

# An Evaluation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Chatra District of Jharkhand

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**Abstract:** This study is an attempt to evaluate the condition of Mid-day meal scheme in Chatra district of Jharkhand. The major objective of this study is to understand the prevailing condition of mid-day meal scheme in Chatra district of Jharkhand. For this study, primary data was collected through Direct personal interview survey method. Different kind of sampling techniques were also used at different stages of the survey. There are 24 districts in the Jharkhand out of which Chatra was selected through purposive sampling for the reason that it best suited the researcher's need of selecting a poor and backward district for the evaluation of the scheme. The selection of respondents was based on the quota sampling. Quota was provided in class, age and sex for respondents. The finding of the study reveals that overall performance of this scheme is satisfactory as the students enrolled in the schools are getting fresh meal of average quality along with sufficient quantity of meal. In all schools' utensils were usually found neat and clean which showed hygienic awareness. Students too washes their hands before taking the meals. The workable kitchens in the schools were also found clean.

**Keywords:** mid-day meal, education, children, nutrition, Chatra.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a significant role in the expansion of human potential. Education is the long-term investment and to reap the benefits the most essential part is to build strong primary education system. To build a strong primary education system this is very essential that the pillars of the system "students" remain healthy and fit. This can only be achieved by giving them the supplements which they require. mid-day meal is one of those supplements. The state governments are spending substantial share of their inadequate resources to provide educational facilities all over the country. In spite of these efforts the aim of cent per cent universalization of elementary education appears to be far and elusive due to inherent socio-economic issues present in the society. Most of the children from low socio-economic society agonize from nutrition, more often they drop out from schools at an early age which unswervingly affects their personality development. Numerous programs have been launched to combat these problems. The national programme of nutritional support to primary education commonly known as mid-day meal is one among them. The credit for this scheme goes to K.Kamraj the former chief minister of Tamilnadu who introduced it in 1960. Gujrat was the second state to contrivance this scheme in 1984, nonetheless latter it was discontinued. By 1990-91 twelve states were funding this scheme to all or most of the students in their region. By 1997 it was started in entire country.

Despite all it economic prosperity the sad reality of India is India has the highest number of children who are malnourished. The occurrence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world, and is nearly double that of sub Saharan Africa with dire costs of morbidity and mortality. This is the reason that government was compelled to enact a scheme which can solve this problem and mid-day meal scheme was introduced.

The main aim of the education is to prepare and develop the child physically, mentally and spiritually. Aristotle explained education as "the creation of a sound mind in a sound body". Today in India, many children have to work for the household in the morning and walk long distance to the schools with empty stomach, this is more noticeable with the girl

child who has to fend a helping hand to the mother and then attend the school. Child stays at school for more than five to six hours a day and even longer, without taking food from their home. Hunger drains of their will and ability to learn and chronic hunger can lead to malnutrition. Malnutrition unfavourably affects universalization of elementary education. Even if a malnourished child does attend school, He or She finds it difficult to concentrate on and participate in the teaching learning activities in school. He or She therefore tends to drop-out, because of the inability to cope with studies. Hence mid-day meal scheme was the need of the hour. Evidence shows that school feeding does indeed improve the Immediate nutritional intake of children (Jacoby, 2002; Afridi 2005). The increase of enrolment in schools have been largely attributed to mid-day meal scheme. (Ritika& Khera 2002).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the implementation of Mid-day meal scheme in one of the most backward districts of the country, to study if there is any bias or discrimination against children who belongs to lower strata of the society namely Dalits and Adivasis.

#### **Objective of the study:**

The main objectives of the study can be described under following points

- (a) To examine the status of mid-day meal in chatra district (Jharkhand)
- (b) To study the role of mid-day meal on student's nutrition, enrolment & attendance
- (c) To study if there is any social discrimination involved when it comes to serving meals to children belonging to downtrodden section of society

#### **Sampling Procedure:**

Different kind of sampling techniques were used at different stages of the survey. There are 24 districts in the Jharkhand out of which chatra was selected through purposive sampling for the reason that it best suits the researcher's need of selecting a poor and backward district for the evaluation of the scheme. Five blocks and schools in those blocks were picked randomly. The selection of respondents was based on the quota sampling. quota was provided in class, age and sex for respondents. Hence the sampling technique was a mixture of random and non-random sampling.

