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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mid Day Meal-Not a Sufficient Deal

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Abstract

The world's largest school feeding programme, "Mid Day Meal" has been running in India since 1995. This paper deals with different aspects of this scheme, Firstly this paper highlights the role of MDM in the economy of India, secondly this paper brings out the facts that how's MDM less effective for promoting school participation and facilitating healthy growth of children, Thirdly the paper deals with the quality standard of MDM related to its main two objectives, Fourthly the paper includes all the scams and issues related to MDM and the last but not least the paper come up with some suggestions which can help MDM to be a sufficient and significant programme of second populated country of the world.

Keywords: *Healthy growth of children, Mid Day Meal, Promoting school participation.*

Introduction

Introduction of mid day meal scheme (MDM) in India occurred almost a century ago. It was the then Madras Corporation that first developed a school lunch programme way back in 1925. However, it was about 50 years later that such a scheme was given any serious attention at the national level. In the year 1974, the National Policy on Children declared that country's children are its supreme human resource. This policy enjoined the state to ensure full physical and mental development of children. Later, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid Day Meal Scheme) was launched in 1995.

History

One of the pioneers of the scheme is the Madras Presidency that started providing cooked meals to children in corporation schools in the Madras city in 1923. The programme was introduced in a large scale in 1960s under the Chief Ministership of K. Kamaraj. But the first major thrust came in 1982 when the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. M. G. Ramachandran, decided to universalise the scheme for all children in government schools in primary classes. Later the programme was expanded to cover all children up to class 10. Tamil Nadu's mid-day meal programme is among the best known in the country.

There is an interesting story about how K. Kamaraj got the idea of a noon meal scheme. The spark is said to have occurred in a small village (now a town) called Cheranmahadevi in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. K Kamarajar was a very simple person who used to travel in his car (even without the red lamp at the top) and was not accustomed to convoys. On one such journey, he had to stop at the railway intersection in Cheranmahadevi and got out of the car and waited. He saw a few boys busy with their cows and goats. The Chief Minister had asked one small boy, "What are you doing with this cows? Why didn't you go to school?" The boy immediately answered, "If I go to school, will you give me food to eat? I can learn only if I eat." The boy's retort sparked the entire process into establishing the mid-day meal programme. Several other states of India also have had mid-day meal programmes. The most notable among them is Gujarat that has had it since the late 1980s. Kerala started

Providing cooked meals in schools since 1995 and so did Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in small pockets. On November 28, 2001 the Supreme Court of India gave a landmark direction, which made it obligatory for the government to provide cooked meals to all children in all government and government assisted primary schools. The direction was resisted vigorously by State governments initially, but the programme has become almost universal by 2005.

The Supreme Court Direction

In April 2001 People's Union for Civil Liberties (Rajasthan) initiated the now famous right to food litigation. Thispublic interest litigation has covered a large range of issues relating to right to food, but the best known intervention by the court is on mid-day meals. In one of its many direction in the litigation the Supreme Court directed the government to fully implement its scheme of providing cooked meals to all children in primary schools. This landmark direction converted the mid-day meal scheme into a legal entitlement, the violation of which can be taken up in the court of law. The direction and further follow-up by the Supreme Court has been a major instrument in universalising the scheme.

Union Budgetary Allocation

Table 1: Year wise outlay under mid day meal scheme (Rs. in Crores)

Year	BE	RE	Releases
2007-08	7324	6678	5835.44
2008-09	8000	8000	6539.52
2009-10	8000	7359.15	6937.79
2010-11	9440	9440	9128.44
2011-12	10380	10380	9901.92
2012-13	11937		4343.14 as on 27-7-12

