

Mid – Day Meal Scheme in Gajapati District of Odisha

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Abstract

In order to boost school enrolment, attendance and support the dietary requirements of children, the Government of India launched a national programme for nutrition support to education institutions nationwide – the MDM scheme. Under the scheme, freshly cooked midday meals are provided during the school day to children in classes one to eight in Government and Government aided schools. Gajapati is a remote rural district of Odisha with more than half of its population being from tribal communities and the literacy rate in the district is just over 50%. Government of Odisha identified Gajapati as the suitable district for the pilot. This study examines the implementation of MDM scheme and its impact on enrolment and retention in schools of Gajapati district. The survey found that the mid-day meal scheme has shown no impact on the student enrolment, but the daily attendance has increased in particularly in afternoon sessions. It has reduced school dropouts, gender gap and improved socialization among children belonging to all castes. The scheme has improved empowerment of women by creating employment. Providing quality education and mid-day meal can increase student enrolment.

Keywords: Nutrition support, Remote rural district, Government, mid-day meal scheme, Socialization, Empowerment of women

Introduction

Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) is the world's largest school feeding programme by providing hot cooked meal to children of primary and upper primary / high school students. The main objective of MDM programme is to boost universalisation of Primary/Upper Primary Education. Mid Day Meal programme was expected to attract more children to come to school and in this way, it will increase enrolment, attendance, retention and bring down drop-out rate. 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.

Mid Day Meal in Schools is aiming at enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children studying in Government, Local Body and Government-aided primary and upper primary schools and the Centers run under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)/Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) and National Children Labor Project (NCLP) schools of all areas across the country. In order to boost school attendance and support the dietary requirements of children, the Government of India launched a national programme for nutrition support to education institutions nationwide – the MDM scheme. Under the scheme, freshly cooked mid day meals with a minimum content of 450 calories and 12 grams of proteins for lower primary school children and 700 calories and 20 grams of protein for upper primary / high school children are provided during the school day to children in government and government aided schools.

Origin of Mid- Day Meal Scheme

In August, 1995 National Programme of Nutritional Support for Primary Education launched 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. This programme is extended to all blocks of the country to cover children in classes 1-5 in government, government aided and local body schools. In September, 2004, the scheme was re-launched as the Mid Day Meal scheme with a focus on providing children 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein per school day. Central assistance revised to provide free food grains, cooking assistance of Rs.1 per child per school day and a transportation subsidy of Rs.100 for special states and Rs.75 for other states. It also included a management and evaluation cost of 2 percent of the cost of food grains, cooking and transportation subsidy.

Since its inception in 1995, the MDM scheme has developed into the world's largest school feeding programme, which is now reaching out to about 12 crore (120 million) children in over 12 lakhs (1.2 million) schools across the country.

Table – 1 Items per day per student

Sl. No.	Items	Quantity per day per child	
		Primary School	UP / High School
1	Food grains	100 grams	150 grams
2	Pulses	25 grams	30 grams
3	Vegetables	60 grams	100 grams
4	Soya	12 grams	25 grams
5	Oil & Fat	5 grams	7.5 grams
6	Egg / Banana	1 no.	1 no.
	Ration & Conversation Cost	Rs. 4.04	Rs. 6.03

Source: School & Mass Education Department, Government of Odisha

Table – 2 Menu on different days in a week

Day	Menu
Monday	Rice and Dalma
Tuesday	Rice and soya chunks curry
Wednesday	Rice and Egg curry
Thursday	Rice and Dalma
Friday	Rice and soya chunks curry
Saturday	Rice and Egg curry

Source: School & Mass Education Department, Govt. of Odisha

Objectives of MDMS

1. To provide wholesome food having requisite calorie & protein content to school children of Primary, Upper Primary & NCLP Schools (Govt., Govt.-Aided, Local body, Madrasa & NCLP schools)
2. To increase enrollment and retention and also to curb dropouts
3. To reduce cast prejudices, class inequality & gender gap (in-education)
4. Thrust on right to life & right to food to disadvantaged section of the society
5. To provide nutritional support to the school children in drought affected areas

