

The Growing scheme - “PM-Poshan” Historical Expansion & Achievements

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Abstract

Children are the human assets of the nation. On their shoulder falls the task of carrying the country forward and bearing the burden of development. The country's founding law assumed that social capital should be the primary area of general growth. Therefore, focusing on children, the state participated in primary school lunch programme, educating citizens about health as well as nutrition. Children are considered to be the most precious natural resource and the greatest human investment for growth in any society. Schools play an important role in the physical, mental and emotional development of children. Therefore, PM-Poshan programme promoted a brighter future for school children across the country, with the dual goals of improving education and health related to nutritional status of poor children in government-owned primary schools. India has the largest food distribution system for school children. The PM-Poshan is currently the world's largest school feeding programme, serving a cooked meal to about 120 million students across India. The scheme has significantly gained the public support, particularly from disadvantaged populations. This paper seeks to understand the roots of the daytime meal program from its beginnings to the current state of the program in India 'how it started' and the achievements & challenges faced by the programme in achieving the goal of nutritional attainment among the beneficiaries of the scheme.

Key words: PM-Poshan, Historical fulfilments, Beneficiaries, Primary School Education

INTRODUCTION

A "silent emergency" has been used to describe the situation faced by children in India. India has some of the lowest levels of child well-being in the world in terms of both education and health. Whether we use the weight-for-age or height-for-age criterion, nearly half of all Indian children are undernourished. Poverty is a critical issue which has its adverse impact on the nutritional level of the children and their educational attainment; poverty-stricken families cannot afford to provide their children the required amount of nutrition and thus fail to provide them with basic educational requirement. Even if the children manage to get themselves enrolled in the schools, due to acute poverty and hunger, they are unable to

pursue their studies. Dreze and Goyal (2003) have rightly called the PM-Poshan scheme a nutritionist's dream. The very basis of compulsory education is to have all round development of children. To achieve this, they should be provided with food which will help them to build healthier bodies and minds. The PM-Poshan has an important dimension in the nutrition of children. School lunch programmes are the easiest means for improving the nutritional status of the school-going children. The PM-Poshan supplements the home diet of the children because of its potential value.

OBJECTIVES

The present research paper focused on the following objectives:

- To enlighten the historical growth of PM-Poshan programme in India.
- To highlight the recent provisions in the PM-Poshan programme for continuing the Scheme in India.
- To enlist the Achievements and Challenges of PM-Poshan

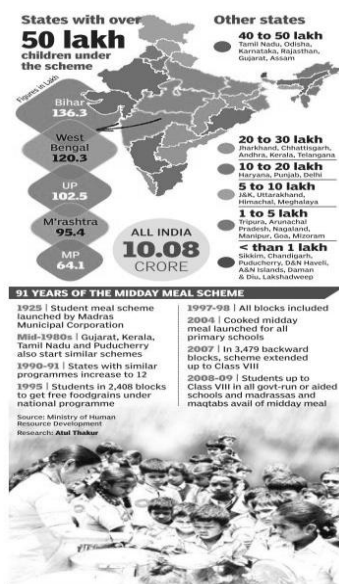
METHODOLOGY

It is basically documentary research based on review of literature and secondary sources. Data and information presented in current study are collected from various reports prepared by national and international agencies on PM-Poshan. Information is collected from various authentic websites. Some journals and e-contents relating to the scheme are referred

HOW IT ALL BEGAN: THE HISORICAL EXPANSION OF SCHEME

The roots of the noon meal programme which was popularly known as mid-day meal programme and now named as PM-Poshancan be found back to the pre-independence era. In late 1925 the Madras Company introduced a noon meal programme for disadvantaged children by the British government. This program was introduced by the French government in the federal territory of Pondicherry in 1930. Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in introducing the noon meal to India. This school meal originated in Tamil Nadu and later spread across the country. The then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, KumaraswamyKamaraj, encountered a group of boys herding cattle near a railroad crossing in herding cattle near a railroad crossing in Cheranmmahadevi, Tiruneveli. He questioned the group regarding their presence near rail crossing instead of school, suddenly one boy questioned, "Will we be provided food or snacks if we attend school?" Places like Chennai and remote villages in