Literature Review

Reetika Khera in her paper title, "Mid Day Meals in Primary Schools Achievements and Challenges" found that mid day meal has become almost universal scheme feeding primary children all over the country but till now the largest scheme of the world facing number of challenges [1]Jean Dreze and Aprajita goyal conducted their study on Mid Day Meal and found that Mid Day Meal have a major impact on child nutrition, school attendances and social equity however the quality issues need urgent attention if MDM programme realise their full potential then MDM would be significant step towards the realisation of the right to food [2] Manisha k jha in her paper title "Hunger and Starvation Deaths"came out with the facts that policies related to hunger and food should be implemented in a very efficient manners [3]. Meera Samson ,Claire noronha and Anuradha DC also found in their study that although the objectives of MDM to boost primary education and nutritional status of children yet the scheme is not much successful in all over India like the initiative state Tamilnadu [4] Brinda Viswanathan stated that in her study that a large number of children in India from poor households did not have access to the meal schemes running in the country [5] Nobel economist Amartya sen and sunil sengupta conducted an empirical field work and found that nutritional level of children in India is very poor [6]Joachim Von Braun, Marie Ruel, and Ashok Gulati stated in their study that growth of the economy can be accelerating by reducing the number of children who are suffering with under nutrition [7]Rama Baru, Rajib Dasgupta, Mita Deshpandey and Aparana Mohanty also discussed in their paper the rationale behind replace the cooked food to dry ratio [8] Afiridi found in his study that performance of Mid Day Meal in term of quality and quantity of food is not appropriate for the health of children [9]

Objective of the Study

- To Promoting school participation.
- To Improving the nutritional status of children.
- To evaluate MDM.
- To justify the fact that just enrolment is not the solution for education in India.
- To prove that the providing level of nutrition is not sufficient to tackle the health problem of children in India.
- To evaluate the impact of inappropriate functioning of MDM.
- To discuss the scams and issues related to MDM.
- To come up with some suggestions and ideas that can make MDM a perfect deal.

Dark Sides of this Objective

- Enrolment in schools is not sufficient for India to be educated.
- Drop-out rate also move parallel to enrolment.
- It is proved by many surveys and reports that just schooling is not education.
- With the increasing rate of enrolment the number of absentees also increases.
- Due to the odd-timing of the meal serving under the scheme the children make tendency to come in afternoon rather in morning.

School Enrolments and MDM

The main objective of the MDM scheme is to increase the enrolments of the students in India. Although MDM works a lot on this objective yet this is not functioning in a proper channel. We have data that can prove that the Gross Enrolment in school is increasing due to MDM but the dropout ratio is also running simultaneously with the Gross Enrolment.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey is designed and coordinated by ASER

Table 2: Gross enrolment

Year	(Classes I-V) (In %)	(Classes V-VIII)
1986-87	84.8	52.3
1989-90	104.2	59.9
1992-93	110.5	58.5
1995-96	97.1	65.0
1998-99	96.8	65.3
2001-02	93.0	69.6
2002-03	95.6	56.3
2003-04	88.3	71.9
2004-05	115.3	70.2
2005-06	118.6	73.5

Source: www.mospi.gov.in

Table 3: Drop-out rates

Year	Primary(I-V) (In %)	Elementary(V-VIII) (In %)
1960-61	64.9	78.3
1970-71	67.0	77.9
1980-81	58.7	72.7
1990-91	42.6	60.9
2000-01	40.7	53.7
2001-02	39.0	54.6
2002-03	34.9	52.8
2003-04	31.5	52.3
2004-05	29.0	50.8
2005-06	25.7	48.8

Source: www.mospi.gov.in

Centre, facilitated by Pratham, and conducted by local organizations. The first ASER was conducted in 2005. Since then, ASER has been conducted in almost every rural district every year. ASER primarily focuses on the learning outcomes of children and is the only annual source of information for learning levels of children in elementary schools available in India. 2012 is the eighth ASER survey.

ASER uses simple, low cost tools to assess impact at scale and to increase the understanding of ordinary citizens about the current status of elementary education.