#### **LIMITATIONS:**

Due to limited number of samples for students, teachers and cooks the results of research might not be replicable in other districts. Results may not be generalised for other districts due to many other constraints like geography, time period, budget and human resources.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research has been conducted in the Chatra district of Jharkhand. to see the difference we have chosen samples from both rural as well as urban areas. Out of 12 blocks of chatra district the blocks Chatra, Kunda, Lawalong, Huntergunj and Simaria has been covered. Chatra and Simaria falls in the category of urban blocks. Schools in different blocks were chosen randomly. The respondents of the research study are of all castes & religion and both male & female. The data has been collected during period of 5<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to 15th January 2016 using schedules. The research study mainly targets the children, teachers & cooks of government or government aided school. Primary data is collected through schedules which is main source of this research. Direct personal interview schedule was conducted to study the views and perceptions of head masters, teachers, cooks & children randomly selected about the problem faced in Mid-Day Meal scheme, functioning of the mid-day meal, efficiency of mid-day meal. On a general note, it was related with issues like regularity of meals to children, quality of meals, nutrition level of children, attendance increase, disruption in teaching, infrastructure, problems of cooks and discrimination on basis of gender or caste.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are various studies that have shown positive benefits of mid-day meal scheme on nutrition level and school attendance of children. Ramachandran and Vimala in 2003 in a study found that classroom hunger has reduced due to enactment of this scheme as children get food in the school itself. one of another study also stated that mid-day meals makes it possible not only to raise their(children)intake of calories and proteins, but also provide nutritional Supplements

such as iron and iodine, which need to be ingested in small doses over a period of time (Dreze & Goyal 2003). Another study which was conducted in Madhya Pradesh found that delicious food was served to each child (Afridi 2005). In Tamil Nadu, rice and sambhar are supplemented with different vegetables each day (Dreze & Goyal 2003). While there are also evidences that school feeding does indeed improve the Immediate nutritional intake of children (Jacoby, 2002; Afridi 2005). While Some of the study reveals that situation is not very rosy as it was largely observed that the provided food did not meet the standard norms given by Supreme Court of India (Jain & Shah 2005). A study again showed that there were serious problems in Daliya (One of the food item) served by schools in Madhya Pradesh. As they were substandard in the quality (Afridi 2005).

The increase of enrolment in schools have been largely attributed to mid-day meal scheme which was enacted fully in 2004.

In Barmer district- a jump in girl's enrolment ratio was seen as enrolment ration has nearly doubled, (Ritika& Khera 2002). Dreze and Kingdon in 2001, in a study named a primary education in rural India stated that girl child enrolment has doubled. Socio-economic surveys have shown that the programme has been effective in improving enrolment rates particularly for girls (Dreze & Goyal 2003). In Madhya Pradesh, a study by Jain and shah in 2005 found one third percent increment in class one enrolment. Swain in a study in 2012 observed that particularly among children from lowest socio-economic strata mid-day meal has done wonders and enrolment has increased with improved attendance.

However, Dreze and Kingdon in a study in 2000 stated that provisions of mid-day meals increased enrolment of girls but not of boys in primary schools, noting the similar trend it was also revealed that the improvement was not up to the mark in case of upper caste children.

Mid-day meal scheme has socialisation value too as many studies reveals this phenomenon. Cooked mid-day meal has also contributed to the cause of social equity as children, cutting across caste and class lines sit together to share a common meal.

To some extent, mid-day Meals also reduce class inequalities. This is likely to reduce future class inequalities, since lack of education is a major source of economic disadvantages and social marginalisation (Dreze & Goyal 2003).