rural Tamil Nadu served as the basis for the idea to develop the programme. Therefore, this situation led to introduction of free noon meals in schools. The chief minister KumaraswamiKamaraj in 1956 initiated the PM-Poshan program with the aim of improving school enrolments and reducing early dropouts by providing one free meal. Successive governments have supported the development of the system since the 1960s. A state government initiative for children began in 1962 when it introduced the PM-Poshan program into elementary schools in the 1963 school year. In the mid-1980s, three states - Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (UT) - used their own resources to run prepared lunch programs for primary school children. On 1 July 1982, Tamil Chief Minister of Nadu, Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran, announced that the existing Poshan scheme in the states as "Enhanced Nutrition Programme" targeted approximately lakhs of children suffering from malnutrition. August 15, 1995 the federal government launched the PM-Poshan program as a dry ration program at Block 2,408. The program has been successfully implemented in Tamil Nadu since the 1960s. In 1997-1998 the program was introduced to all blocks. In April 2002, the PM-Poshan program was expanded to all state-sponsored primary schools and municipalities. In April 2002, the PM-Poshan program was expanded to all state-sponsored primary schools and local schools. September 2006 Program Nutrition Boost: Provided a 450 calorie, 12 gram protein cooked meal to primary school (I-V) beneficiaries. April 2008 the program was extended to all beneficiaries studying in SarvaShikshaAbhiyan-supported madrasahs and other schools and learning centres. Between 2011 and 2012, more than 2.4 million cooks were employed, most of them were women who were either widow or belonged to disadvantaged sections of society. Millions Children were under Pm-Poshan's program. Nutritional and hygienic serving is a major challenge in most states, serving meals in adequate quantity and quality.



Map 1: States with over 50 lakh children under the PM-Poshan scheme 1925-2009

Graphic courtesy: [The Times of India](http://www.thetimesofindia.com), August 5, 2016

In order to improve enrolment, retention (early dropout rates), attendance rates, and to improve children's nutritional levels, the National Nutrition Assistance Program for Primary Education (NP-NSPE) (commonly known as the PM-Poshan) was implemented in a centrally funded program on the 49th year of India's independence - August 15, 1995 under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's Common Minimum Program. It has been replicated nationally to provide cooked meals to children in government-subsidized elementary schools and Education Assurance (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education centres (AIE) aims to increase enrolment rates and improve attendance rates by improving their nutritional status. . In September 2004, the PM-Poshan program was revised and was commonly known as the Cooked PM-Poshan Program (CPM-Poshan) to provide hot meals to children. The program was revised again in 2006. The scheme was also implemented in all upper middle schools from April 2008.

The main objective of the PM-Poshan Scheme is:

- To motivate the vulnerable sections of the society to get enrolment in government-aided schools so that they can fight classroom hunger and increase the nutritional intake which is necessary for their growth as a children and socializing with the different caste group's students by providing a single noon meal it will help to combat the malnutrition ratio in Indian children. The scheme will privilege the women from different disadvantage social groups to join as cook-cum-helper.

To achieve this aim, PM-Poshan, which contains 450 calories and 12 grams of protein (compared to 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein in the previous standard), was provided to each primary school beneficiaries, according to the revised standards. The beneficiaries were provided meal daily. Additional amounts of calories and protein are provided by adding vegetables or other protein ingredients. For upper middle school students, PM-Poshan contains 700 calories and 20 grams of protein. The central government assists local authorities related to government such as Panchayat and Nagarparika to implement the program and provides wheat and rice (depending on demand of beneficiaries) at 100 grams per student per day in primary school and 150 grams per student in upper primary school by the nearest Food Corporation of India (FCI).

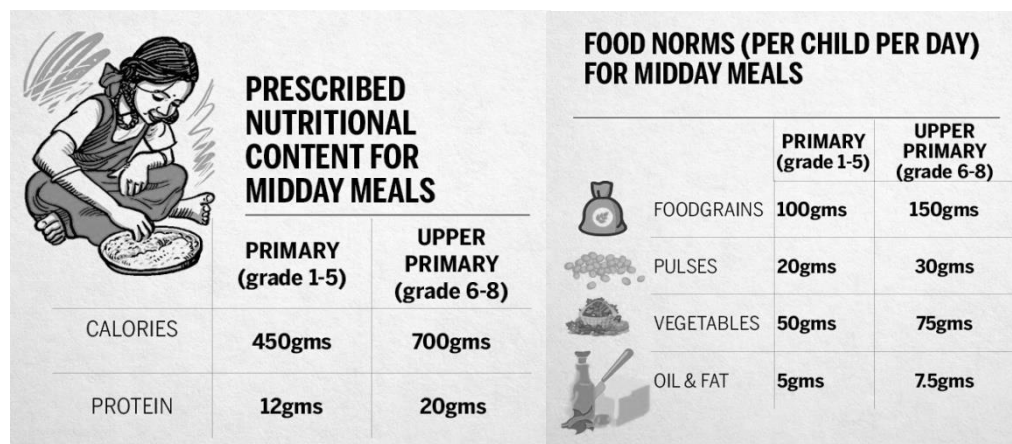


Figure 1: Prescribed nutritional content and food norms (per child per day) for PM-Poshans

Source: <https://pmposhan.education.gov.in/2021-2022>

PRESENT PROVISION IN PM-POSHAN SCHEME

In the Table 1 given below shows the revised cooking cost per beneficiaries per school day implemented on 1st April 2020. The following table 1 reveals that the PM-Poshan Scheme is regularly reviewed. In primary schools each beneficiaries receives one noon meal with 480 calories and 12 grams of protein per day (previous standards were 300 calories with 8-12 grams of protein per child). PM-Poshan Beneficiary in upper primary/middle school consumes 720 calories and 20 grams of protein. Additional fruits, vegetable, milk and other necessary proteins enrich the calories and protein among the PM-Poshan Beneficiaries. Centre and state divides the budget ratio 60:40 for both primary and upper primary beneficiaries of the scheme.