Findings

An Enrolment in the 6-14 Age Groups Continues to be Very High. But the Proportion of Out of School Children have Increased, Especially among Girls in the Age Group of 11 to 14.

- Overall, enrolment numbers remain very high. Over 96% of all children in the age group 6 to 14 years are enrolled in school. This is the fourth consecutive year that enrolment levels have been 96% or more.
- Nationally, the proportion of children (age 6 to 14) who are not enrolled in school has gone up slightly, from 3.3% in 2011 to 3.5% in 2012. A slight increase is seen for all age groups and for both boys and girls.
- Girls in the age group of 11 to 14 years are often the hardest to bring to school and keep in school. In 2006, in eight major states, more than 11% girls in this age group were not enrolled in school. By 2011, this figure had dropped to less than 6.5% in 3 of these states (Jharkhand, Gujarat and Odisha) and less than 5% in 3 others (Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal). The situation in these states remained more or less unchanged in 2012. However in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the proportion of out of school girls (age 11-14) has increased from 8.9% and 9.7% respectively in 2011 to more than 11% in 2012.

Private School Enrolment Continues to Rise in almost all States

- At the All India level private school enrolment has been rising steadily since 2006. The percentage of 6 to 14 year olds enrolled in private schools rose from 18.7% in 2006 to 25.6% in 2011. This year this number has further increased to 28.3%. The increase is almost equal in primary (Std. I-V) and upper primary (Std. VIVIII) classes. In 2012, among all private school children (age 6-14), 57.9% were boys.
- In 2012, more than 40% of children (age 6-14 years) in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya are enrolled in private schools. This percentage is 60% or more in Kerala and Manipur.
- Increase in private school enrolment is seen in almost all states, with the exception of Kerala, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya (where private school enrolment was over 40% even last year) and Tripura.
- Since 2009, private school enrolment in rural areas has been rising at an annual rate of about 10%. If this trend continues, by 2018 India will have 50% children in rural areas enrolled in private schools.

Reading Levels continue to be a Cause for Serious Concern. More than Half of All Children in Std. V are at Least three Grade levels behind where they should be

- In 2010 nationally, 46.3% of all children in Std. V could not read a Std. II level text. This proportion increased to 51.8% in 2011 and further to 53.2% in 2012. For Std. V children enrolled in government schools, the percentage of children unable to read Std. II level text has increased from 49.3% (2010) to 56.2% (2011) to 58.3% (2012).
- For all children in Std. V, the major decline in reading levels (of 5 percentage points or more) between 2011 and 2012 is seen in Haryana, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala. Even private schools in Maharashtra and Kerala, with a large proportion of aided schools, show a decline in reading ability for Std. V.
- The percentage of all children enrolled in Std. III who cannot read a Std. I level text has increased steadily from 53.4% (2009) to 54.4% (2010) to 59.7% (2011) to 61.3% in 2012. For children enrolled in government schools, this figure has increased from 57.6% in 2010 to 64.8% in 2011 to 67.7% in 2012.

2012 was the Year of Mathematics. But it has been a Bad Year for basic Arithmetic for Children in India

- In 2010, of all children enrolled in Std. V, 29.1% could not solve simple two-digit subtraction problems with borrowing. This proportion increased to 39% in 2011 and further to 46.5% in 2012. Barring Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, every major state shows signs of a substantial drop in arithmetic learning levels.

- Comparing the cohort of children who were in government schools in Std. V in 2011 with the cohort in Std. V in 2012, there is evidence of a more than 10 percentage point drop in the ability to do basic subtraction in almost all states. Exceptions are Bihar, Assam and Tamil Nadu where the drop is less; and Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala where there has been either improvement or no change from 2011.

- The proportion of all children enrolled in Std. V who could not do division problems has increased from 63.8% in 2010 to 72.4% in 2011 to 75.2% in 2012. In rural India as a whole, two years ago about two thirds of all children in Std. V could not do simple division. In 2012 this number is close to three fourths.

- Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra are all states where the cohort in Std. V in 2012 seems to be substantially weaker than the cohort in Std. V in 2011. In the southern states, the situation is unchanged from 2011 except in Kerala where there is a significant improvement.

ASER 2012 Assessed Basic English

- In ASER 2012, children were given a set of simple English reading and comprehension tasks. Across rural India, 48.9% children enrolled in Std. V could read English words or more, and 22.5% could read simple English sentences. Among all children enrolled in Std. VIII, 47% could read sentences. Of those who could read words or sentences, well above 60% could convey the meaning in their own language.

Private inputs into Children's Education, such as Private Schooling and Private Tutoring, are Widespread and their Influence on Children's Learning Outcomes are Substantial

- Whether enrolled in government schools or private schools, across rural India in the elementary grades (Std. I-VIII) about a quarter of all children also go to paid private tutors.

- Another way to think about private inputs into education is to categorize children into four groups:

  - Children in government schools who do not go to private tutors;
  - Children in government schools who go to private tutors;
  - Children in private schools who do not go to private tutors; and
  - Children in private schools who go to private tutors.

In 2012, the above four groups comprised 54.5%, 18.8%, 20.7% and 6% of all students in Std. V. Children in categories 2, 3 and 4 – amounting to about 45% of all children in Std. V in rural India - receive some form of private input into their education, either in the form of schooling or tuition.The influence of additional inputs in the form of tuition on children's ability to read or to do arithmetic is clear. Whether enrolled in government schools or in private schools, children receiving this additional support have better learning outcomes than those who do not.

The Proportion of Small Schools is Rising in India

- A total of 14,591 schools were visited during ASER 2012. Of these about 60% were government primary schools with classes up to Std. IV or V and the rest were upper primary schools which had primary sections.

- The proportion of government primary schools with enrolment of 60 or fewer students has increased overtime. In the last 3 years, this figure has increased from 26.1% in 2009 to 32.1% in 2012.

- The proportion of children in primary grades who sit in multigrade classrooms is also rising. For Std. II, this number has gone up from 55.8% in 2009 to 62.6% in 2012. For Std. IV, it has risen from 51% in 2010 to 56.6% in 2012.

School Facilities show Improvement over Time

- Based on RTE norms, the pupil teacher ratio shows improvement. In 2010, the proportion of schools meeting these norms was 38.9%. This number has risen to 42.8% in 2012.

- 73% of all schools visited had drinking water available. However, just fewer than 17% did not have drinking water facility at all. A water facility was available, though not usable in the remaining schools.

- The proportion of schools without toilets has reduced from 12.2% in 2011 to 8.4% in 2012 and the proportion of schools with useable toilets has increased from 47.2% in 2010 to 56.5% in 2012. Approximately 80% of schools visited had separate provision for girls' toilets. Of schools which had this separate provision, close to half had useable girls' toilets, as compared to a third in 2010.

Nutrition Level and MDM

Nutritional support is perceived as a facilitator for education and to provide healthful and nutritious diet to children is another main objective of MDM.

Meal Provision

Since its inspection, the scheme has been revised from time to time and the present provisions are as given below. Free supply of food grains @ 100 grams per child per school day at Primary and @ 150 grams per child per school day at Upper Primary. Subsidy for transportation of food grains is