A study also reported that cooked mid-day meal has also contributed to the cause of social equity as children, cutting across caste and class lines sit together to share a common meal (Mathur 2005).

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 (Anima and Sharma 2008).

#### **4. PROFILE OF THE STUDIED AREA**

Chatra was a sub division of Hazaribagh district and was formed as district in 1991. It is one of the most backward district of Jharkhand. The district comprises of one sub-division, 12 development blocks, 154 panchayats, and 1474 revenue villages. There are 14 police stations in the district, which is facing the heat of red terror for long time. However recently the red tide of naxal wave has been stemmed by the police to a large extent. Chatra is one of the poor district also. This is the district where still after 70 years of independence around seventy percent of the population remains reliant on primary activities like agriculture & allied activities. The condition of weaker section mainly scheduled caste and scheduled tribe remains grim despite the fact that the constituency is reserved for scheduled caste. Scheduled caste forms one third of the population. Of the total SC population around most are living in rural areas which shows the lethargy of development programme initiated by government towards them.

#### **5. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

The profile of the respondents' states that Chatra is predominantly a Hindu majority district where a large number of Hindu population which studies in the schools are from other backward castes. Of the 56 samples collected for students around two- third belonged to the other backward category (OBC). The general population studying in the schools was merely one sixth of the collected samples which was approximately equal as to the scheduled caste student's number found in the sample and nearly one tenth of the students were from the scheduled tribes. Sample found that two –third of the students were Hindus, one fourth were Muslims, around one tenth were Christians and others are negligible in the

sample. The samples for cooks suggest that majority of the cooks employed under mid-day meal scheme are from other backward castes. In percentage terms it was sixty seven percent. The scheduled castes comprise one third of district population but sample shows only one sixth of students belonged to scheduled caste category. The results are worrisome for the fact that it may indicate that many scheduled caste students are not going to school. Samples indicated that majority of teachers belong to the OBC community where as a few are from general and scheduled caste category. The samples also suggest that there is not enough representation of scheduled tribes in the teaching as there was no teacher from the scheduled tribe community.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The followings are the major findings of the present study.

### ➤ **Quality and Quantity of the mid-day meal scheme:**

Under the mid-day meal scheme the main items provided to the students are rice, pulse, vegetables, and fruits on regular basis. It has been observed that egg is provided seasonally to the students' due to the cost constraints. Eggs are provided to students only in the summer when prices are low but withdrawn in the winter due to rise in the prices. Fruits which are mainly served to students under the scheme include oranges, banana, and apple. Majority of the students said that rice, pulses and vegetables are a daily item while provision of fruits is not regular.

The response of the respondents regarding quantity of the food was a mixed one though largely in favour of the saying that they get "enough food". Thirteen percent of the students were of the opinion that the food provided to them are not enough. A large number of students were of the opinion that they are getting more than enough food under the mid-day meal scheme. It has been observed that the amount of the food provided to students are sufficient for the students and they don't have to remain half stomach filled.

### ➤ **Frequency of the Mid-day meal Scheme:**

It has been observed that there is no regularity in the implementation of the mid-day meal. It is found that there is gap of five to ten days in a time period of two to three months. Teachers have attributed this gap to the delay in funding by the government and could last for twenty to thirty days. Only few students have stated that there is a complete regularity in the mid-day meal.

### ➤ **Participation of Students in the Cooking Process:**

Majority of the respondents said that they have never been asked to do any kind of work for preparing noon meals. While some of the respondents said that sometimes in some urgent situation like absence of any cook they had to work. Two students stated that they always had to work for noon meals. These students belonged to a school in the urban area. But teachers and Cooks rejected the claim and stated that students never have to engage in preparation of meals, and no help were taken from students in cooking the meals.

