

IMPLEMENTATION OF MID- DAY MEAL PROGRAMME IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF ODISHA – AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

The National Programme of Nutritional Support, popularly known as Mid-day Meal programme is the largest social welfare programme in India. It involves provision of free lunch, free of cost to school going children on all working days. Presently in India, 12 crores of students of 12 lakh schools are getting benefit under this programme. In Odisha, the Mid-day Meal programme was introduced on 1st July, 1995 in primary schools. The programme is running in more than sixty thousand primary schools and near about sixty lakh students are getting benefit out of this programme. The programme is managed by Department of School and Mass Education, Govt. of Odisha. Government of Odisha has made systematic departmental arrangement at each level for the smooth functioning of the programme. Steering-cum-monitoring committee in block, district and state level have been formed to monitor the programme. For the enrichment of Mid-day Meal programme, different innovative practices are going on in the state. The slogan of Mid-day Meal programme in Odisha is taken as “Nutrition for Education”.

Key Words: *Mid-day Meal Programme, Primary School*

INTRODUCTION

India State Hunger Index (ISHI) reported that, “India is home to the world’s largest food insecure population, with more than 200 million people who are hungry.” Adding to this, the report urged that, the country’s poor performance is driven by its high levels of child under-nutrition and poor calorie count. Poverty is a critical issue which has its

adverse impact on the nutritional level of the children and their educational attainment. The socio-economic factors present in the society lead most of the children suffer from under nutrition, more often they drop out from schools at an early age which directly affects the progress the nation. School feeding programme is a direct approach to improve the nutritional status of children as well as for rapid increase in students' attendance in schools.

The National Programme of Nutritional Support, popularly known as Mid-day Meal programme is the largest social welfare programme in India. It involves provision of lunch, free of cost to school-going children on all working days. Presently in India, 12cores of students of 12 lakh schools are getting benefit under this programme.

Objectives of Mid-day Meal Programme

The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, popularly known as Mid-day Meal Programme was launched in India on 15th August 1995, with the main objectives of –

- Boosting Universalisation of Primary Education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance.
- Improving the Nutritional Status of children studying in class I-V and class VI-VIII.
- To develop the process of socialization.
- Encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend schools regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities.
- Providing nutritional support to children of primary stage in drought-affected areas during summer vacation.

History of School Lunch Programme/ Mid-day Meal Programme in Western Countries

The school lunch programme is not a recent phenomenon. At the **global level**, the school lunch programme was first introduced in France in the year 1885 by Victor Hugo. Since then school lunch programme was introduced in several parts of the world viz, UK (1945), USA (1946), Switzerland (1946), Japan (1947), Australia (1950), China (1964-69),

and Singapore (1975). The developing countries are not an exception to the worldwide trend towards school lunch /noon-meal-programme. The programme received due attention in countries like Indonesia (1967), Thailand (1970), Korea (1973) and Samoa (1980).

Studies reveal that Asian Countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan have further gone a step ahead in providing food support to the parents of the school going children to take care of food security of the families in the form of either distribution of good grains, oil or other such food items (Panda, 2010). While in the Latin American countries of Panama, Brazil and El – Salvador food baskets, milk and cakes are provided to the school age children belonging to the slums and the disadvantaged areas in order to improve the enrolment of the schools (Moore, 1994); whereas USA has ensured the full participation of the children from the disadvantaged groups in the school by providing food packages, thus every country has considered the importance of food in improving the enrolment in schools. The school feeding programme further received a boost in 2000, as the United Nations met in Dakar to commit itself to the eradication of hunger and the attainment of universal primary education.

History of School Lunch Programme/ Mid-day Meal Programme in India

In India, Mid-day Meal Programme was started on an experimental basis in the state of Tamil Nadu by corporation of Madras in the year 1925. The noon-meal programme was started officially as a state wide scheme by Mr. K. Kamraj, the then Chief Minister of Madras in 1956 in Adi Dravida Community schools as the ‘Poor Feeding’ programme. In 1961, the government started receiving American aid for the programme and it was expanded to all corporation and government schools in urban areas. But it was only in July 1982 under the leadership of the legendary Chief Minister the late M.G. Rama Chandra that the Puratchi Thalaivar MGR Nutritious Meal Programme was introduced in a phased manner in Child Welfare Centre in rural areas for pre-school children in the age group of five years and for primary school children in the age groups five- nine years. On September, 15, 1982 the programme was extended to Nutritious Meal Centres in urban areas. It was further extended to school students between 10-14 years in 1984. Inspired by the success of school lunch programme in Tamil Nadu, several states of India adopted the scheme. The states adopted the scheme were Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana (1961), Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh (1962), Madhya Pradesh (1965) and Bihar (1968).

