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Quality and Safety Issues in Mid Day Meal: A Study of Two Districts in Uttar Pradesh

Tarannum Siddiqui Ph.D. Scholar, Singhania University, District Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan)

ABSTRACT

All the children studying in primary and upper primary classes will get free lunch during working days underMid-day Meal Scheme. To make available nutritious food to children enrolled in Class 1 to 8 in schools like-Government, Government Aided schools, Government Aided Madarsa, Alternate Innovative Education Centers (AIE) andNational Child Labour Project (NCLP) schools. The present paper is based on concurrent monitoring of MDM under SSA which is running all over the country. Survey conducted in Barabanki and Balrampur district of U.P. MDM scheme provides roughly 120 million children with free lunch, making it the world's largest school lunch programme.In spite of corruption involved in implementing the scheme, including unpleasant incidences, it aims to fight widespread poverty, improve children's school attendance and health, as a large number of India's children suffer from malnutrition.

KEYWORDS : Mid-Day Meal Programme, Quality and Safety Issues in Mid Day Meal, Hygiene in MDM

SUMMARY

The reason for not serving hot cooked meal regularly to the students in these 2 primaries and in 1 upper primary school of Balrampur district was that food grain was not available in these schools. The entire components of environment, safety and hygiene were found either good or satisfactory in most of the primary and upper primary schools of both districts. Only 1 upper primary school was found in unsatisfactory condition for the hygiene in Barabanki district. It has been observed that 1 primary school was not good for environment, safety and hygiene while 1 upper primary school was having unsatisfactory condition for the safety in Balrampur district. Due to MDM scheme, in 85.18 per cent sample primary schools and in 90 per cent sample upper primary schools the condition of enrollment of students improved in Barabanki district. It has also observed that in 100 per cent sample primary and upper primary schools the condition of attendance of students improved in Barabanki district. In 92.60 per cent sampled primary schools and in 80.00 per cent upper primary schools of Balrampur district improved the condition of enrollment and attendance.

Introduction

Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programme is being implemented with the joint efforts of the government of India and state government of Uttar Pradesh. The government of India implemented this scheme on 15 August, 1995. MDM is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India that, among other things, seeks to address issues of food security, lack of nutrition and access to education on a pan nation scale. It involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in Government, Government Aided, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate Innovative Education (AIE) Centers, Madarsa supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and National Child Labour Project (NCLP) schools run by Ministry of Labour. The government of India provides hundred grams per student per day (wheat/rice) for primary classes and one hundred fifty grams per student per day in upper primary classes. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide hot cooked meal to children of primary and upper primary classes. With other objectives of improving nutritional status of children, develop the grasping power of children, encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them to concentrate on classroom activities, thereby increasing the enrolment, retention and attendance rates, reduce the drop-out rate, to develop the feelings of brotherhood and to develop positive outlook through combined food for the children belonging to different religions and castes.

A World Bank report states that India has 42 percent of the world's underweight children. According to the studies by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB), National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), 58.6 percent of the children of the age group 6–9 years and 77.9 percent of the children of the age group 10-13 are underweight. If the mild under nutrition is added to underweight, this number increases to 94.1 percent and 96.4 percent respectively. 30.1 percent of all children of 10-13 age groups are severely underweight. The school dropout rate is as high as 60 percent. Under Article 24, paragraph 2c of theConvention on the Rights of the Child to which India is a party, India has committed to providing "adequate nutritious foods" for Children.

It is relevant here to quote Bihar incident which was very disappointing and draws the attention towards quality and safety issues. The primary school in the village of Dharmashati Gandaman was established in 2010. At the time of the incident, 89 children were registered with the school. The food material for mid day meal was stored at the house of the headmistress as the school did not have sufficient infrastructure. Who's responsible of Bihar incident? Cook of the school, negligence of teachers, present system prevailing or vested interest?

Objectives

The supply of hot cooked meal to the students in schools according to the prescribed menu, quality of food, safety and hygiene, environment, improvement in health of students and impact of MDM on enrolment are the main issues of mid-day meal programme. In this light following are the objectives of this paper:

- To assess the regularity in supply of hot cooked meal in MDM.
- To assess the general impression of environment, safety and hygiene.
- To assess the impact of MDM on enrolment, attendance and improvement in health of students.

Methodology

This paper is based on concurrent evaluation of MDM scheme in two districts namely- Barabanki and Balrampur of Uttar Pradesh. Both Primary and Secondary data has been collected for the present study through well-structured schedule. All the primary data has been gathered from the sample schools by making a field visit. Secondary data and information has been procured from BSA office and through Internet.

Sample Design of the Study

Two districts namely Barabanki and Balrampur of Uttar Pradesh have been randomly selected for the study. A total number of 74 schools were taken as sample schools from these districts. Out of these schools 54 were primary, 20 were upper primary schools. From each district 27 primary and 10 upper primary schools were selected for the study. The primary data were collected through pre-structured schedules. The data tabulation and analysis was done on the computer by using SPSS package.

Regularity in serving meal

All the sample primary and upper primary schools are providing hot cooked mid-day meal to their students in both primary and upper primary schools of Barabanki district. Regularity in supplying of hot

cooked meal to the students of these schools has been observed by enquiring from the students, teachers, parents and through MDM register. It has been found that in 100 per cent primary and in 100 per cent upper primary schools in Barabanki District and 92.60 per cent primary and in 90.00 per cent upper primary schools in Balrampur district, hot cooked meal has been provided to students regularly. In 2 primary schools and 1 upper primary school hot cooked meal has not been provided to students regularly in Balrampur district (Table-1).

