involvement of various stakeholders in different fields, but more importantly at the school level, through the collaboration between schools, communities, and partners. By addressing the nutritional needs of children, a society where children can achieve their full potential can be realised.

Erlene G. Umali

and

Sherlyne A. Almonte-Acosta

SEAMEO INNOTECH, Philippines

Email: erlene@seameo-innotech.org

she@seameo-innotech.org

News from ANTRIEP Member Institutions (July-December 2023)

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

Bangladesh

- CAMPE organised a "Stakeholder Consultation on School Meal" on 23 July, 2023 at the UCEP Auditorium, Mirpur, Dhaka to collect inputs from relevant people on a draft "stakeholder mapping" to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of advocacy initiatives in the light of the "National School Meal Policy 2019".
- Leading education experts and researchers shared key findings from the latest study of "Education Watch titled Post-Pandemic: Recovery and Renewal of School Education". CAMPE, the secretariat of the Education Watch, organised the event on 9 September, 2023 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC), Dhaka.
- Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) celebrated its remarkable three-decade commitment to advancing quality education for all on 9 September, 2023.

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA)

India

- NIEPA organised a national workshop on "Access and Participation with Special Focus on Preschool and Elementary Education", from 4-6 July, 2023 at NIEPA, New Delhi.
- Held a national seminar on "Social Responsibility and Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions: Policies and Practices" in July 2023.

- Organised an orientation programme on "Leadership in Educational Governance for District Education Officers", from 21-25 August, 2023.
- Conducted an orientation workshop on "Education of Disadvantaged and Weak under RTE: Policy Issues and Programme Interventions", in October 2023.
- A National Conference and Award Function for Innovations and Good Practices was organised on 05 December 2023. It was an Award Ceremony on Innovations and Good Practices in Educational Administration for District and Block Level Education Officers on December 5, 2023, in the presence of the Hon'ble Union Minister of Education and Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, as the Chief Guest to the award ceremony.
- The Department of School and Non-Formal Education, NIEPA, organised a two days' National workshop from 26-27 October 2023 on National Education Policy 2020: Transforming Teacher Education in India, which was addressed by Shri. Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India, in the inaugurated session.

Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB)

Malaysia

- IAB organised an Education Leadership Webinar Series 4/2023 Institut Aminuddin Baki North Branch: "Consensus Forming a Culture of Innovation in Realizing a Civilized Malaysia", on 6 December, 2023.

- Aminuddin Baki Institute Sarawak Branch organized the "Sarawak State Disadvantaged School Education Leader Settlement Program 2023", on 24 October, 2023.
- Held an Educational Leadership Webinar: "Human Governance in Student Learning Management", on 29 September, 2023.

The Aga Khan Education Service

(AKES)

Pakistan

- On 1 December, 2023, the Aga Khan Mzizima Secondary School (AKMSS), Dar es Salaam, held a graduation ceremony for its Form 4 students from the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) curriculum.
- From 10-11 November, 2023, the Aga Khan Schools (AKS) held its annual Climate and Environment Conference. The conference was attended by more than 160 students from the Aga Khan Academies in Dhaka, Hyderabad, Maputo and Mombasa, Aga Khan Mzizima Secondary School, Dar es Salaam; Aga Khan School, Dhaka; Aga Khan High School, Kampala; Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Karachi; Aga Khan School, Garden; Diamond Jubilee High School, Mumbai; Aga Khan Academy, Nairobi; and Aga Khan School, Osh.
- The Aga Khan School (AKS), Mundra hosted a heartwarming alumni reunion on 11 November, 2023, bringing together the threads of cherished memories and lifelong friendships. The event was meticulously planned and spearheaded by a dedicated team, which included some of the school's active and enthusiastic alumni.

- On 8 September, 2023, students and teachers from the Aga Khan Nursery School, Mombasa celebrated "International Literacy Day", with this year's theme being "Promoting Literacy for a World in Transition: Building the Foundation for Sustainable and Peaceful Societies".

National Institute of Education

Sri Lanka

- 25th National RESC Conference & 10th National Conference on Language Assessment organised on 5-7 December 2023.

Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES)

Vietnam

- On the morning of December 27, 2023, at the headquarters at 04 Trinh Hoai Duc, the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences held a workshop to announce the 2023 Annual Report on Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in Vietnam.
- On December 14, 2023, at Grand Vista Hotel, Hanoi, the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences, in collaboration with UNICEF Vietnam, organized a policy dialogue workshop titled "We share—Mental health of adolescents."
- During two days, December 7 and 8, 2023, at La Thanh Hotel - Hanoi, the Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences, in collaboration with Angels' Haven, Korea, organized an international scientific conference with the theme "Towards a quality inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities for people with disabilities".

ANTRIEP Member Institutions

1. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 19 Prospect Hill Road, Private Bag – 55, Camberwell, Melbourne, VICTORIA-3124, Australia (www.acer.edu.au)
2. Balitbang Dikbud Centre for Policy Research (Puslit Penelitian), Office for Educational and Culture Research and Development (Balitbang Dikb), Ministry of Education and Culture, Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, Senayan, JAKARTA-12070, Indonesia. (www.kemdikbud.go.id)
3. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) 75, Mohakhali Commercial Area, DHAKA – 1212, Bangladesh (www.brac.net)
4. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), 5/14, Humayun Road, Mohammadpur, DHAKA – 1207, Bangladesh (www.campebd.org)
5. Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), R.S. No. 9A2, Plot No. 82, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Nagar, Near Yalakki Shetter Colony, Lakamanahalli, Dharwad-580004 KARNATAKA, India (www.cmdr.ac.in)
6. National Institute of Education (NIE), P.O. Box 21, High Level Road, Maharagama, Sri Lanka (www.nie.lk)
7. Institut Aminuddin Baki (National Institute of Educational Management and Leadership), Malaysia Education Ministry, Value Education Complex 71760 Bandar Enstek, Negeri Sembilan, MALAYSIA (<http://iab.moe.edu.my>)
8. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), 7-9 rue Eugene-Delacroix, 75116 PARIS, France (www.iiep.unesco.org)
9. Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), 7, Gyohak-ro, Deoksan-eup, Jincheon-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do, South Korea (www.kedi.re.kr)
10. National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), Dhanmodi, DHAKA – 1205, Bangladesh (www.naem.gov.bd)
11. National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), Sanothimi, BHAKTAPUR 2050, Nepal (www.nced.gov.np)
12. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110 016 (INDIA) (www.ncert.nic.in)
13. National Institute of Education (NIE), 80, Preah Nordon Blvd, Phnom Penh-120207, Cambodia (www.nie.edu.kh)
14. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi –110016, India (www.niepa.ac.in)
15. Pakistan Institute of Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Taleemi Chowk, G-8/1, ISLAMABAD-44000, PAKISTAN (<http://aepam.edu.pk>)
16. Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University, G.P.O. Box 2161, Balkhu, KATHMANDU, Nepal (www.cerid.org)
17. Institute of Human Resource Development (SIHRD), Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences 21 Chaling Road, SHANGHAI, P.R.C.-200032, China
18. South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology, SEAMEO INNOTECH P.O. Box 207, Commonwealth Avenue, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City 1101, Philippines (www.seameo-innotech.org)
19. State Institute of Educational Management & Training (SIEMAT), 25, Sir P.C. Banerjee Road, Allenganj, Prayagraj-211002, ALLAHABAD, Uttar Pradesh, India (www.siematup.org)
20. The Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P) 1-5/ B-VII, Federal B Area, Karimabad, Karachi – 75950, PAKISTAN (www.akdn.org/akes)
21. The Aga Khan University - Institute for Educational Development, (AKU-IED), 1-5/B-VII, Federal B. Area Karimabad, KARACHI-75950, Pakistan (<http://www.aku.edu/iedpk>)
22. Vietnam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES), Centre for Higher and Vocational Education Studies 101, Tran Hung Dao Hoan Kiem HANOI CITY, Vietnam (www.vnrw.vnies.edu.in)

Edited by Prof. Madhumita Bandyopadhyay on behalf of the Focal Point, ANTRIEP and published by the Registrar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016. Processed/printed by the Publication Unit, NIEPA at M/s Viba Press Pvt. Ltd., Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020, India.