MDMS in Gajapati District

The Department of School and Mass Education (DS&ME) of the Government of Odisha (GoO) has taken the initiative to address several nutrition and health problems in school children through enhancing its MDM scheme in Gajapati. Government of Odisha identified Gajapati as the suitable district for the pilot due to the high levels of anemia in the school children of the area. Rice fortification technology is being used to add iron to the school meal, which is consumed daily by most lower and upper primary school children in the district. World Food Programme (WFP) is the partner of choice of the DS&ME of the GoO to lead this pilot project, which currently covers all Government and Government aided schools in Gajapati. WFP is collaborating with the DS&ME for this pilot over a two-year period (from mid 2012 to end 2014). The main objective is to reduce the prevalence of anemia among school children through the MDM scheme in Gajapati.

Table – 3 Number of schools and students covered under MDMS in Gajapati

S1. No.	Block	Total Schools	Total Students
1	Gosani	149	7703
2	Gumma	201	12684
3	Kashinagar	118	7763
4	Mohana	374	28768
5	Nuagada	163	11035
6	Parlakhemundi (Municipality)	28	2982
7	Udayagiri	199	13599
8	Rayagada	241	12493
	Total	1473	97027

Source: DEO, Gajapati

MDMS is now reaching out to about 97027 children in over 1473 schools in Gajapati district.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are:

- 1) To examine the impact of MDMS on enrolment, retention and dropouts in primary schools, particularly the children of disadvantaged sections of society.
- 2) To assess the role of MDMS in improving socialization among children belonging to different castes and reducing gender disparity.

Methodology

To assess the implementation of MDMS and its impact on enrolment and attendance of students a survey was conducted. The questionnaire schedules were administered to (1) Headmasters (2) Teachers (3) Students (4) Parents (5) Cook-cum-helpers (6) Public / official. Schools were selected basing on the size and remoteness to ensure the sample was representative. (Total samples – 450; 200 boys, 200 girls and 50 include headmasters, teachers, parents, public and officials).

Table – 4 Availability of basic infrastructural facilities in schools for MDMS

Name of the Block / Name of the school and place	Kitchen Shed	Kitchen devices	Fuel used	Source of drinking water	Meals plates & glasses
Mohana Block 1. New Primary School, Kalema 2. PUPS - Narayanapur	Available Available	Available Available	Firewood Firewood	Well Tube well	Available Available
Gumma Block 1.PUPS, Kheteda 2. PS, Jamiguda, Parida 3. U P School, Kujasingi	Available Available Available	Available Available Available	Firewood Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well Tube well	Available Available Available
Kashinagar Block 1. PUPS, Vistala 2. UGH School, Siali 3. KGN Peta PS, Siali	Available Available Available	Available Available Available	Firewood Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well Tube well	Available Available Available
Udayagiri Block 1. PS, Tandiguda, 2. New PS, Raibada	Available Available	Available Available	Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well	Available Available
Nuagada Block 1. Primary School, Sambalpur 2. Primary School, Kirama	Available Available	Available Available	Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well	Available Available
Rayagada Block 1. Primary School, Bonda 2.Primary School, Badasuda 3. Primary School, Sargisahi	Available Available Available	Available Available Available	Firewood Firewood Firewood	Well Gravity water Gravity water	Available Available Available
Gosani Block 1. UP School, R. Sitapur 2. U G High School, Jajpur	Available Available	Available Available	Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well	Available Available
Paralakhemundi Municipality 1. Gandhi Memorial UP School 2. MROG UP School	Available Available	Available Available	Firewood Firewood	Tube well Tube well	Available Available

