



Implimentation of Mid Day Meal Scheme in India

KEYWORDS

Mid day meal, Dropout, Nutritional status, Education

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ABSTRACT *The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education which is popularly known as the Mid-day Meal Scheme was launched by the Government of India in 1995 with the objective of giving a boost to universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment, attendance and retention and simultaneously improving the nutritional status of students in primary classes. Accordingly, many of the states started distributing food grains (dry rations) @ 3 kg. / per month/ per child with 80% attendance in class. The Cooked mid-day meal (CMDM) scheme was introduced in all Government and Government-assisted primary schools in the form of a country-wide "Day of action on mid-day meals" in April 2002 by a landmark direction of the Supreme Court. In 2004, the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Elementary Education and Literacy revised the guidelines for the scheme prescribing supply of meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein. The Ministry again revised the scheme in September 2006 to provide cooked mid-day meal with 450 calories and 12 grams of protein content to all children in primary classes (I-V) in the country. In October 2007, the scheme has been further revised to cover children in upper primary (classes VI to VIII). The key objectives of the scheme are: protecting children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment and attendance, improved socialization among children.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the core of human development and an essential prerequisite for achieving equality, dignity and social justice. A country can build a sound system of education only if its elementary education is free from defects and weaknesses. Malnutrition is widely prevalent in India among growing children. As per the NFHS-3 Survey (National Family Health Survey conducted in 2005-06), the level of malnutrition amongst children below five years is 42.5 per cent," India's Mid Day Meal program is the world's largest school feeding program, reaching out to about 120 million children across the country. It was introduced primarily to protect the nutritional as well as the educational rights of the children.(NP-NSPE,1995) This is due to the fact that children are not able to concentrate in their studies with empty stomach and there is a need to focus upon the MDMS, to overcome child's short term hunger. Thus, initiating this kind of meal programme, Government of India aimed at helping the children especially belong to the poor socio-economic background to attend school and to have at least MDM through which their education as well as food related issues could be tackled. Significantly, the scheme was intended for the tribal areas of various states in the country where, the level of food insecurity and starvation is much higher and children are sold due to acute poverty of the parents.

Mid Day Meal Scheme: Development out look

Mid day meals, as a public welfare concept in India, dates back to 1925 when such a project was launched for the underprivileged children in the then Madras Corporation area. One of the pioneers, Madras Corporation started providing cooked meals to children in Corporation schools in the Madras city; the programme was later introduced on a larger scale in 1960s. Tamil Nadu's midday meal programme is among the best known in the country. The programme was introduced at a national level by the government of India in the late 50s and early 60s and later

in the 80s as a centrally sponsored programme. In 1990-91, seventeen State governments were implementing the programme for primary school children between the age group of 6-11 years with varying degrees of coverage. Twelve states namely Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh were implementing Mid Day Meal Programme from their own resources. In three states namely Karnataka, Orissa and West Bengal, the programme was implemented partially with assistance from CARE. As reported by Ministry of Human Resource and Development, thirteen States and five Union Territories were administering mid day meal programme as of December 1994.

National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE)

With a view to enhance enrolment, attendance and retention and also improving the child health by increasing nutrition levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) known as Mid- Day Meal (MDM) scheme was launched in India as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995.

The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) was launched initially in 2408 blocks in the country. By 1997-98 it was introduced in all blocks of the country. It was further extended in 2002 to cover children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres. Central Assistance under the scheme consisted of free supply of food grains @ 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of Rs 50 per quintal.

In September 2004 the scheme was revised to provide cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes I – V in Govern-

ment and aided schools and EGS/ AIE centres. In addition to free supply of food grains, the revised scheme provided Central Assistance for (a) Cooking cost @ Re 1 per child per school day, (b) Transport subsidy was raised from the earlier maximum of Rs 50 per quintal to Rs. 100 per quintal for special category states, and Rs 75 per quintal for other states, (c) Management, monitoring and evaluation costs @ 2% of the cost of food grains, transport subsidy and cooking assistance, (d) Provision of mid day meal during summer vacation in drought affected areas.

In July 2006 the scheme was further revised to provide assistance for cooking cost at the rate of (a) Rs 1.80 per child/school day for States in the North Eastern Region, provided the NER States contribute Rs 0.20 per child/school day, and (b) Rs 1.50 per child/ school day for other States and UTs, provided that these States and UTs contribute Rs 0.50 per child/school day.

In October 2007, the scheme has been further revised to cover children in upper primary (classes VI to VIII) initially in 3479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs). Around 1.7 crore upper primary children were included by this expansion of the scheme.

In 2006, the Government of India revised the nutritional norm to 450 calories and 12 gms of proteins. In 2007, the GOI extended the scheme to cover children of upper primary classes (i.e. class VI to VIII) and changed its name to 'National Program of Mid Day Meal in Schools' (NP-MDMS). The nutritional norm for upper primary stage has now been fixed at 700 calories and 20 grams of protein. Since 2008, the NP-MDMS has been implemented across the country. Currently, India's NP-MDMS is the largest nutritional program for school children in the world, covering 104.4 million children in 1.2 million schools across the country with an annual budget allocation of Rupees 119,370 million. A comprehensive and elaborate mechanism for monitoring and supervision of the Mid Day Meal Scheme had been prescribed by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development and is depicted in Table-1.

