

MP anganwadis provide nutritious food  
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Madhya Pradesh has the highest level of malnutrition amongst children under six in India but here is a story on a mini revolution that's successfully fighting it. An NDTV Correspondent travelled to another historical hunger spot Shivpuri to find that with a little initiative not only can malnutrition be fought but set new benchmarks. MP has now become the first state in the country that's providing a nutritious a la carte menu to its youngsters. Earlier the children could barely walk now they run. Their faces are lit with excitement as kids wait for surprise packet they get each day at the *anganwadi* centre in Badharwaas. One of the leader is 45-year-old Shakuntala, an *anganwadi* worker known to people as *amma* or *chachi*. **Special menu** Last year when the collector asked for suggestion to make the *aanganwadi* more attractive for children, Shakuntala Sharma and a few other workers suggested that apart from the standard *panjiri* and *daliya*, they cook different food items for the children. The recipes, which would not cost more than the prescribed Rs 2 per child daily and also meet the calorie requirements set out by the Supreme Court. That suggestion is now part of a daily routine. From October 2006, Shivpuri is the only district in Madhya Pradesh, which has 15 different recipes under the supplementary nutrition programme at all the 25 centres where the *aanganwadi* workers have volunteered to cook. For cooking the special meals they get the money at the beginning of each month. The result is phenomenal, almost 220 of those registered in the centres actually come here every day a five times increase in attendance. "Earlier the number would fluctuate between 35-60. Now you come any day, you will find from pregnant ladies to children, all of them are present," said Shakuntala. **No malnutrition death** In fact Shakuntala proudly claims that in the last five years no child has died due to malnutrition. This in an area where malnutrition deaths were amongst the highest in the country. Shakuntala says she is not harassed for bribes by officers to get her salary nor does she have to beg them for supplies for the *aanganwadi*. If only Shivpuri could set an example for the rest of the state, where today there are 49,784 *aanganwadi* workers while the need is for nearly double that number. What's more that 50 per cent say they have not been paid and 70 per cent say they are harassed by senior officials. It is a situation the collector says they can reverse. "We have a lot of interaction with the *aanganwadi* workers through our follow up camps, routine meetings and visits. We try to keep them motivated," said Manohar Aganani, collector, Shivpuri. She is allowed to speak her mind and her views on improving the childcare system. On being asked the best part is her work is appreciated and these are great motivating factors that indeed make a huge difference in combating a severe problem like malnutrition.