

Editor ... 1-7-JUN-2007--

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Plans to bring 20m school children under SF by 2015

The Secretary-in-Charge of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, has called for concerted efforts to scale up School Feeding (SF) programme to enhance the primary school attendance and improve the health status of poor children, reports BSS.

"Bangladesh has made significant improvement in the social sector, particularly in education, but still many school-age children remain outside schools and suffer from malnutrition," Bhuiyan said.

He was participating in a special TV programme with a local TV channel on child hunger on Friday.

Around 20 million children will need to receive primary education by 2015 to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)-2, he said.

Bhuiyan said, "The government is fully committed to the programme, but the ongoing SF programme is not enough to meet existing demands. We need donors support to gear up the programme".

M. Emmanuel Haque, Head of Advocacy, WFP Bangladesh and Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Social Director, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rural Service (RDRS), a northern region-based NGO, participated in

the programme.

"The School Feeding programme which provides daily snacks to schoolchildren is indeed contributing to the implementation of government's policy of universal primary education by improving access to basic education, particularly in poverty-prone food-insecure areas," said Emmanuel Haque.

Referring to other MDGs, Haque said "If we end child hunger by 2015, we will have effectively achieved the first MDG that of halving the number of all hungry people by 2015."

Sharing his field experience, Kayes said, "The project is a good example of a partnership approach where the government, UN, and NGOs are actively involved in it and community owns the programme."

WFP's existing SF programme provides 600,000 poor schoolchildren in 4000 schools in poverty-prone areas of Bangladesh.

To increase the coverage of the programme, WFP Bangladesh has been working closely with the government and development partners in designing a new School Feeding Plus programme to cover five million poor children by 2010.