### ➤ **Mid-Day Meal and Nutrition:**

The major goal of the scheme is to improve the nutrition of the school going children. Most of the teachers feel that introduction of mid-day meal scheme has changed the course from malnutrition of children to nutrition. Earlier the students from poor families were almost starving due to lack of proper food even for one time. The introduction of cooked meals even for one time has brought down hunger among them at the same time, improving their nutrition. There was only a single teacher who stated that there was no improvement in hunger and

Nutrition level of children. These results seem to indicate that the Scheme has in fact improved the status quo of nutrition among the poor children.

### ➤ **Mid-Day Meal and Attendance:**

Majority of the respondents in the surveyed schools believe that the inclusion of mid-day meal has improved the attendance of students in the class. It has improved the enrolment and attendance of the students in an unprecedented way. Now students come to the school regularly as meal is served. The students belonging to weaker sections of the society were able to find at least get one good meal in a day. Teachers have attributed the leap in the attendance and enrolment to the success of the mid-day meal scheme.

➤ **Mid-Day Meal and Socialisation:**

Indian society is deeply entrenched with the age-old caste system. This system has reduced the dignity of people belonging to lower caste. They have been treated badly by upper class groups. Recurring incidents of atrocities against the lower caste have been observed in the society. Teachers from the schools have mentioned that such shameful customs and discrimination based on caste are absent in the present study on noon meal scheme. Children were seated and share their meals without any discrimination based on caste. They have developed good hygiene habits among them. However, these findings need to be taken cautiously as the teachers could just be avoiding trouble. A small girl student was verbally abused by her teacher when she accidentally identified herself a scheduled caste, by stating that she is not a 'Harijan'. Such observations contradict pleasant statements made by the teachers and reveals the deeply rooted evils of caste system in the modern society.

➤ **Administrative set up in the Mid-day meal scheme:**

There is a well-established administrative set up to look after the mid-day meal scheme. The cooks are appointed by a committee named "VIDAYALA PRABHANDHAN SAMITI". This committee is responsible for total number in the school and who will be appointed as cook. They generally prefer Dalit cook as there is an unofficial dictate by government to prefer the cooks from downtrodden society. There is also a monitoring authority for proper functioning of mid-day meal scheme. There is a district education commissioner to monitor this scheme. There are gram panchayat members under gram panchayat samitee to look into the funding of the mid-day meal scheme. The headmaster of the school along with the chief of committee takes the decision regarding fund allocation of mid-day meals in schools.

➤ **Issues in Mid-Day Meal Scheme:**

The mid-day meal scheme is not without issues. There are so many issues in implementation of this scheme. It has been observed that in cooking process sometimes students have to participate. Some students stated that always they have to do some kind of work. There are some infrastructural problems in the schools too. Likewise, they don't have enough space to keep grains. Students are sitting very tightly in the classes due to reduced spaces in some schools. In one of the maktab (Urdu school) there is only one room for 1 to 8<sup>th</sup> class. There is problem of availability of fresh water in some schools as it was found that a school which exists in naxal belt still does not have any hand pump or well. The cooks have to use river water for the cooking process. The schools also face the problem of availability of fuel. In many schools it's not easily available, even if it's available then inflating prices of fuel have created many problems for school Headmasters. The list of issues does not stop here as Respondents said that due to delay in funding many a times the mid-day meal scheme was stopped for a long duration. Sometimes it has been 5 days delay and sometimes it has been even discontinued for 35 days. In Urdu school in last six months two times this has been delayed by 21 and 35 days. The funds which they receive from government for this scheme is also very less. They are getting just 5.54 rupees per day for upper primary students while rupees 3.69 for junior primary students. Respondents (Headmasters) said that this is too less and sometimes they were forced to sacrifice the quality of meal because of inadequate funding by government. There was a complaint in one of the schools that the amount of ingredients for preparing meals are just not adequate. Any rational thinking person can feel that the amount provided by the government is not up to the mark. The issue is associated with cooks also. They are getting an appallingly low salary for their hard work. They have to rush to the schools at sharp 9 o'clock in the morning and they go back by 3 o'clock in the afternoon. For this amount of work, they are receiving a wage less than even 40 rupees a day. This is utterly a dishonour to the policies of minimum wage of government. At one side, the government states that they are giving rupees 180 per day as minimum wage and on the other side the same barefaced government is not even giving them rupees 100 a day. The deserted workers are just continuing to work in the hope that one day they will be given status of permanent worker and their good days will come.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The Mid Day Meal Scheme is one of the country's national flagships feeding scheme introduced to improve the nutritional and educational position of the susceptible children. The Mid Day Meal Scheme is a noble programme filling the hunger of millions of children per day throughout the country. The Mid Day Meal Scheme is one of the major initiatives started for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education in India. The Scheme has the potential to boost or unfavorably affect the ongoing teaching-learning processes depending on its way of implementation. The assessment of Mid-Day Meal Scheme is very important in terms of its implementation and the objectives for which it is launched. In this