By the mid 1980s three states viz. Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the UT of Pondicherry had universalized a cooked Mid- day Meal programme with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage. Mid- day Meal was also being provided to children in Tribal areas in some states like Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. By 1990-91, the number of states implemented the Mid day Meal programme with their own resources on a large scale which had increased to twelve, namely, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh. In another three states, namely Karnataka, Odisha and West Bengal, the programme was being implemented with state resources in combination with international assistance. Another two states, namely Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan were implementing the programme entirely with international assistance.

Officially the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) was launched by Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the former Prime Minister of India as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995 in 2408 blocks with central assistance of 100 grams of food grains per child per school day and a transportation subsidy of Rs.50 per quintal. All the states and Union Territories of the country were encouraged to adopt this programme in primary schools run or funded by the Government throughout the country for the benefit of children in the age group of 6-11 years. Under this programme the union HRD Ministry made provision of free food grains to primary school children at the rate of 100 gram per child for ten months in a year. A historical order by the Supreme Court of India on 28th November, 2001 changed the picture of MDM and all the state governments introduced cooked Mid-day Meals in all government and government assisted primary schools. The Scheme was revised in its content and coverage from time to time. The hot cooked Mid-day Meal is being served to the children of elementary classes from 2004.

The scheme saw a significant development during 11th Plan and many studies reported that this scheme has a positive impact on various educational parameters and has helped a lot in achieving the goals of SSA in universalizing the elementary education in India. The provision of payment of honorarium to cook-cum-helpers has opened the path for the disadvantaged sections of the society to get employment in the scheme with dignity and pride to prepare the meal and serve to the children. The Mid- day Meal was extended to cover all children of upper primary classes from 2008-09. The scheme was further revised in April

2008 to extend the scheme to recognized as well as unrecognized Madrasas/ Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) as Government aided centres. The scheme was further revised during 2009-10 to enable the States / UTs to provide nutritious and calorific meal to the children of elementary classes. It was further extended to cover children under National Child Labour Projects (NCLP) w.e.f. 1st April, 2010. Realizing the importance of MDMs, Right to Education Act, 2009 has made it mandatory for every school to have all weather building including kitchen-cum-store. The rules under the RTE Act, 2009 mandate that School Management Committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Mid-day Meal scheme.

During the Twelfth Five year Plan (2012-17), MDMs would be expanded to cover pre-primary schooling in a progressive manner, private unaided schools, particularly in the SC/ST and minority concentrated areas, and poor children admitted in neighbourhood private schools against the 25 per cent earmarked seats as per provisions of the RTE Act. Partnerships with panchayats and municipalities, as well as with other NGOs and government agencies may be developed to ensure good-quality, nutritious and regular supply of food to all children.

Related Studies

Studies have been conducted by researchers and differed organizations on Mid-day Meal programme at national and state level. Some of the studies are given below.

Dreze and Goyal (2003) conducted a study on future of Mid-day Meal and found that with additional resources and quality safeguards, Mid-day Meals can play a major role in improving school attendance, eliminating classroom hunger, and fostering social equity. The investigation conducted by Mishra(2003) was on Mid-day Meal programme in Odisha and its impact on enrolment, attendance, retention and dropouts among primary school going children. The study revealed that average annual growth rate of enrolment was positive both in pre Mid-day Meal and post Mid-day Meal periods in Odisha. Jain and Shah (2005) reported that the enrolment in schools had gone up despite poor meal quality and inadequate infrastructure. Khera (2006) opines that the net impact of the scheme on child's health would depend upon whether the meal is a supplement or a substitute for food intake at home both in terms of quality and quantity. Another study by Samson, Noronha and De, (2007) on MDM

scheme in Delhi clearly points out that quantity and quality of the Mid day Meal needs to be improved and that so far what is provided does not justify the term Mid day Meal. It suggests monitoring of school functioning which may be inhibiting proper implementation of the scheme.

Anima and Sharma (2008) in an empirical study of the Mid- day Meal programme in Khurda district of Orissa, found that cooked Mid day Meal has increased socialization among the children and helped in increasing enrolment and afternoon session attendance. It was also found that MDM has created new employment opportunities for underprivileged sections. However, due to inadequacy of required staff, the teachers had to spend much time and effort in running the cooked meal scheme. Sinha (2008) in a study on social audit of Mid-day Meal Scheme in Andhra Pradesh found that the audit brought many positive effects of the Mid-day Meal Scheme by increasing enrolment, averting classroom hunger and reducing social discrimination. Swain (2008) on a study in Mid-day Meal Programme in Angul district of Odisha found that the scheme had positive impact on enrolment of children in schools.

