

Mid Day Meal Programme Implementation in Mishrik Seetapur

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Abstract

"The Food you eat can be either the safest & most powerful form of medicine or the slowest form of poison."
– Ann Wigmore

With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995. In October 2007, the Scheme was extended to cover children of upper primary classes (i.e. class VI to VIII) studying in 3,479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs) and the name of the Scheme was changed from 'National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education' to 'National Programme of Mid Day Meal in Schools'. The nutritional norm for upper primary stage was fixed at 700 Calories and 20 grams of protein. The Scheme was extended to all areas across the country from 1.4.2008. This paper is actual view of Mid Day Meal programme in Mishrik village, Sitapur District, Lucknow U.P, where children were not having mid day meal in proper quantity which is actually decided by the government & not getting any beneficial aspects with this government scheme. Children were suffering various health issues during this stage. Data had been taken for 50 school going children. Physical medical checkups had conducted from government authorized doctors. Findings were related with lots of diseases among children. This were like *Diarrhoea, Vomiting, Stomach – ache* were found in comparison of those children who are not having this meal in other schools. Children were weak in comparison with other children. In the present scenario of Mid Day Meal were so challenging. In future perspective government must take serous initiative to monitor the quality of this meal at regular basis.

Nutrition Support to Primary Education popularly referred to as Mid Day Meal programme (MDM) is considered as a means of promoting improved enrolment, school attendance and retention. MDM seeks to provide for each school child roughly a third of the daily nutrient requirement in the form of a hot fresh cooked meal. It is sometimes argued that in the case of children of poor households, the school meal may become a substitute rather than a supplement for the home meal. It is important to note that it is not merely the long-term effects of the school meal on the nutritional status but its Short-Term Effects on better attention, memory and learning that is important. There are several published reports based on well-conducted studies pointing to these beneficial short-term effects of the school meal on learning ability. A hungry child is a poor learner lacking in concentration

. A mid day meal is an important instrument for combating classroom hunger and promoting better learning. Many children reach school with an empty stomach in the morning, since a good early morning breakfast is not a part of the household routine. Under these circumstances it is important to acknowledge the Short Term Effects of MDM on learning. MDM could thus be a means for not only promoting school enrolment but also better learning in schools. With children from all castes and communities eating together, it is also instrumental in bringing about better social integration.

MDM could serve the important purpose of improving school enrolment and attendance especially girls thus contributing to gender equality. With MDM, it will be easier for parents to persuade their children to go to school and for teachers to retain children in the classrooms. It could foster sound social behaviour among children and dispel feelings of difference between various castes MDM can also contribute to gender equality by reducing the gender gap in education by boosting female attendance in school.

Most importantly MDM could trigger all round development of the entire school system-leading to better infrastructures in schools, better teaching facilities, a School Health Service and community involvement. Even now, after a long span of implementation of MDMS in Meghalaya, State is not able to fully resolve the problem of the children dropping out of primary schools. Poor enrolment and high school dropout rate are attributed to poor socio economic conditions, child labor, and lack of motivation and poor nutrition status of the children.

Present evaluation study on MDM programme in MISHRIK, Dis. SEETAPUR, LUCKNOW. Present evaluation study on MDM programme in MISHRIK carried out to assess the performance of the programme in the village. The main aim is to understand the constrains and bottlenecks in implementing the programme and to suggest policy measures for improvement in the functioning of the programme on the basis of in-depth observations. A comprehensive sample of government kanya vidyalay was exhaustively studied in the current evaluation study.. Assuming that the level of infrastructure would also affect the efficacy of MDM differently in that village was made on the basis of Infrastructure Development Index (IDI). IDI was calculated on the basis of NSS 2001 data for all the village level. This study was based on intensive fieldwork approach.

The data collection was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, secondary data was collected that facilitated finalization of the sample from the children and employers of the school. In the second and final phase, primary data was collected from all stakeholders - officials in various implementing, management committees, parents, etc. Primary data was collected using some tools like citizen report card, case study, interview, focused group interview; some structured questionnaires were also used at the time of data collection. During the collection of the data some important aspects like enrolment, attendance and dropouts; delivery systems; infrastructural availability; were also focused.

Information in respect of occupation of the parents/guardians, distance of the residence from the school, socio economic profile of the beneficiaries was also obtained. Further descriptive and inferential statistics used for in-depth analysis and in order to ascertain the degree of relationship of selected variables in the study. Quantitative data is analyzed using SPSS and SAS software. Here, it is worth mentioning that data collection was

assigned to a team of experienced sincere and motivated researchers. Questions were asked in a non-suggestive manner that neither did not offer any lead. Wherever possible, data were triangulated by repeating the same question to different stakeholders, to minimize errors in data collection.