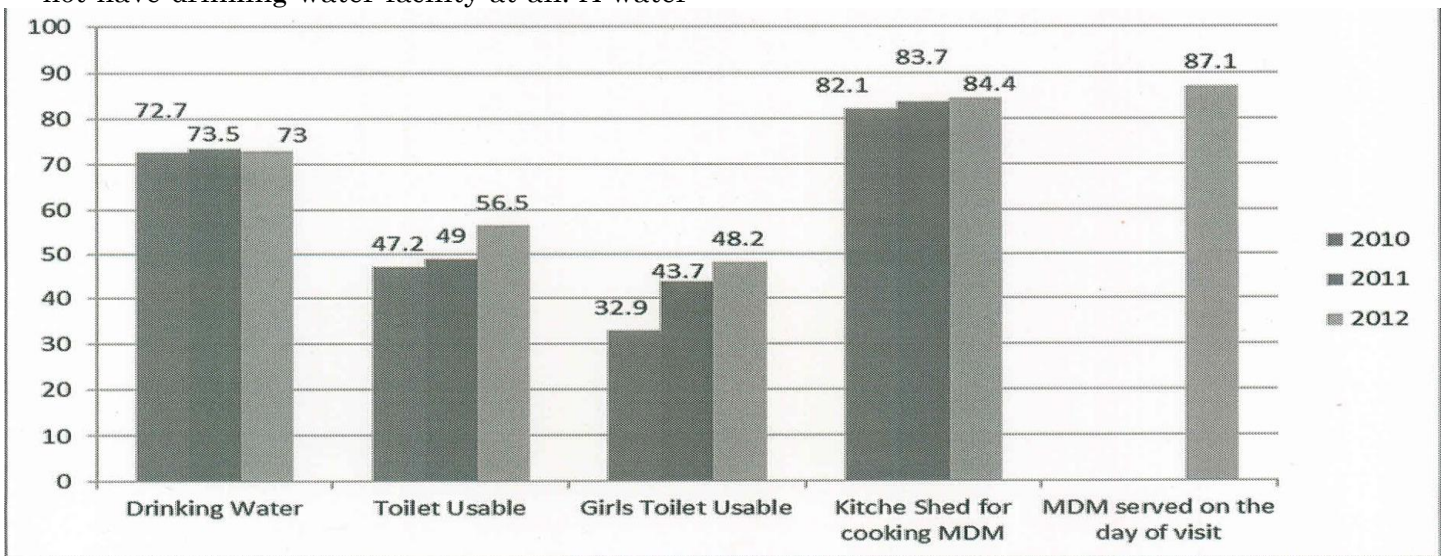

Fig.1: The mid-day meal was observed being served in 87.1% schools that were visited

provided to 11 special category states at PDS rate prevalent in these states and up to a maximum of Rs.75.00 per quintal for other than special categories States/UTs.

In addition to food grains, a mid day meal involves major input, viz., cost of cooking, which is explained below.

Cost of cooking includes cost of ingredients, e.g. pulses, vegetables, cooking oil and condiments as given below.

Dark Sides of this Objective

- The report released as part of the 2011 Global Hunger Index, India ranks at 15 out of 88 countries.

Table 4: Food norm with effect from 1-12-2009

S. No.	Items	Quantity per day/Child	
		Primary	Upper Primary
1	Food grains	100 gms	150 gms
2	Pulses	20 gms	30 gms
3	Vegetables (leafy also)	50 gms	75 gms
4	Oil & fat	5 gms	7.5 gms
5	Salt & condiments	As per need	As per need

Sourse: mdm.nic.in

- In Delhi 42.2% children fewer than 5 are stunted or too short for their age and 26% are underweight.
- According to the UNICEF table given below shows the miserable condition of India
- 80 per cent of the world's stunted children live in 14 countries

Table 5: 14 countries with the largest numbers of children under 5 years old who are moderately or severely stunted

Ranking	Country	Year	Stunting prevalence (%)	% global burden (2011)	Number of stunted children (moderate or severe, thousands)
1	India	2005–2006	48	38	61,723
2	Nigeria	2008	41	7	11,049
3	Pakistan	2011	44	6	9,663
4	China	2010	10	5	8,059
5	Indonesia	2010	36	5	7,547
6	Bangladesh	2011	41	4	5,958
7	Ethiopia	2011	44	3	5,291
8	Democratic Republic of the Congo	2010	43	3	5,228
9	Philippines	2008	32	2	3,602
10	United Republic of Tanzania	2010	42	2	3,475
11	Egypt	2008	29	2	2,628
12	Kenya	2008–2009	35	1	2,403
13	Uganda	2011	33	1	2,219
14	Sudan	2010	35	1	1,744

According to UNICEF India is on the highest ranking in the number of children who are severely wasted.