Panda (2010) found that the school feeding programme in the residential Ashram schools in Chhattisgarh had positive impact on learning to live together. It had also influenced the regularity of school children and minimized malnutrition in residential schools for the Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh. Based on a survey of primary schools in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Afridi (2010) concludes that the MDM scheme had a substantial effect on reducing hunger at school. Singh and Mishra (2010) found that MDM scheme had improved the status of primary education by enhancement of enrolment and attendance in some way in Nagaland. The study by Pratiche Trust of Prof. Amartya Kumar Sen (2010) revealed that implementation of MDM has been a success throughout the country. Though the quality of food needs to be improved, it must be said that with active participation of the beneficiaries, it has become a community programme. Annual Status of Education Report (2010) reported that 83.4% schools served MDM on a day of visit and 81.3% schools were having kitchen sheds for cooking Mid- day Meal. A vastly improved availability of Mid- day Meals had contributed to the increase in enrollment.

Performance Audit (2011) conducted by Centre for Environment and Food Security on food security schemes in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh reported that performance of

the MDM scheme is better in Odisha in comparison to Uttar Pradesh. An overwhelming 86.7 per cent of Orissa's children were getting second best category of MDM (regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal), whereas only 51.8 per cent of children in UP were getting regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal in their schools. The investigation by Bonds (2012), revealed that the school feeding programme was extremely successful in raising enrollment rates, particularly among children from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds. Alim et al. (2012) conducted a study on impact of Mid-Day Meal scheme on the nutritional status and academic achievement of school children of Aligarh city (Uttar Pradesh). It was found that children were the most valuable group that suffered from malnutrition and nutritional defiance. The study by Mohanty and Sethy (2013) in an elementary school in rural area of Kendrapara district of Odisha found that the students enrolment had been increased and daily attendance of the students also has been increased after implementation of Mid-day Meal in the school. The problems associated with the implementation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme include: no separate room for serving the food, insufficient food, rice and pulses were not of good quality, irregular release of fund for the purpose etc. The study conducted by Swain and Sahu (2014) in Odisha revealed that the problems in the implementation of Mid-day Meal Programme were relating to inadequate physical facilities, irregular supply of rice, low quality of rice, burden of the programme on teachers etc.

Mid-day Meal Programme in Odisha

In Odisha, the Mid-day Meal Programme was introduced in the year 1995 to provide cooked noon meal to primary school children of all Government and Government-aided Schools studying in Class I to V all over the state for about 210 working days in a year. However, w.e.f. 1st of July 2001, it was decided to provide cooked meal to the primary school children in all Govt. and Govt.-aided primary school children only in the rural areas of the 8 KBK districts (80 Blocks including 44 ITDA Blocks) and in 74 ITDA Blocks of the Non-KBK districts. Thus, cooked food under the MDM programme was being provided only in the KBK and the ITDA Blocks. As regards the other districts of the state, dry ration, @ 3 kgs. of rice per beneficiary per month was being supplied. During the year 2002-03, the cooked meal system under the MDM programme was also extended to the primary school children in the backward district of Boudh w.e.f. 1st April, 2002. Thus, 157 blocks out of the

314 blocks in the state were covered under the 'dry ration system' till 31st August, 2004. As per direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, cooked meal at noon time is being provided to all students of all the Govt./Govt.-aided Primary Schools, EGS & AIE Centers w.e.f 1st September, 2004. Previously this programme was being implemented by the Department of Women and Child Development. It was transferred to the Department of School and Mass Education in August, 2011.

Implementation of Mid Day Meal Programme in Odisha

As stated earlier Mid-day Meal programme was introduced in Odisha on 1st July 1995 as a nutrition intervention programme. The following are the basic features of Mid-day Meal programme in Odisha.

Coverage of Mid-day Meal programme

In Odisha the Mid-day Meal programme is running in more than sixty thousand primary schools (all the govt., aided, Madrasa and national child labour schools) and near about sixty lakh students are getting benefit out of this programme.

Food Grains Management

The government of India allocates food grains (rice) as per the list of students submitted by the State Govt. The State Govt. reallocates the rice in favour of the districts. The respective collectors lift the rice through the storing and transporting agents appointed by them through tender procedure from the nearest FCI godown. The Block transporting agents carry the rice to the school point from the godown. The SHG/Teachers –in- charge of MDM receive the rice at the school level. This process has been streamlined. The collectors have been instructed to take care of proper storage of food grains.

Revised Ration Cost

The revised ration cost per meal under MDM is Rs.4.04 for primary students and Rs.6.03 for upper primary students. This is effective from 25th August, 2014.