Table- 1. Institutional Mechanism for MDMS

Level of Responsibility	Agencies responsible	Responsibility
National Level	National Level Steering Cum Monitoring Committee (NSMC), and Programme Approval Board (PAB)	Overall control and monitoring
State Level	State Level Steering cum Monitoring Committee and Nodal Agency	Nodal officer for implementation, evaluation and monitoring at the State level
District Level	District Collector/District Nodal Agency	Nodal officer for implementation at the ZP level, co-ordination of implementation of the scheme with Education Department, Food and Civil Supplies Department
Taluk Level	Executive Officer, Taluk Panchayat	Supply of food articles to schools, supervision and monitoring of supply of food and payment of wages to cooks, etc.

Source: NP-NSPE, 2006.

Objectives of Mid Day Meal Scheme

1. To improve nutritional status of children and protecting children from classroom hunger. Thus to address the problem of malnutrition
2. To increase school enrolment and promote regular school attendance; especially to encourage children belonging to disadvantaged sections to attend school regularly.
3. To provide nutritional support to children of primary classes in drought affected areas during summer vacation.
4. To improve socialization among children belonging to all castes thus helping to undermine caste prejudices by teaching children to sit together and share a common meal.
5. To provide social empowerment through provision of employment to women and liberate working women from the task of having to feed children at home during the day.
6. Act as a source of economic support for the poorer sections of society.
7. To impart nutrition education to children.

Impact of MDMS on Enrolment and Nutritional status of the children

Evaluation studies conducted in various states on the implementation of MDMS have revealed that the Cooked Mid Day Meal Program has been successful in addressing "classroom hunger" in the beneficiary schools. With the serving of cooked food, MDMS appears to have raised the enrolment and attendance of children in schools.(Savita Mishra, 2013, Avinash and Manjunath Avinash. 2013, Parida, 2010.) Mid Day Meal Scheme also improved the nutritional status of primary school children by providing a hot cooked nutritious meal in lunch time.(Shalini et.al 2014, Seetharaman. 2008, Naik .2005) The study conducted by the planning commission (2010) shows that cooked Mid-Day Meal has created a platform for all social and economic backgrounds to take meals together, thereby facilitating achieving the objective of social equity. Towards achieving Millennium Development Goals-India 2013, analyses the achievement at national level of MDMS and the targets on the basis of updates data sets. This report has showed that the country in now well set to achieve cent percent primary education for children in the primary schooling age of 6-10 years.

Advantages of the Mid-day meal scheme: On the basis of the study it was found that there are certain advantages of the scheme, which are as follows:

Provision of Quality Meals: The Government, NGOs and the public private partnership organisations have made schools a place of attraction for children who were not able to afford decent meal in their homes. The variety in food items served everyday is guaranteed with complete satisfaction of the parents and children. The varied menu also sustains the interest of children. In mid-day meal programme the special attention is being paid to cleanliness and hygiene of cooked food.

Development of Good Food Habits and Social Equity among Children: The scheme has been successful in developing good food habits among children. Teachers also instruct the students regarding good food habits such as:

washing hands before and after meals, chew their food properly, do not waste food, clean the sitting place, eat in rows and discipline. The scheme provides an opportunity where children of all groups and communities to sit together and have their meals. The children also learn to wait for their turn.

Employment Generation: A sustainable means of livelihood has been provided to persons to effectively implement the schemes vide appointment of cooks, computer operators, helpers for cooking etc.

Transparency in MDM Weekly menu information is permanently displayed on notice boards or even painted on the walls of the school to make everybody aware about the Programme.

Involvement of SDMC: (School Development and Management Committee) and PTA (Parent Teacher Association) are involved in the implementation of the Programme hence makes it transparent. Important points for inspection are also circulated. All of the school having MDM keep the record and maintain registers for various activities.

Development of Social Equity: Children were not discriminated in the schools on the ground of caste, gender, religion, creed or disability, while serving cooked food to children in schools.

Community's Participation in MDM One of the good practices of MDM is the participation of community members in MDM of the school. It is noted that sometimes the parents and community members oversee MDM while cooking and at the time of serving. Sometimes they do taste the cooked food before serving the food to the children. Community is also participating by the way of providing firewood and utensils. School managements may also be encouraged to seek local support for drawing out varied, but wholesome and nutritious menus. School Managements should maintain a roster of community members who will be involved in the programme.

CONCLUSION

Mid Day Meal programme is one of the most important programmes of the Government to encourage children to come to schools and participate in the learning process without worrying for their meal, especially that of day time. The programme in the holistic manner helps in bringing all school going age children back to schools, improve retention ratio of school children and arrest dropout rate besides providing nutritious meals to growing children. MDMS is perceived as a major means to impart positive habits among the children and also in educating them on the importance of health, sanitation, and socialization. It is also seen as a factor for economic support to poor parents. For effective implementation of MDMs, all the functionaries involved in the scheme, need to be aware about nutrition, health hygiene and safety of foods. Non-governmental organization, local youth and active social workers can also play a significant role in this scheme.

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