Strengthening Capacity: Training and exchange of experience for school headmasters and kitchen helpers in Tambov, Russian Federation

2016
In the framework of strengthening the capacities of the National school feeding programme, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) jointly with the Social and Industrial Foodservice Institute (SIFI) of the Russian Federation and in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia organized an advanced training for 33 school headmasters and kitchen helpers. The participants of the training were selected from the three provinces under the Government administered National school feeding programme: Syunik, Ararat and Vayots Dzor. The training was arranged in Tambov, Russian Federation, on the premises of the Tambov Multi-profile Technological College from 18 to 22 July, 2016.

The training courses lasted 5 days and were specifically designed to cover theoretical and practical lectures on school feeding for headmasters and kitchen helpers. The participants had an opportunity to get familiarised with the school feeding programme infrastructure of Tambov region, to exchange their knowledge and gain new skills.

The training was aimed to strengthen the capacities of school staff and was designed to meet the needs of the personal engaged in the organization of school feeding. Based on the results of the capacity need assessment conducted by SIFI jointly with the Government of Armenia and WFP, the training program included a set of theoretical modules on main aspects of school feeding organization including legislation, food quality and safety, procurement, nutrition education, development of balanced rations and menus, control of quality, as well as practical classes for kitchen helpers and study visits to the schools of Tambov region. The field visits allowed participants to get practical knowledge on the implementation of various school feeding models both in urban and rural communities.

During the courses, the participants were separated into two groups: a group for headmasters and a group for kitchen helpers. The lectures for headmasters were mainly focused on various aspects of menu development, practical processes of preparation and serving, as well as on proper hygiene, sanitation and safety conditions in the school canteen, quality control of raw materials and final products, classification and specifications of technical equipment of school kitchens, preparation technology of dishes from school menus, as well as cooking techniques for preparing nutritious soups, salads, hot meals, bakery products, etc. A study tour was organized to show the practical aspects of agro-technological capacities of Tambov schools and their best practices. The learning courses of kitchen helpers ended with the practical exercises on preparation of school menus and dishes, using modern equipment. The exercise brought great excitement and inspiration among the kitchen helpers and was very successful.

Tambov regional and municipal departments of education play an important role in quality implementation of school feeding. All strategic issues related to kitchen and cafeteria renovation, kitchen equipment, furniture (tables and chairs), colours, guidelines on healthy feeding are designed, managed and controlled by local authorities.

The exercises brought great excitement and inspiration among the kitchen helpers and was very successful. The headmasters and cooks were asked to provide feedback of the trainings. All participants expressed their high appreciation on quality of courses and administrative arrangements. They mentioned the importance of the valuable exchange of experience, which allowed gaining new knowledge and skills to organize the school feeding process.

Participants highlighted that despite the differences in modalities and targeting of School feeding programmes, as well as cultural peculiarities of Russia and Armenia, the basics of the implementation, hygiene and sanitation, as well as nutritional considerations, preparation and serving technics are similar. It was obvious that long-lasting experience of school feeding in Tambov has been a valuable contribution to the two-year long National school feeding programme in Armenia.
According to the obtained agreement between the Government of Armenia and WFP, technical support will be provided by WFP to establish a “Republican Training Centre” for school feeding on the premises of the Yerevan Regional State College N1, which will serve as an in-country resource for trainings of the school management and personnel on all aspects of school feeding. As a first step in that direction, three managerial staff of the Yerevan College N1 joined the trainings in Tambov. It is planned that a group of professional trainers on school feeding from Tambov will periodically visit the Yerevan College N1 to support the establishment of the “Republican Training Centre”, the development of the curricula and conduct master classes for trainers.

Yerevan Regional State College N1 was founded as a result of merging the former Technical College and Vocational School N2. In line with the 2007 Government decision, the College N1 was included in European Union budgetary support programme’s list of 12 pilot colleges for capacity building and renovation.

Since its establishment, the College N1 has been focused on preparing qualified professionals, increasing their competitiveness in the labour market, as well as maintaining accessibility and equality in educational and social-economic spheres.

The main mission of the college is the creation, transmission and distribution of knowledge, training of high quality professionals and development of productive life skills among students.