



An anganwadi sevika teaches students at a centre.
Picture by Deepak Kumar

Self-help groups to plug graft

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Patna, Aug. 8: The state social welfare department is all set to rope in self-help groups (SHGs) to check corruption at anganwadi centres in Bihar.

These groups will now be given money directly to prepare and distribute food among children, pregnant and lactating women under Take Home Ration scheme.

Talking to **The Telegraph**, social welfare minister Parveen Amanullah said the step was being taken to put a check on large-scale irregularity and corruption on part of anganwadi workers.

"The scheme has not been very successful due to the role of workers — Sahayika and Sevika. We are therefore roping in self-help groups to ensure that right amount of food with standard quality is distributed among beneficiaries. We are taking the help of organisations like Women's Development Corporation, Jeevika and Mahila Samakhya for the purpose," Amanullah said. She also said the plan would be adopted for 100 blocks in the state on an experimental basis.

According to sources, every month 80,997 anganwadi centres in the state get over Rs 88.28 crore at the rate of Rs 10,900 each centre every month. The state has 544 child development project officer (CDPOs) and 38 district project officers (DPOs) under the integrated child development scheme (ICDS).

According to officials, the ICDS programme aims at improving the health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years, reducing incidents of child mortality and school drop-out, enhancing capability of mothers to look after normal health, primary education and nutritional requirement of her children. It is a central government scheme with state government contributing 50 per cent towards contributing supplementary nutrition cost.

Currently, anganwadi centres cater to the needs of about 100 persons each, who are selected on the basis of their nutritional and financial status. "While children who often come to the centres for pre-schooling are given ready-to-eat food, women are given ration," said a senior official in the department.

Amanullah said the groups will be given funds and menu and will be asked to deliver. "This will mean more empowerment to these groups and will help beneficiaries tremendously as women will ensure quality for their own children. This will double up as a community development programme," she added.