There is a major difference between the required and provide calorie under MDM. The table given below justify this fact:

Table 6: Required calorie

Age	Boys	Girls
(Years)	Kcal/day	Kcal/day
1-2	1200	1140
2-3	1410	1310
3-4	1560	1440
4-5	1690	1540
5-6	1810	1630
6-7	1900	1700
7-8	1990	1770
8-9	2010	1830
9-10	2150	1880

Source: From data of Ferro-Luzzi and Durnin

- The World Bank estimates that India is ranked 2nd in the world of the number of children suffering from malnutrition, after Bangladesh (in 1998), where 47% of the children exhibit a degree of malnutrition. The prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world, and is nearly double that of Sub-Saharan Africa with dire consequences for mobility, mortality, productivity and economic growth.[1] The UN estimates that 2.1 million Indian children die before reaching the age of 5 every year – four every minute – mostly from preventable illnesses such as diarrhoea, typhoid, malaria, measles and pneumonia. Every day, 1,000 Indian children die because of diarrhoea alone. According to the 1991 census of India, it has around 150 million children, constituting 17.5% of India's population, who are below the age of 6 years.

Table 7: Provided calorie of MDM

Component	Primary	Upper primary
Calories	450 cal	700 cal
Protein	12 gms	20 gms
Micro-Nutrients	Adequate quantities of micro-nutrients like folic acid, Iron, Vitamin A etc	Same level of micro-nutrients as Primary.

Source: mdm.nic.in

- Less -qualitative and unhygienic food provided to children under MDM is not nourishing the nation.
- Providing meal doesn't necessarily mean they are eaten by children.

- According to UNICEF one in three of the world's malnourished children live in India.

Impact on the Economy

- As India a labour abandoned country so the unhealthy progress of children can be a bottleneck towards the path of development.
- Unhealthy children can impact negatively on HDI.
- Children are the future of any country. If children are not fit then it is impossible to get a higher rate of growth of the country.
- Less productivity.
- Deteriorating the human capital resources.

Ignorance of MDG (Millennium Development Goals)

Issues and Scams

- Issues related to Uttar Pradesh state has failed to score well on performance audit carried out by audit watchdog, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. In its stand-alone report on the implementation of the scheme in the state, the CAG has pointed out on several leaks and slips between the children and the dish. Not only has the scheme turned out to be a huge window for diversions and undue favours to vested interests, in non-compliance with Supreme Court directives [April 2004], the state has failed to provide nutritional support to 1.63 crore children of drought affected areas during summer vacations of 2005 and 2007.

- In January 2006, the Delhi Police unearthed a scam in the Midday Meal Scheme.
- In 2006 a scam related to MDM noticed in Darjeeling.
- In December 2006, The Times of India reported a scam involving government schools that siphon off food grains under the midday meal scheme by faking attendance.

Suggestions and Conclusions

- More transparency in the allocation system should be introduced.
- Just Schooling is not education so more steps towards the literacy should be taken.
- The quality of education given in the school must be enhanced.
- Odd timing of MDM diverts the concentration of students from study to food so the timing must be changed.
- Only enrolments should not be a motive of this scheme but also required some qualitative and quantitative steps towards the education.
- The nutrition level, the quality, the way of serving, the way of cooking and the way of distributing of the meal must be improved.
- The nutrition providing under MDM is not nourishing the nation so this is required more effective steps towards the meal provision of the MDM.
- In spite of cooked food more energetic packed food and the items that can be distributed easily should be included in the menu of MDM.
- Involvement of local community can be a major step towards not only proper working of MDM but also self sufficiency of the society.