study, an attempt has been made by the researcher to know the strengths and weaknesses of the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal Scheme) in Chatra (Jharkhand) along with its present status of implementation. The success of any programme depends upon its proper implementation and hence evaluation of such programmes is needed in order to know the ground realities. The study was conducted for the same purpose that is to know the status of mid-day meal in Chatra district. Unequivocally Mid-day meal scheme raises the enrollment and retention ratio and especially drastically increase in girls' enrollment ratio in Chatra district of Jharkhand. The study suggest that students prefer to come to school for study purpose. Findings of the study reveals that overall performance of this scheme is satisfactory if not astonishing. The factors which are responsible for satisfactory performance is, they are getting fresh meal, in addition getting sufficient quantity of meal along with the average quality of meal, and lastly, they get different variety of food in a week. All ingredients used for cooking (i.e. food grains, pulses, vegetables, cooking oil, etc.) were free from adulteration and pest infestation and were used by the cooks after proper cleaning and washing. It is ensured by the school teachers that the cooked mid-day meal is nutritious and balance diet.

In all schools cooking utensils were usually found to be neat and clean in order to ensure hygienic preparation of mid-day meals. Cooking utensils were properly cleaned by the helpers/cooks after serving mid-day meal and then dried up in the sunlight. Proper attention is paid towards hygienic preparation of mid-day meals and the role of school teachers in this context is praiseworthy. Students too washes their hands before taking the meals. The workable kitchens in the schools were found to be clean. All possible efforts are made by the teachers to keep the school campus clean. There was enough water available in the schools for the purpose of cleaning the utensils and the schools have their own water sources like hand pumps and well. Though in a densely rural school the cooks have to use river water.

No case of discrimination was detected with any child of any section of society on the basis of caste, gender and religion in these selected government primary schools at the time of distribution of mid-day meals. Almost all the teachers perceived that the values of love, brotherhood, cooperation and discipline are developing in the students as a result of sharing of common meal provided under Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Teachers should be relieved of all Mid-Day Meal Scheme responsibilities, except supervising the preparation and distribution of mid-day meal. There must be a clerk to do all the paper work of this scheme.
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be given to any accountable local agency like Anganwari, Gram Panchayat, Mahila-Mandal or NGOs which may implement the Scheme and maintain the entire records. No scheme should be effected at the cost of teaching time of the teachers.
- Distinct kitchen-cum- store should be made available to all government primary schools and it should be at an apt distance from the classrooms. The Mid Day Meal Scheme should be implemented in such a manner that in any conditions it does not adversely affect teaching-learning activities in schools.
- The grant for Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be increased by taking into consideration the inflation rate and should be provided monthly well in time.
- The payment for helpers and cooks must be increased so that they can be motivated for the preparation of better meal for the children with satisfactory income and they don't face economic crisis in their families.
- Many schools did not have eating plates therefore the children brought bowls or plates or lunch boxes from their homes or ate on papers torn from the note books. In this way serving of proper quantity of meals is difficult to maintain as sometimes utensils are small or are not according to nature of meals served. Moreover, it is not hygienic too. Therefore, there is need to provide eating utensils to schools.
- The quality of meals must be increased to attain the goals of mid-day meal in a more effective way.

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