The reason for not serving hot cooked meal regularly to the students in these 2 primaries and in 1 upper primary school of Balrampur District was unavailability of food grain in these schools.

Table-1: Regularity in Supply of hot cooked meal in MDM Scheme

Sl. No	Particulars	No. of Schools (Barabanki)				No. of Schools (Balrampur)			
		PS		UPS		PS		UPS	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	According to Students	27 (100.00)	-	10 (100.00)	-	25 (92.60)	2 (7.40)	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)
2	According to Teachers	27 (100.00)	-	10 (100.00)	-	25 (92.60)	2 (7.40)	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)
3	According to Parents	27 (100.00)	-	10 (100.00)	-	25 (92.60)	2 (7.40)	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)
4	According to MDM Register	27 (100.00)	-	10 (100.00)	-	25 (92.60)	2 (7.40)	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)
	Total No. of MDM	27 (100.00)		10 (100.00)		27 (100.00)		10 (100.00)	

Figures in brackets indicate percentage to total
Source: SSA Programme, BSA, District, Barabanki and Balrampur U.P.

Safety and Hygiene

The general information of environment, safety and hygiene has been observed and enquired through teachers, parents and students. These entire components were found either good or satisfactory in most of the primary and upper primary schools of the Barabanki and Balrampur district. Only 1 upper primary school was found in unsatisfactory condition for the hygiene in Barabanki district. On the other hand that 1 primary school was not good for environment safety and hygiene while 1 upper primary school was found unsatisfactory condition for the safety in Balrampur district (Table-2).

Table-2: General Impression of Environment, Safety and Hygiene

Sl. No.	Particulars	No. of Schools (Barabanki)					
		PS			UPS		
		Good	Satisfactory	Un-satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	Un-satisfactory
1	Environment	26 (96.29)	1 (3.70)	-	8 (80.00)	2 (20.00)	-
2	Safety	24 (88.88)	3 (11.11)	-	8 (80.00)	2 (20.00)	-
3	Hygiene	21 (77.77)	6 (22.22)	-	7 (70.00)	2 (20.00)	1 (10.00)
		No. of Schools (Balrampur)					
1	Environment	10 (37.04)	16 (59.26)	1 (3.71)	4 (40.00)	6 (60.00)	-
2	Safety	9 (33.34)	17 (62.97)	1 (3.71)	5 (50.00)	4 (40.00)	1 (10.00)
3	Hygiene	8 (29.63)	18 (66.67)	1 (3.71)	7 (70.00)	3 (30.00)	-

Figures in brackets indicate percentage to total
Source: SSA Programme, BSA, District Barabanki, U.P.

Impact of MDM on enrollment, attendance:

The impact of Mid-Day Meal on enrollment, attendance and improvement in general well-being like hygiene and health of students in all sample primary and sample upper primary schools have been examined. It has been found that due to MDM scheme, in 85.18 per cent primary and in 90.00 per cent upper primary schools, the condition of enrollment of students improved in Barabanki district. It has been observed that due to MDM scheme, in 92.60 per cent primary and in 80.00 per cent upper primary schools the condition of enrollment of students improved in Balrampur district. No impact of MDM, on enrollment and attendance of students was found in 2 primary schools and in 2 upper primary schools in Balrampur district. Improvement due to MDM, in general well-being of the students has been observed in 81.49 per cent primary and in 70.00 per cent upper primary schools of the district Balrampur. It has also observed that in Barabanki district due to MDM scheme, in 100 per cent sample primary schools and in 100 per cent sample upper primary schools the condition of attendance of students also improved. No impact of MDM, on enrollment and attendance of students was found in 4 primary schools and in 1 upper primary schools of Barabanki district. Improvement due to MDM, in general well-being of the students has been observed in 88.88 per cent primary and in 100 per cent upper primary schools in Barabanki district (Table-3).

Table-3: Impact of MDM

Sl. No.	Particulars		No. of Schools (Barabanki)			No. of Schools (Barabanki)				
		PS		UPS		PS		UPS		
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
1	Improvement due to MDM in students	Enrollment of student	23 (85.18)	4 (14.81)	9 (90.00)	1 (10.00)	25 (92.60)	2 (7.41)	8 (80.00)	2 (20.00)
		Attendance of student	27 (100.00)	-	10 (100.00)	-	25 (92.60)	2 (7.41)	8 (80.00)	2 (20.00)
		Improvement in general well being (Health)	24 (88.88)	3 (11.11)	10 (100.00)	-	22 (81.49)	5 (18.52)	7 (70.00)	3 (30.00)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage to total
Source: SSA Programme, BSA, District Barabanki and Balrampur, U.P.

SUGGETIONS

- It is advisable that food grain should be made available to all schools well in time by the district authority. Hot cooked mid day meal must be ensured as it is mandatory in MDM.
- All schools should be very careful regarding the safety and hygiene measures, so that the incidents of Bihar should not be repeated anywhere.
- The basic facilities of first-aid (primary treatment), along with trained person should be provided to all schools.
- It is felt necessary that Government should develop a separate autonomous body to conduct and control over the performance of mid-day meal and this body must be fully responsible.

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