Source: Field Data

Table – 5 - Impact of MDMS on enrolment of students in primary schools

Name of the Block & school	Number of Students Enrolled				
	2010 - 11	2011 - 12	2012 - 13	2013 - 14	2014 - 15
Mohana Block 1. New PS, Guluba Panchayat 2. PUPS - Narayanapur	9 5	11 9	11 6	13 4	8 8
Gumma Block 1. PUPS- Kheteda, Namanaguda 2. PS, Jamiguda, Parida, Gumma 3. U P School, Kujasingi, Gumma	6 6 19	9 7 20	11 10 17	12 3 24	9 7 24
Udayagiri Block 1. PS, Tandiguda, Udayagiri 2. New PS, Raibada	6 14	3 6	18 8	7 7	6 9
Kasinagar Block 1. UGH School, Siali, Kasinagar 2. KGN Peta Primary School, Siali	34 18	20 12	25 10	16 7	10 6
Rayagada Block 1. Primary School, Bonda 2. PS, Badasuda, Loba, Rayagada 3. PS, Sargisahi, Loba, Rayagada	5 1 7	7 4 2	10 5 10	7 9 6	5 5 5
Gosani Block 1. UP School, R. Sitapur, Gosani 2. U G Govt. High School, Jajpur	21 45	15 37	11 30	11 19	9 26
Paralakhemundi Municipality 1. Gandhi Memorial UP School. 2. MROG UP School	88 29	55 27	46 31	31 20	43 13
Nuagada Block 1. Primary School, Sambalpur 2. Primary School, Kirama	70 5	30 9	43 15	35 14	26 21

Source: Field Data

Findings of the Study

MDM Menu

Menu is flexible, with cooked rice, dalma and vegetables, soya chunks being the main menu with eggs twice a week. It is observed that mid-day meal is served regularly according to the menu in all schools visited. Menu is painted in some schools and flexes are hanged in some other. Along with rice, dalma is served twice a week, soya curry is served twice a week and eggs are served twice a week. An amount of Rs. 4.04 is paid as conversion cost a day per student in primary schools and Rs. 6 .03 in upper primary and high schools. In many schools, teachers do not taste the food before serving it to the students. Cooks-cum-helpers are tasting the food before serving it to the students. No student is coming to school only for lunch and no one is leaving the school after the lunch. In most of the visited schools, the meal is served in verandahs and classrooms, as there is no separate place for serving the meals. Space is cleaned after eating the meals. Children wash their hands before having the mid-day meal.

Monitoring of MDMS

The Mid-Day Meal Programme is monitored especially on 5 parameters:
(i) Regularity in serving meals and adherence to weekly menu. (ii) Availability of food grain. (iii) Availability of cooking cost. (iv) Proper storage of food grain. (v) Payment of honorarium to cook-cum-helper.

All functionaries i.e. Officers in charge of district, District Education Officers, District Project Coordinators, District Inspector of Schools, Block Resource Centre Coordinators, Sub-Inspector of Schools, Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators are authorized to visit schools at regular intervals to oversee the implementation of the programme and to visualize its impact. The members of School Management Committee play a vital role in ensuring quality and quantity of the cooked meal.

Socialization among Students

All students sit together and take mid –day meal irrespective of caste, creed, religion and gender. There is no refusal of meals by upper caste students and all take mid – day meal without any discrimination. The MDMS is fostering social equality and reducing the gender gap among the students.

Infrastructural Facilities for MDMS

MDMS was launched a decade ago with an objective to improve literacy rate and check dropouts. Even after a decade, many schools are lacking the basic infrastructural facilities such as kitchen, sheds and clean drinking water. Storerooms are not available in many schools. Rice and provisions are stored in the Headmaster's room. Firewood is used as fuel to prepare Mid-day meal.

Water from sources such as well, tube well and gravity water is used for preparation of meals, drinking and other purposes. Meals plates and glasses are available in all schools. These are donated by public, villagers, NRIs, school teachers, headmasters and charitable trusts. Students also bring their own plates from homes.

Cook- Cum- Helper

Mid – day meal programme is a national flagship programme in which Cook-cum-helper play a vital role. School management committee (SMC) is the appointing authority of cook – cum- helper. One cook-cum-helper is appointed for 25 students, two cook-cum-helpers for 26 to 100, for more than 100 students one additional cook-cum-helper for every addition of 100 students. In the survey, it is found that all cook-cum-helpers are women belonging to SC, ST and SEBC.

