

# Mid day meal essay



The Mid Day Meal Scheme 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. The main objective of MDM Programme in the State is to boost universalisation of Primary Education.

It involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in Primary and Upper Primary Classes in Government, Government Aided, Local Body, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate Innovative Education (AIE) Centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Schools run by Ministry of Labour. Mid Day Meal with enhanced calorific energy content and increased quantity of proteins in food, is also expected to improve the nutritional status of children.

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, encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities, increasing the enrollment, retention and attendance rates. According to the government, it is the world's largest school feeding programme, reaching out to about 120, 000, 000 children in over 1, 265, 000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres across the country.

Research Findings on Mid Day Meal Some research findings on Mid Day Meal Scheme conducted by independent agencies reported that MDM programme

is a visible programme and has helped in increase in attendance and enrolment of children particularly girls. They also reported that there is an increase in retention, learning ability and achievement as well as greater social equity among caste, creed, sex and gender groups in the schools. The main research findings are as under: i) Research findings (2010) of Pratichi trust of Prof.

Amartya Kumar Sen: Unlike many other Government programmes, 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. The quick response of the state administration in amending the shortcomings indicates that the administration is gradually becoming aware of this. ii) The major findings of the PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) Report indicated that 84% of households reported that the children get cooked mid day meal in schools and children enjoy varied menu.

Good practices like washing hands before eating, & after eating are imparted in the schools. Incentives like MDM have contributed to improving enrolment rates. iii) Mid Day Meal Scheme in Madhya Pradesh by National Institute of Public Cooperation & Child Development, Indore has reported that MDM has shown marked improvement in enrollment pattern of children in primary schools. Mid Day Meal Scheme undoubtedly resulted in increased school attendance and retention of children in schools for a longer period. The Scheme has played a crucial role in reducing drop out, especially among girls.

Parents viewed that the mid day meal had reduced the burden of providing one time meal to their children and considered it as a great support to their families. Teachers opined that mid day meal aided in active learning of children, which indirectly improved their academic performance. The Scheme has played a significant role in bringing social equity among all the sections of the society. iv) An empirical study conducted on Mid Day Meal scheme in Khurda district of Orissa, revealed that cooked mid day meal has increased socialization among the children and helped in increasing enrolment and afternoon session attendance.

MDM has created new employment opportunities for underprivileged sections. v) Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010 reported that in 83. 4% schools served MDM on a day of visit and almost same percent of schools (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. The Problem Statement:- “ The mid-day meal scheme was adopted on the pattern of the Madras Municipal Corporation school lunch scheme.

The problem is there is no clear structure defined, and every state functions according to its wish,” said Ambrish Rai, convenor 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. 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 is lack of guidelines and institutionalisation 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 monitoring 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 reports sitting at their tables without having visited schools. How would the government ever know what is happening in the name of mid-day meal scheme? ” Irfail said. “ The government says it is taking all the steps, but it is an eyewash. There is no infrastructure in schools; many of them have no running water; hygiene is not maintained; and in addition, the money provided fills the pockets of those who arrange for supplies,” Irfail told 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 people ask them to stop the scheme altogether. Maybe they want to hand over the scheme to some corporate organisation, 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 people ask them to stop the scheme altogether. Maybe they want to hand over the scheme to some corporate organisation,” he said.

Irfaal 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 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 IANS. “ The principal of one aided school told me that children get food from home, because the mid-day meal portions are not sufficient. No one 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, and 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; by that time school time is over. When will the child study? ” he questioned. Asked what can be a possible solution for streamlining the scheme, the experts suggest 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.