



### Administration & Monitoring

The Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development has prescribed a comprehensive and elaborate mechanism for the monitoring and supervision of the Mid Day Meal Scheme. The representatives of Grampanchayats / Gram Sabhas, members of Municipal Corporations as well as Mothers' Committees are required to monitor the:

(i) regularity and wholesomeness of the Mid Day Meal served to the children, (ii) cleanliness in cooking and serving of the mid day meal, (iii) timeliness in the procurement of good quality ingredients and fuel etc. (iv) implementation of varied menu and (v) social and gender equity. This is required to be done on a daily basis. The State Government Officers should inspect the schools and centers where the scheme is being implemented. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) is responsible for the continuous availability of adequate food grains in its Depots. It is mandated to issue food grains of the best available quality. The Guidelines provide that as far as possible the responsibility of cooking/supply of cooked Mid Day Meal should be assigned to the local women / mothers' Self-Help Group or local Youth Club affiliated to the Nehru Yuva Kendras or an voluntary organization or by personnels engaged directly by the Municipal Corporations/ Grampanchayats / Municipality. The involvement of Self Help Groups under the scheme is increasing gradually.

Quality of MDM largely depends on the quality of food grains. FCI is held responsible for issuing of food grains of the best available quality which will in any case be at least of Fair Average Quality (FAQ). FCI appoints a Nodal Officer for each State to take care of various problems in the supply of food grains under the MDM Scheme. The District Collector / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Zila Panchayat ensures that food grains of at least FAQ are lifted after joint inspection by a team consisting of FCI and the nominee of the Collector and / or Chief Executive Officer, District, Panchayats and confirmation by them that the grain conforms to at least FAQ norms. Quality, safety and hygiene specifications have been prescribed in the Guidelines. It is also provided that 2-3 adult members and among them at least one should be the teacher who must taste the food before it is served to the children. Although the guidelines provide the provision for the inspection of 25% schools every quarter by the supervisory officer but due to the shortage of officers / staff and resources, intense and frequent inspection of the scheme is not occurring in the expected manner.

### Financial Administration of Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Presently, Mid-Day Meal Scheme provides the following assistance to the State Government / UT Administrations: Supply of free food grains (wheat/rice) @100 grams per child per school day for primary & @150 grams per child per school day for upper primary and NCLP (National Child Labour Project) children from the nearest FCI (Food Corporation of India) go-down of the State/UTs are currently mentioned in table-1 and table-2 as under:

**Table-1.**  
Center / State Allocation of fund for MDM provision per child

STAGE	Total Cost Per Meal	Center -State Sharing			
		Non-NER States (75:25)		NER States (90:10)	
		Centre	State	Centre	State
Primary	Rs. 2.89	Rs. 2.17	Rs. 0.72	Rs 2.60	Rs. 0.29
Upper Primary	Rs. 4.33	Rs. 3.25	Rs. 1.08	Rs. 3.90	Rs. 0.43

**Source: PARLIAMENT LIBRARY AND REFERENCE, RESEARCH, DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SERVICE (LARRDIS), No. 20 / RN/ Ref./ August/ 2013**

The above table indicates the Centre-State sharing of financing the MDM scheme in the Non-NER (North Eastern Region) States. In case of Primary Schools, the State Government contributes Rs. 0.72 and Rs. 2.17 is the contribution from the Central Government out of the total cost per meal at primary level i.e Rs. 2.89. The NER States have the contribution of Rs. 0.29 from State Government and Rs. 2.60 from Central Government out of total expense per child i.e Rs. 2.89 per students.

In case of Upper Primary Schools, the share of Central Government in case of Non-NER States is Rs. 3.25, while the State Government contribution is Rs. 1.08 per child only out of total Rs. 4.33. In case of North Eastern States the Central Government contributes Rs. 3.90, while State Government contributes only Rs. 0.43 per child out of Rs. 4.33 per child in total.