Honorarium

An amount of Rs. 1000 /- (Rupees one thousand only) per month is paid to cook-cum-helper as honorarium by the school management committee (SMC) out of grants made available by the Government. It is observed that the cook-cum-helper clean, wash and remove impurities if any from the raw material to be cooked cook and serve the meal to the students at the designated hour in hygienic condition. In addition cook – cum-helper also clean the kitchen, utensils and store the utensils in a hygienic condition. Cook- cum-helpers are now expecting at least Rs. 3000/- per month as honorarium. The honorarium is paid to the bank account of the cook.

Maintenance Charges

The maintenance charges to purchase vegetables, oil, eggs and other ingredients are released at least 3 months in advance. Cooking cost, honorarium to cook-cum-helper is made available for a period of 3 months in advance and rice is made available at least for a period of one month for interrupted supply of hot cooked meals to the children.

Fortified Rice for MDMS

Fortified rice is provided for on-site cooking of supplementary food under the MDM scheme. Rice fortification technology is used to add iron to the school meal. The rice is fortified with Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK), which are manufactured by combining rice powder with iron and converting this powder into rice-like kernels using cold-extrusion technology. The micronutrient fortified rice kernels closely resemble the sheen, transparency, consistency and flavour of rice. The fortified kernels are then blended at a ratio of 1:100 with the ordinary rice provided by the Government of Odisha. Government provides transportation cost for delivering of food grains from FCI to the school point. In

some schools, teachers are involved in MDM activities and in some other schools, teachers do not take any responsibility. The MDMS disturbs the teaching activities. The headmaster has to spend time for issuing of rice, provisions, writing records and distribution of meals. Further, he also attends meetings frequently.

Impact of MDMS on student enrolment

The impact of MDMS on enrolment of students in primary schools for the last 5 years from 2010 – 11 to 2014- 15 is presented in Table – 5. There are fluctuations in enrolment of students. The MDMS has shown no impact on the enrolment. However, the scheme has not increased the enrolment of students but it has prevented further decline of enrolment to some extent. The attendance of students in afternoon has increased. It implies the retention of students has increased. The students are not permitted to go to their homes, but retained till evening in the school. Student enrolment from the poorest families has increased due to MDMS. Mid-day meal is availed by all students in primary schools but not availed by all students in upper primary and high schools. There are no dropouts. If there is any dropout, it is due to migration of parents from one place to another in search of livelihood. The children also migrate along with their parents.

View of Public, Parents and Officials on MDMS

Information was collected from the officials, parents and public. According to them around 20 percent of students are attracted by MDMS.

The parents can provide food for their children, but they expect better quality education and discipline. Parents are not interested to join their children in government schools due to shortage of teachers and lack of better quality education in government schools.

Grievance Redressal

All the functionaries associated with the implementation of the programme should give patient hearing of the grievances and take immediate corrective measures. A toll free number for School Students Helpline (18003456722) has been assigned for redressal of various complaints received from the students and the public. The public, the School Managing Committee, Women Self Help Group, Mothers' Committee, Parents Teachers' Association and above all the students can use the toll free telephone.

Recommendations

1. Many schools do not have clean drinking water facility. Such schools should be provided water facility
2. Quantity of rice may be enhanced to 150 grams per student per day and government should supply good quality rice
3. There is a need to speed up the construction work of kitchen and stores in needed schools
4. Damaged kitchen devices may be replaced
5. Conversation cost may be enhanced to supply nutritious food
6. Honorarium of cook – cum – helpers may be enhanced to Rs. 3000 per month and they may be given orientation training relating to safety and hygiene apart from cooking
7. The teachers should be asked to have lunch from the MDMS for which a nominal amount may be deducted from their salaries
8. Mothers should be involved in monitoring the scheme

Conclusion

The mid-day meal scheme has shown no impact on the student enrolment. The daily attendance of students has increased particularly in afternoon session. MDM has reduced the school dropouts. It has improved socialization among children belonging to all castes. It has reduced gender gap. The scheme has improved empowerment of women by providing employment. Providing better infrastructural facilities, quality education and mid-day meals can increase student enrolment.

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