

POSHAN

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INTRODUCTION

According to The Global Hunger Index, India Has been ranked 101 which is behind most of the South Asian Countries. India was itself shocked by the drop in its position because it has implemented many schemes to end hunger and achieve the goal of “Zero Hunger”. Through this position, we can say that most of the schemes are tackling hunger on the frontline of emergencies but there is need for the long -lasting solutions. Hunger also gives rise to child labour as most of the children are not sent to school by the parents and are forced to work as they have a mindset of “more hands, more labour, and more money”. Most of the children are not able to educate themselves due to these reasons and get trapped in the vicious circle called “Poverty Cycle” which they cannot break without education. For the good will of these poor children, Indian government started the world’s largest initiative to end hunger called as “THE MID DAY MEAL SCHEME”/ “POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman)”

BACKGROUND

Tamil Nadu started the initiative of providing noon meals to children as a hungry child cannot be expected to learn, read or write. The first school which had this scheme was “Sourashtra Boys Higher Secondary School”, Madurai. The National Programme of Nutritional Support to primary education started on 15th August 1995. It was renamed as The Mid-Day Meal Scheme in October 2007. The Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) is the authorized body to implement the scheme. The name of the scheme has been changed to POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman) in September 2021 by MOE (Ministry of Education), which is the nodal ministry of the scheme. The basic aims of the scheme is to provide food to all the children up to the age of 14 years studying in classes 1 to 8 who are

enrolled and attend school. Every school shall have the facility of cooking meals in the hygienic manner. Food grains shall include rice, wheat, pulses and recently the vice president has also proposed the inclusion of milk in the mid-day meal scheme. The government had also decided the quantity of protein and food calories for primary and upper primary schools.

Primary schools	Upper primary schools
Calories-480	Calories-720
Protein -12gms	Protein-20gms
Micronutrients like- vitamin A, folic acid, iron	Micronutrients like- vitamin A, folic acid , iron

Fig 1: quantity of protein and calories for the primary and upper primary schools

Quantity of food grains as per the quantity for the primary and upper primary schools

ITEMS	PRIMARY		UPPER PRIMARY	
	Quantity gms	Energy content(Kcal)	Quantity gms	Energy content
Food grains	100	340	150	510
Pulses	20	70	30	88
Vegetables	50	25	75	32
Oils/fats	05	45	07	90
Salt/condiments	As per need	-	As per need	0
Total	480		720	

Fig 2: quantity of food grains, pulses, vegetables, oil fats , salt for the primary and upper primary schoolsⁱⁱ

OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of Mid – Day Meal Scheme are:-

- 1) It helps in improving the nutrition of children up to the age of 14 years.

- 2) It helps in quality education and Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan is one of the supporter of the sameⁱⁱⁱ
- 3) It provides relief to the poor parents to save money for one meal
- 4) It increases enrolment of children in schools
- 5) It attracts more children to attend schools
- 6) It aims at providing hygienic food to children keeping their health in consideration
- 7) It helps the children to focus on the classroom activities
- 8) It aims to keep children mentally and physically fit
- 9) It indirectly helps to end child labour
- 10) It is helping India to overcome the problem of hunger and to achieve the goal of zero hunger.
- 11) Address malnutrition

MID DAY MEAL SCHEME RULES

Mid-Day Meal Scheme Rules, 2015

The Union government of India notified Mid-Day Meal Scheme under National Food Security Act, 2013 on 30th September 2015.

- 1) It is the duty of the School Management Committee mandated under Right to Free and compulsory Education Act, 2009 to check the implementation of the Mid- Day meal Scheme , quality of food provided to children and to keep a check of cleanliness.
- 2) The meals shall be evaluated and certified by The Government Food Research Laboratory to keep in consideration that the food meets the nutritional standards before being eaten by the children
- 3) The Food and Drug Administration Department shall also collect samples to ensure the nutritional standards and quality of food.
- 4) If the school is not able to provide the mid-day meal due to any reason then it is the responsibility of the state to provide allowances or beneficiaries to the children for food.

- 5) The state government shall take an action if the food is not provided to children for 3 days continuously or for five days in a month.
- 6) Under Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the schools are allowed to use other funds in case the MDM funds gets exhausted.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme Rules, 2017:

- 1) Every school shall have the facility of cooking food in hygienic manner
- 2) The schools in urban areas and rural areas with good road connectivity shall use the centralised kitchen for cooking meals to ensure efficiency of gains.
- 3) The food shall only be served in the respective schools.

IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS ON MID DAY MEAL SCHEME

When the nationwide lockdown was announced in order to control the spread of covid-19, most of the poor children had a fear to face hunger. The Ministry of Human Resource Development tried to ensure that no child shall stay hungry and offered certain suggestions to make sure that the children have the access to the nutritional food. The options included either delivering the packaged food to the children on their respective residents or to deposit the food allowances directly to the bank accounts of the parents of the children. on virtual classes, the teachers would ensure that the child was eating the meal . However, not all sates showed an active effort to keep the stomachs of the children filled. It was further declared that the state which has 1.7 crore of MDM beneficiaries shall distribute 8 kg and 12kg of rice to primary and upper primary school students. The parents of the children were asked to come to school to collect grains as all measures of social distancing were kept in place. Rupees 397 and Rupees 596 were being provided as the cost of food beneficiaries to primary school and upper primary school students.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME

There are certain loopholes in the implementation of the program as there are certain incidents which denote hygiene is not kept into proper consideration, increase of corruption, irregularity, caste discrimination etc. ^{iv}

- 1) In December 2005, the rice was being stolen by an Ngo. Delhi police found 8 trucks laden with 2,760 sacks of rice which were for the primary school children. The rice was being transported from The Food Corporation of India Go downs, Bulandshahr District to North Delhi.
- 2) In November 2006, the residents of Pembong village, Darjeeling filed a written complaint against the teachers of the primary school as the children were not receiving the mid-day meal for the past year and a half.
- 3) In Dharma Sati Village, twenty -three children died on 16 July 2013 after eating pesticide -contaminated mid-day meal.
- 4) In Kalyuga village, Fifty five children fell ill on 31 July 2013 after eating the Mid-Day Meal provided by an NGO.
- 5) On 31 July 2013, another incident took place where 95 children fell ill in Alwar district after eating their meal.

SCHEME FAILING IN INDIA?

The Mid – Day Meal Scheme is lagging behind in India due to these reasons:

- 1) The government only focuses on providing the food to the large number of schools but they do not pay attention to the quality of the food or implementation of this policy.
- 2) The parents does not allow children to eat food due to unhygienic and unclean use of food grains which may also result in deaths, illness or other health issues. In Bihar, 23 children lost their lives after eating the meal as the same oil was used in food which was earlier used to store pesticide.
- 3) CAG’s performance audit report found that there was financial mismanagement by The Human and Resource Development Ministry itself .The food supplies were diverted and halved which lead to extreme food wastage.
- 4) In states like Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh , there were instances that the Dalit children were forced to sit separately while serving the Mid-Day Meal and the children from upper caste families refuse to eat food made by schedule caste or schedule tribe women . The caste system plays a vital role in failing the mid-day meal scheme.

- 5) Most of the schools do not take initiative to even provide the mid -day meals to children, the government only makes the policy but do not focus on the implementation of the same.

CRITICISM

If all the schemes are implemented in India in a proper manner then why India's rank has slipped from 94 to 101 on Global Hunger Index. India is today behind all its neighbouring states. Most of the malnourished children are in Uttar Pradesh even after having approximately 90,000 schools. According to UNICEF report of 2018, 8.8 lakh children under the age of 5 years lost their lives due to starvation, 3000 children in India dies on daily basis because of the lack of food and lakhs of Indians sleeps empty stomach. National Family and Health survey states that 38% children below the age of five years falls under the category of stunted one and 36% of the children are underweight.

CONCLUSION

Through this legal article we conclude that the "POSHAN" scheme helps children in multiple ways and also increase their focus on class activities. It helps them to keep healthy and active. Mental labour requires healthy nutrition. It is appreciable that our Indian government not only focuses on one aspects but also on the other aspects which would help in the efficient functioning of the scheme. There are certain loopholes in the implementation of the scheme which needs to be viewed or else the scheme will turn into a failure.

REFERENCES

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- 2) <https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/Mid%20Day%20Meal%20Scheme.pdf>
- 3) http://www.mdm.nic.in/mdm_website/Files/MDM_Rules/MDM-Rules-Without_DO_Letters/MDMRules2015.pdf
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- 7) https://www.nhp.gov.in/mid-day-meal-programme_pg

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Available at https://www.nhp.gov.in/mid-day-meal-programme_pg

ⁱⁱ Available at <https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/Mid%20Day%20Meal%20Scheme.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Available at http://www.mdm.nic.in/mdm_website/Files/MDM_Rules/MDM-Rules-Without_DO_Letters/MDMRules2015.pdf

^{iv} Available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/midday-meal-scheme-shoddy-implementation-by-states-keeping-kids-hungry-amid-lockdown/articleshow/77305936.cms>

^v Available at https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midday_Meal_Scheme