Amount of Food Grains and Menu

For the primary students 100gms of rice, 25gms of dal, 60gms vegetables, 12gms of soyabodi and one egg is supplied in the meal on a fixed weekly menu. For the Upper Primary School students, 150gms of rice, 30gms of dal, 100gms vegetables, 25gms of soyabodi and one egg is given in the meal on a fixed weekly menu. Under a common menu in all the primary schools of Odisha, rice and dal is provided on Monday & Thursday, rice and soyabodi curry is given on Tuesday & Friday and rice and egg curry on Wednesday & Saturday.

Calorie Contain

The average protein content per meal is 13.8gms for primary school students and 20.5gms for Upper Primary School students. The average K. Calorie content per meal is 493.6 for primary students and 728.67 for Upper Primary students.

Departmental Arrangement

Government of Odisha has made systematic departmental arrangement at each level for the smooth functioning of the scheme. At state level, Mid-day Meal programme comes under Department of School and Mass Education and one O.A.S. officer is working as State Nodal Officer. At district level, the district collector is in charge of the District Headquarters. BEO is acting as District Nodal Officer. At Block level, the BDO, BEO, BRCC and CRCC are taking the responsibility of the programme. At school level, the SMC, SHG in charge and Headmaster are taking the responsibility of the programme.

Monitoring

Steering-cum- Monitoring committees in block, district and state level have been formed to monitor the scheme. The state Govt. also ordered that, one member from SMC/Mothers Committee/Parents to be invited to come to school, and inspect MDM and taste the cooked food.

Engagement of Cook-Cum-Helper

With the objectives to provide an earning opportunity to the local resident especially women of weaker and deprived section of the society, the Government of Odisha decided to engage them as MDM Cook-Cum-Helper. For 25 students one Cook-Cum-Helper

is allotted and between 26 to 100 students, two Cook-Cum-Helpers are allotted. Then for every another 100 students, one more Cook-Cum-Helper is allotted. School Management Committee (SMC) is the appropriate authority to engage the Cook-Cum-Helper. Presently the Cook-Cum-Helper gets Rs.1000/- per month during school working days.

Tasting the Food before it is Served

The state Govt. has decided that, every day the cooked food is to be tasted/checked by two teachers and cook-cum-helpers before it is served to the children. The taste checking teacher and cook-cum-helper shall sign on the register maintained for the purpose on daily basis. The Govt. also circulated that, it is the Headmaster who will take personal diligence to supervise the quality, quantity, health & hygiene with regard to Mid-day Meal and be responsible for lapses.

Innovative Practices

For the enrichment of better Mid-day Meal programme, different innovative practices are going on. They are Hand Wash Abhiyan, Multi-Tap Water Source, Mid Day Meal Observation Register, Selection of Sishu Khadya Mantri and Sishu Swasthya Mantri, Inclusive dinning, Observance of Happy birth Day, Capacity building of new recruits etc. In the same line the state Govt. decided that, Madhyan Bhojan Puraskar would be given on 15th Aug. or 26th January every year.

MDM Panchaniyam

By the order of state Govt. five non-negotiable rules(MDM Panchaniyam) for Mid-day Meal is displayed on the wall of the school. The MDM Panchaniyams are:

- i) Safe, clean and hygienic ambience
- ii) Safe, nutritious and hygienic cooking and consumption
- iii) Hand wash before and after food
- iv) No gender/social discrimination
- v) Safe drinking water

The slogan of Mid-day Meal programme in Odisha is taken as “Nutrition for Education”.

Software for School Student Helpline

From 1st January, 2015 a special web portal named www.studenthelplineodisha.nic.in on School Student Helpline is functioning. All type of grievance related to Mid-day Meal programme can be accessed and complied through the website.

Involvement of Private Organisations

Government of Odisha welcomed different private body's involvement in Mid-day Meal programme to make the scheme a big success. Presently, the SHGs are keeping all the records of attendance as well as daily requirement of food grains. They procure food, prepare and distribute it to the children. Vedanta Aluminum Limited, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with District Administration of Kalahandi and NAANDI Foundation to provide Mid-day Meal in Lanjigarh block of the Kalahandi district. Presently the NAANDI Foundation is providing Mid-day Meal to some blocks of Ganjam, Kalahandi and Keonjhor districts. Except NAANDI Foundation, Akshaya Patra Foundation, a Bangalore based voluntary organisation, has started providing Mid-day Meal in some blocks of Puri, Nayagarh district etc.

Role of Teachers

Presently teachers are not directly assigned duty in Mid-day Meal programme due to hindrance of teaching learning. However, they have to monitor the programme and should ensure that:

- Proper quality and quantity of food is being served to children as per the attendance on each day.
- Entitlements of children are displayed at a prominent wall in the school.
- Food is being cooked in a hygienic manner and children wash their hands before and after eating.
- No stray animals etc. are allowed in the school premises at any time.
- Periodic health check-up of the cook-cum-helper is done.
- The quality of food should be tested before it is served.

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