Some Remarkable Steps by Different State

Karnataka

The Akshaya Patra Foundation, which was by then successfully implementing its own**school lunch program** in Karnataka, was called in to give testimonies for verifying the efficacy of the scheme.In order to successfully carry out this mandate, each State Government then started its own **Mid-day meal** program. Initiated by the Government of Karnataka, Akshara Dasoha is one such scheme in place.

Once started, the challenge which now faced the Government was one of successful implementation. As the guidelines for the NP-NPSE, 2006 state, wherever possible, the Government would*: 'mobilize community support and promoting public-private partnership for the programme'*Voluntary organizations such as Akshaya Patra are therefore encouraged to set up operations wherever possible. They act as the implementing arm of the government.

In fact, as the Karnataka Human Development Report 2005 explains, the Government of Karnataka was the 'first to take this step' of involving NGOs in development programs. The report states that this *'involvement of the NGOs in multilateral/bilateral programs, raises the level of co-operations to another level. The NGOs become not only implementers; they also find a place in designing and managing programs together with government at all levels.'*

This pioneering move, by the Government of Karnataka, to make NGOs the implementing arm of the Government has been one of the major reasons for its success in attaining the goals of the program. The achievements of these private-public partnerships have even influenced the Central Government. By setting up and encouraging private-public partnerships, the

government is successfully leveraging the skills and resources of the private sector for the greater good. Today, India's **mid-day meal scheme** is one of the largest **school lunch programs** in the world, reaching out to nearly 120 million children in the country.

Mizoram

Kitchen Gardens in the Schools

One of the best practices found in most of the north eastern states is kitchen garden in the schools. In Mizoram, certain schools, especially in the rural areas and small towns, have started their own kitchen gardens. The schools serve fresh vegetables grown in the garden in the MDM sometimes as one of the main items, sometimes as supplement to MDM and as salad depending upon the types of vegetables available in various seasons. In states like Mizoram, where adequate supply of green vegetables throughout the year is not available, it is a good practice to have kitchen garden in a school.

Tamil Nadu

The State Government not only makes sufficient budget provision for constant supply of food items and infrastructure facilities, but increased budget provisions are made every year for continuous improvement in the management systems and quality of Mid Day Meals supplied in schools. The Social Welfare and Nutritional Meal Programme Department at State Level and the network with the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation ensure constant supply of food items. At the institutional level, preparation and distribution of MDM is a good team effort which includes not only the regular workers, noon meal organizers, cooks and the assistants, but also get the cooperation from teachers, head teachers, mothers and the members of the village education committee.

Rajasthan

Public –Private Partnership

A policy for attracting public–private partnership in the MDM Scheme was launched by the Government of Rajasthan in January 2006. Commendable achievements have been made in attracting such partnerships in the programme. Akshya Patra Foundation, Naandi foundation, Adamya Chetna Trust are examples which have partnered with the Government in success implementation of the MDM in the State.

West Bengal

In Nadia district of the West Bengal, the schools were having their own kitchen garden where vegetables are grown in the school premises. An Assistant teacher of the school has voluntarily taken up responsibility of the entire farming process. Students are engaged ever day in the watering the vegetable plots. The school has also dug out a pond where fish farming is undertaken. Students are thus provided with varied fresh vegetables and fish in MDM. Support of VEC members is obtained in nurturing and maintenance of the vegetables plots and the pond. The school even provides its produced vegetables to other nearby schools. To enhance the spirit, students are asked by the teachers to recite poems (based on subjects like Mid Day Meal, Education for All etc.,) before taking the meal. These poems are composed by the Assistant Teachers of the school. Discussions are also held with the guardians/ parents about the usefulness of the MDM. This innovation helped the school management committee to become self-reliant in the supply of vegetables.Such significant steps can help to Mid Day Meal to be a PERFECT DEAL.

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