

Best Practices Under Take Home Ration

SHG-Operated THR Units in Uttar Pradesh



Introduction

The Government of Uttar Pradesh is committed towards improving the nutrition status along with empowerment of women in the state. This is in line with State's firm belief and commitment towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals. UP is striving and ensuring affirmative actions for improving the nutrition status in the state for which empowerment of women is equally important and is a cornerstone for societal progress. Recently, Government of Uttar Pradesh has come forward with a novel model in which the production and supply of Take-Home Ration for the beneficiaries of Anganwadi Centers is being done through Women Self Help Group (SHGs) from rural communities. These SHGs have set up Microenterprises and have established semi-industrial manufacturing units for standard and quality production of THR in the state. This decentralized production and supply of THR through SHGs is a robust model of interdepartmental convergence, digital solutions, strong systems, use of renewable energy for environment conservation and most of all women economic empowerment. These manufacturing units, which are a collaboration between the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRLM), are critical in providing supplementary nutrition to millions of beneficiaries. This report highlights techniques and interventions employed by the state for decentralized production and supply of THR through SHGs and stand out as a best practice model for improving the nutritional status along with social and economic empowerment of rural women.

Background and Overview of Take-Home Ration (THR)

The Take-Home Ration (THR) is a critical component of the ICDS scheme aimed at improving the nutritional status of children (6 Month to 6 Years), adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers. THR is provided through Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) to the eligible beneficiaries. Over the years THR was being provided to AWCs through private agencies. However, in 2020 Uttar Pradesh decided to improvise the implementation of the scheme and decided to engage Rural Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the state for transparent production and supply of Take-Home Ration to eligible beneficiaries at AWC.

The Role of SHGs in THR Production and Distribution

Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRLM) is implementing centrally sponsored scheme DAY-NRLM with a mandate to organize women from rural communities into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and provide them alternative livelihood opportunities. The SHGs promoted by UPSRLM have been given the responsibility of preparing THR (Daliya Moong Dal Khichdi, Atta Besan Barfi Premix, Energy Dense Halwa, and Atta Besan Halwa) under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) scheme. These SHGs women have established a Manufacturing unit for production of fortified Take-Home Ration. In THR unit 20 SHG women work on daily basis to produce the THR as per the Demand Indent (DI) issued by Department of ICDS. The Department provides wheat through Food Corporation of India (FCI) on a subsidized rate and other raw materials are procured by SHG women locally. Once the THR is produced samples are sent to the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited labs for quality testing. After the quality testing the SHG women supply the THR to allotted Anganwadi centers as per the DI. After completion of THR distribution to AWCs an electronic bill is generated by SHG women which is submitted to ICDS through UPSRLM for payments. This initiative empowers women economically while ensuring standardization of systems and quality of THR.



The THR units in Uttar Pradesh are an exemplary model of how women-led SHGs can be instrumental in delivering essential services with quality. As of the financial year 2024-25, total 204 THR units have been established across 43 districts in the state. These women from SHG's are not only responsible for producing supplementary nutrition but are also key players in its distribution and transportation to Anganwadi Centre's.

To date, the SHGs have produced approximately 1,79,899.00 Metric Tons of supplementary nutrition. This production, which directly supports the nutritional needs of around 206.12 lakh beneficiaries, is a significant achievement. The ICDS has compensated these SHG Microenterprises with approximately ₹ 92797.59 lakh, ensuring that their contribution is recognized and is fairly and timely remunerated. This payment mechanism is a critical element in fostering economic empowerment among the women involved.

Payment Mechanisms

One of the key success factors of this initiative is the structured payment mechanism put in place by the ICDS Department. SHGs receive regular payments for their services, thereby ensuring financial inclusion and economic empowerment. The funds for THR preparation are transferred to UPSRLM and they directly transfer the amount to the bank accounts of the SHGs, which enhances transparency and accountability.

The payment mechanisms implemented by the Uttar Pradesh government ensure that SHGs receive timely and adequate compensation for their services. These payments not only cover the cost of production but also provide a profit margin that enables the SHGs to be financially sustainable. By receiving direct payments from the UPSRLM to SHGs are empowered to manage their finances independently, which is a crucial step towards financial autonomy.



This model of direct payment is particularly effective because it minimizes delays and reduces the risk of corruption or mismanagement. It also enhances the SHGs' ability to reinvest in their operations, further strengthening their economic position. The transparency and efficiency of this payment process are key factors that make it a best practice model, not just for Uttar Pradesh, but for other states looking to empower women through similar initiatives.

Impact on Women's Empowerment

The economic impact of the THR units on the women involved is profound. By participating in these SHGs, women are gaining valuable skills in production, financial management, and leadership. The financial independence afforded by the payments they receive allows them to contribute to their households and communities in meaningful ways.

Moreover, the involvement in THR production and distribution has had a significant social impact. These women, who might otherwise have limited economic opportunities, are now seen as vital contributors to the state's public health and nutrition initiatives. This shift in perception is a critical component of social empowerment, as it challenges traditional gender roles and elevates the status of women within their communities.