The program executing authorities were also taken into confidence. They were explained that the exercise was being conducted to improve implementation of the MDMS and not to find mistakes or scapegoats. Government officials and community stakeholders were involved during the survey exercise to get their cooperation, suggestions, and guidance. The opinions and observations of all stakeholders including administrative officers, management committee, students, and parents reflects that MDM scheme has get better the status of primary education by improvement of enrolment and attendance in some way. The response regarding the increase in span of attention after implementation of MDM was found marginal.

Year wise record of the enrolment number based on the data provided by each MDM Centre also confirms this observation. It was in this school overall MDM had proved as an instrument in increasing enrolment in sample MDM Centers. As per the latest DISE data, the drop-out rate at primary level has come down to less than 10% which is commendable. The ultimate goal is, of course, to bring it down to 0% and the Education Department is striving in that direction. Reasons inferred from the discussions with the teachers and managing Committees for not having regular meal were that in some cases parents were not allowing them to eat and many, especially girl students, were feeling hesitant to have food in the schools. Parents expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the way of functioning of MDMS in the State. Teachers had argued that MDMS had disturbed their teaching schedules. During interrogation while evaluation, various aspects of MDM like the frequency of meals served, the quality of food and the impact of MDM on children attendance and performance were tried to assess in the present study.

Very few parents expressed their satisfaction over quality of food. Although they have strong feeling that it had improved their children performance and influenced their attendance. But majority of parents shared that it is not being served all five days in a week. Except almost all are serving less quantity than the prescribed norm. Next observation indicates that the quality of food was found of not “fair” quality in most of the in the school. Reaffirming the previous feeling it was reflected that in majority of the MDM Centers in all the districts, students showed fair level of acceptance of cooked meal.

Students regarding frequency of getting cooked meal, shared that a very few Centers were providing cooked meal regularly. Additional queries regarding giving preference for menu and preference of dishes revealed that most of the students being a non-vegetarian were fond of non-vegetarian dishes. Another observation made during study was that the amount served was less than sufficient for students. The revelation regarding serving area confirmed that most of the students have their meal in open space that gives important pointer with reference to hygienic condition in MDMS in the school. The reason for distributing dry ration given by Head, SMC was that the money received was not enough to provide good quality food. They found it quite difficult to arrange cook and provide a good quality of food in this given amount. Otherwise if they involve teachers in cooking

it would disturb teaching schedule it took lot of time to reach supply of ration from FCI to school door.

It may be due to non-receipt of transportation cost by wholesalers for three and a half years with effect from 2003-04. Wholesalers found it impossible to keep on paying for the transportation of MDM food grain from their pocket for long periods without getting reimbursement in time. Another important problem, most of the school authorities raised on the insufficient conversion money provided under MDMS. They argued that because of very less amount of conversion money it is difficult to manage cooking regularly.

The study confirmed another serious fact that most of the MDM centre authorities are not aware about the amount of conversion money and ration. Sometimes they were receiving ration once in 3 months and conversion money once in a year. Another issue was revealed by management committees that government is not providing ration for pre primary students. They were providing ration only for primary schools as SMC cannot differentiate while distributing meal as they did not feel ethical to give meals only to seniors. Because of this reason most of them disclosed that schools were not able to provide food for all the five days. Inquiring about the hands-on action for delay in supply of ration, most of the members of management committees shared that they did not make any arrangement.

It was also told that among the reasons behind the returning back of supply was the recommendation of MDM Committees to return back the ration and less quantity of ration. About proper storage facilities in their centers, it was observed during the assessment in the state that a very few MDM centers were having this facility. Only government schools were managing to have this facility with government financial support in all the districts. Those MDM centers where there were no proper facilities for storage of ration; most of them stored their ration in their offices and classrooms. Over fifty percentage sampled centres were found to have hygienic and clean cooking shed although it is important to point out here that all the cooking sheds were not functional, as some of them were built recently in the beginning of year 2008. Nearly all were using fuel wood for cooking MDM meals.

It is observed that in some schools even students were contributing in the collection of wood from nearby forest areas and more interestingly it was stated that in some schools each student was bringing one piece each per day for cooking. One of the objectives of MDMS is to take care of health of school going children. Enquiring about health check up facility being provided by school managing committees, facts captured was not very encouraging. In similar way, nutritional medicine, which are supposed to be distributed among school children as per the MDMS guideline? During assessment of drinking water facility in this evaluation study, it was observed that students were having less drinking water facility in their schools Some school authorities expressed their dissatisfaction regarding monitoring of MDM as it was mostly limited to only road side schools.

The impact of the programme in terms of increase in enrolment, attendance and retention levels of children. No data has been collected from schools disclosing any definite pattern in enrolment, attendance and retention levels of children over the years for the main purpose of monitoring of the MDMS in the state. Otherwise also unless scientific design

like randomization control trial is not adopted for evaluation and monitoring, it cannot be concluded that only because of MDMS performance has improved or specific objectives have been attained. observation (participant and non-participant) and some PRA techniques.

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