**Table-2.**  
Cooking Cost proposed for the year 2012-13

STAGE	Total Cost Per Meal	Center -State Sharing			
		Non-NER States (75:25)		NER States (90:10)	
		Centre	State	Centre	State
Primary	Rs. 3.11	Rs. 2.33	Rs. 0.78	Rs 2.80	Rs. 0.31
Upper Primary	Rs. 4.65	Rs. 3.49	Rs. 1.16	Rs. 4.19	Rs. 0.46

**Source: PARLIAMENT LIBRARY AND REFERENCE, RESEARCH, DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SERVICE (LARRDIS), No. 20 / RN/ Ref./ August/ 2013**

The above table explains the sharing and bearing of the cooking cost of MDM in Primary and Upper Primary Schools by Central/State Government. In case of NER states, the ratio of Center/State sharing of cooking cost is 90:10, while in case of Non-NER states the ratio of sharing is 75:25 between Central / State Government in case of both Primary and Upper Primary Schools.

### Critical Administrative Issues:

On July 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, 23 children in Saran District of Bihar died due to the presence of pesticides in the food served under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Honourable Chief Minister of Bihar Mr. Nitish Kumar admitted and claimed that "the poisoning could not have been an accident" (IBN7 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013). Furthermore, 79 students of the government's primary school in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan were admitted to hospital as they fell ill after consuming mid-day meal. This happened because of the food poisoning caused by the dead lizard found in the food. There are more cases in addition to this such as in 2011, 126 students at a Sarvodaya Vidyalaya fell ill after having a mid-day meal because insects were found in the mid-day meals served in Assam, 42 students fell ill after consuming mid-day meal at Haryana. (Ramandeep Kaur 3rd August 2014 at www.mapsofindia.com).

"The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was adopted on the pattern of the Madras Municipal Corporation's "School Lunch Scheme." The problem is that there is no clear structure defined and every state functions according to its wish," said Ambrish Rai, convener of the Right to Education Forum, an umbrella body of NGOs working in the field of education. "In most places, it is a matter for the teachers to manage. In some places, NGOs or private contractors do the job. The scheme is better managed in South Indian states but in the Northern part of the country the situation is pathetic," Rai told IANS (Indo Asian News Services - Sunday, 28 July 2013). Rai said "huge corruption" at all levels was destroying the scheme. "Children are getting low quality and insufficient food; hence there is lack of nutrition. Corruption is involved in the delivery system. Fake enrolments are being done to embezzle money. These rackets are

killing this very important scheme and the main reason of it is lack of guidelines and institutionalization," he said.

Mohammed Irfail, who is attached to the Right to Food campaign and is working in the field of mid-day meals in West Bengal, said lack of administrative efficiency, is the biggest problem. "Government agencies are not doing the monitoring. Even if there are committees at some places they are not functional. They submit their reports regarding the scheme by sitting at their tables only without having visited to the schools. In this situation how would the government ever know what is happening in the name of mid-day meal scheme?" Irfail said. "The government says that it is taking all the steps but it is eyewash. There is no proper infrastructure in the schools; many of them have no running water- supply; hygiene is not maintained; and in addition to this the money provided by the government to operate the scheme fills the pockets of those who arrange for supplies," Irfail told to IANS.

Irfail went on to allege that he smelled a rat in the government's treatment of the scheme. "Perhaps the government does not want the scheme to function properly. They want problems to be created so that the people may ask them to stop the scheme altogether. May be they want to hand over the scheme to some corporate organization," he said. Irfail added that in places where self-help groups or NGOs have been roped in for the scheme, delay in payment is a big problem. "Even where NGOs are providing the meal, the payment is low and delayed. When they do not get payment for 5-6 months, they lose their morale," he said.

Ashok Agarwal, a Delhi-based advocate who has been fighting for issues concerning the right to education, said that the attitude of school authorities towards the children is also a major issue. "In most of the schools I have seen in Delhi, especially in the outer areas of Delhi, the school authorities treat children like a burden. The manner of distributing the meal is not dignified," Agarwal told to IANS. "The principal of one aided school told me that children get food from home because the mid-day meal portions are not sufficient. Is there to see if the lunch boxes of the children (in which they are doled the food) are clean; sometimes left-over food is given; the utensils used for cooking and serving are also not clean," he said. Agarwal added that the process of distributing the mid-day meal is also taking a toll on teaching. "A lot of children are from very poor families. They come without having breakfast so they cannot study in the first half as they are hungry. In some schools, the process of distributing lunch takes two hours or more and by that time the school time is over. When will the child study?" he questioned and asked as well what can be a possible solution for streamlining the scheme? The experts suggest that involving the parents and local community as a good option- "If the local community is involved, if parents are involved in the process of serving mid-day meals, the situation will improve. School Management Committees defined under the Right to Education Act can be a good way," said Agarwal.