The financial remuneration provided to SHGs has far-reaching implications for the economic and social empowerment of women in Uttar Pradesh. By earning a stable income, women are better able to support their families, invest in their children's education, their own health and contribute to the overall economic development of their communities.

Socially, this initiative has helped shift perceptions about women's roles in society. Women who were previously confined to household duties are now seen as valuable contributors to the community's welfare. This shift in perception is crucial for achieving gender equality and fostering a more inclusive society.

Impact on Environment

Sustainable Energy Transition in THR Manufacturing: Harnessing Solar Power for Environmental and Economic Benefits

The Take-Home Ration (THR) initiative has had a multifaceted impact, not only in improving nutritional outcomes but also playing a significant role in environmental conservation. Initially, the THR manufacturing units were powered by hydroelectricity supplied through the grid, with diesel generator sets (Gensets) serving as a backup to ensure uninterrupted production. However, it was soon realized that the electricity supply in rural areas was highly inconsistent, leading to frequent disruptions in production.

To mitigate these disruptions and maintain a steady production flow, the extensive use of diesel Gensets became necessary. While this addressed the immediate challenge, it also resulted in increased production costs and a substantial environmental footprint due to the high carbon emissions associated with diesel consumption. Recognizing these challenges, a strategic decision was made to transition the THR manufacturing units to **solar renewable energy**, thereby promoting sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

As a pilot initiative, three solar power plants, with capacities ranging from 65 kW to 100 kW, were installed in three THR manufacturing units. The impact was immediate and remarkable—regular and reliable solar power supply enabled production to double, significantly enhancing efficiency and productivity. Encouraged by the success of this pilot, it was decided to expand the initiative by installing 75 kW solar plants in all THR manufacturing units across the state.

To implement this transition at scale, a phased approach was adopted. In the first phase, work has commenced to install solar plants in 50 THR units. Out of 50 THR units 19 THR units have successfully installed the solar plants. This initiative has been strengthened through convergence with the Horticulture Department, which provides financial support for solar energy projects. Under this scheme, 90% of the installation cost is subsidized by the government, while the remaining 10% is contributed by Self-Help Group (SHG) members.

This transition to solar energy marks a significant step toward sustainable and eco-friendly THR production. By leveraging renewable energy sources, the initiative not only ensures uninterrupted production but also reduces dependence on fossil fuels, leading to long-term cost savings and a reduced carbon footprint. This model of sustainability and convergence serves as a best practice that can be replicated across similar initiatives, fostering a greener and more resilient future.



Impact on Nutrition and Livelihoods

This partnership has had a positive impact on both nutrition outcomes and livelihoods in Uttar Pradesh. The availability of locally produced THR has contributed to improved nutritional status among children and mothers. Simultaneously, the participation of SHGs in the THR supply chain has created income-generating opportunities for women, fostering greater financial stability in rural areas.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The payment system implemented by the department of ICDS and UPSRLM for the services provided by SHGs is exemplary in several ways:



1. **Inter-Departmental Convergence:** The success of SHG led THR is based on the robust inter-departmental convergence in which ICDS and UPSRLM have collaborated to bring synergy for achieving the desired results. The resources of these two schemes have contributed significantly in establishing THR as a Model.
2. **Direct Payments:** The direct transfer of payments by ICDS to UPSRLM then by UPSRLM to SHGs ensures transparency and reduces the risks of fund misappropriation.
3. **Timely Compensation:** Ensuring that payments are made in a timely manner maintains the motivation and morale of the SHGs, encouraging continued participation.
4. **Capacity Building:** Regular training and capacity-building sessions for SHGs help in maintaining the quality of THR production and distribution.
5. **Community Involvement:** By involving women from the local community, the initiative fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the success of the program.
6. **Gender Equality and Women Empowerment:** Women have become more independent, and their income sources have greatly contributed to the financial improvement of families.

7. **Renewable Energy:** The model has evolved over a period of time and is now striving to achieve sustainable supply of power through green energy. This will not only reduce the cost of energy but will also support in reducing carbon emission in the long run.

Conclusion

The engagement of SHGs in preparing Take-Home Ration under the ICDS scheme in Uttar Pradesh stands out as a best practice for other states to follow. It not only addresses the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations but also empowers women economically, creating a sustainable livelihood model. By ensuring inter-departmental convergence, timely payment and promoting financial inclusion, this initiative showcases how collaboration and grassroots-level participation can drive both social and economic outcomes.

By ensuring that SHGs are paid fairly and promptly, the state not only supports the livelihoods of thousands of women but also strengthens the overall effectiveness of its public health and nutrition initiatives. The THR initiative is enabling state to achieve the **Sustainable Development Goal-1 No Poverty, Goal-2 Zero Hunger, Goal-5 Gender Equality and Goal-7 Affordable and Clean Energy**. As other states and regions look to replicate this success, the lessons learned from Uttar Pradesh's approach towards production and supply of THR through SHG can serve as a valuable guide.