From the above cases it is quite evident that the condition at the ground level is still critical. Keeping in view the above evidences reported by media and researchers the recent efforts from the State and Central Governments are quite appreciable.

#### Recent Administrative efforts:

In the wake of Mid-Day Meal Tragedy, the Center has decided to constitute a monitoring committee to look into the quality of food supplied and to ensure effectiveness of the supply chain and proper hygiene. The Committee is expected to supplement the efforts of the existing Mid-Day Meal monitoring

committee which meets twice a year and warns the status if there are any short comings (PTI, New Delhi, 18.07.2013). The Human Resources Development Ministry has asked to all the states to set up decentralized monitoring units, to increase public awareness about the mid day meal so that parents can keep a watch and to set up monthly monitoring by community committee headed by the local Member of Parliament. The Ministry has issued guidelines to all the states to ensure quality, safety and hygiene under the mid-day meal scheme. Aside from making it mandatory for a teacher to taste the food before serving it to the school children, the Ministry has asked that a member of the school management committee should also be present and taste the meal. A rotation system will need to be worked out for this. The school management committee includes village functionaries, school administration, parents. Stressing on the need for safety and hygiene; the Ministry has asked to all the states to use the kitchen-cum store designs that had been circulated earlier. It has asked to the states to work with the Home Science Departments in universities and colleges to upgrade and train cooks and their helpers so that proper hygiene and food safety is maintained. Additionally proper labeling, use of separate bins have also been suggested. Many schools have no proper systems of storage. The order takes note of the prevalent practice of storing food items in the Principal's or Headmaster's home. The Ministry makes clear that such a system will not be acceptable.

Another intervention that has been suggested is putting in place an emergency medical plan. The absence of a proper plan resulted in higher fatalities in Bihar. The Ministry has suggested periodic testing of food at reputed or certified laboratories. It has stressed on the need for regular monitoring at the state and district level as well. It has asked that the district monitoring committee headed by the district magistrate must include the local Member of Parliament. These meetings must be held every quarter. As a form of external check, the Ministry has asked that schools to display the entitlements under the scheme in a prominent manner preferably painted on a school wall to ensure that the parents are aware of what their children should get as a part of the mid day meal.

#### Conclusion:

The efforts to implement an effective administrative system from both State and Central Governments for smooth and flawless execution of MDM scheme are appreciable but the cases and evidences in the recent pasts are quite an eye-opener for all the stakeholders of such a valuable scheme. They are still to go for a long way to improve it up to the mark of the universally acceptable quality of the foods being served as a Mid Day Meal. All the reports, evaluations and monitoring bodies are exceptionally smart on paper to highlight the implementation of the scheme successfully. One of the examples is of Uttar Pradesh Government which is using e-governance for the monitoring. The smart caller randomly calls to the schools at noon to collect the information about day to days' MDM reports. The effort is appreciable but how much will it improve the quality of the execution of the scheme? How will it improve the administrative efficiencies of the officers involved in that?

Another strange thing to note down is that most of the states of South India are up to the mark about the quality and quantity of the MDM but on the contrary of it the North Indian states are still struggling to achieve a lot in that area. Few more questions are being left to ask to the administrators of the MDM scheme - why are they not adopting the cases of the success stories in some of the states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka and some districts of Gujarat? The answer of this question may be dubious to accept at this level, it may

be because some states do not want this scheme to continue, or another reason may be the traditional and acute that is corruption. The intentions of the administrators are doubtful otherwise the scheme could run smoothly like Tamil Nadu with the help of NGOs and PPP (public private partnership).

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