Revised Cooking cost per child per school day w.e.f. 01.04.2020						
Stage	Total Cost	Central-State Sharing				
		Non-NER States and UTs with Legislature(60:40)		NER-States (90:10) and 3 Himalayan States		UTs without Legislature (100%)
		Central	State	Central	State	
Primary	INR.4.97	INR.2.98	INR.1.99	INR.4.47	INR.0.50	INR.4.97
Upper Primary	INR.7.45	INR. 4.47	INR. 2.98	INR. 6.70	INR. 0.65	INR. 7.45

Table1: Revised cooking cost per child per day

Source: Ministry of Human Resource and Development (2020).

REVISED NEW NAME OF MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

The scheme was stamped in 2021 with the new name known as PM-POSHAN (PardhanMantriPoshan Shakti Nirman Scheme) by the Cabinet Committee. The Scheme will expand the provision of hot nutritious cooked meals to students in pre-primary level schools which are under the state owned and aided schools. The restructured scheme will benefit around eleven million schoolchildren across India. Scheme emphasis providing iron ,regular check-ups by anganwadi workers with government recommended specialised doctor will scrutinize the in which height, weight, blood count and Body mass index of the PM-Poshan Beneficiaries. The scheme will introduce the kitchen-cum-gardens for students which will implant knowledge of growing healthy environment. It is also focusing on providing meals according to the cultural cuisine different types of menus with wide variety of meals. These new standards will eradicate the malnutrition, anaemia and iron deficiency in India at root level.

ACHIEVEMNTS AND CHALLENGES OF PM-POSHAN SCHEME

Most importantly the scheme has improved the nutritional status, enrolment rate, hunger, malnutrition, retention and caste based discrimination at school level. Disadvantaged sections of Indian society are gaining education from the government based primary and upper primary schools these are uplifting the social status of the society from the root level and

encouraging the parents to send their children to school despite of being poor and unable to provide a single meal to their children they are trusting the government based education system and sending their children to schools and improving the malnutrition level of Indian children who are the backbone and future of the Indian society.

- The Government of India (1995) in a report analysed that the Prevalent School Noon Meal Programme – Mid-Day Meal has served 12 million school children across India. The particular program helped the schools children by combating hunger, malnutrition and majorly helping the weaker section of the society from the root levels.
- The scheme has also helped to lift the status and enrolment of girls in the school in high volume. Anuradha De, Claire Noronha, and Meera Samson (2005) in her research examined majority of girls arrived schools with empty stomach for mid-day meal this has improved the attendance in the schools.
- According to the National Council of Educational Research and Training's (2005) report on "Learning Attainment of Students at the End of class fifth," children who receive mid-day meal have higher achievement levels than those who do not.
- Jean Dreze and Aparajita Goyal (2003) stated that the experience thus far clearly shows that Mid-Day Meal scheme have much to contribute to the well-being and future of Indian children. Mid-Day Meal programmes currently have many defects, but the scheme has forwarded a step ahead, not backward. Mid-Day Meal with ample resources and quality maintains can play a significant role in humanizing school attendance, fostering social equity and eliminating classroom hunger.
- Ritika Khera (2005) a survey was conducted of the most backward villages and it was discovered that there was a 15 per cent increase in enrolment, which was more pronounced in the case of SC and ST children 43 per cent increase.
- According to the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development in Indore, Madhya Pradesh (2007), mid-day meal program has resulted in a significant increase in school enrolment. The program has helped reduce dropout rates, especially among girls. Parents considered mid-day meal to be of great help to their family.

- According to Kadari Rajeshwar (2016) the main concept and goal of the state was to satisfy hunger and provide food for vulnerable children. In addition to providing food assistance to students, it also helps increase the number of students attending school by influencing the educational culture of disadvantaged parts of society.
- The study by Throat and Lee (2005) analysed the importance of education for empowering women. The study explained that considering education as one of the most important means of empowering women many programmes, schemes, awards and facilities have been initiated by the Central and State Government to promote girls and women education. It was explained that the Government of India has taken resources to comprehensive literary drive for girls related to poor and socially weaker sections of the society. The study further revealed that mid-day meal scheme- started by Central Government has motivated the girls to primary education by relieving them from household chores. Because of this programme, enrolment and retention of girls to schools has increased remarkably.

MAJOR FINDINGS RELATED TO SCHEME

Findings of the studies from various sociologist and scholars in various states indicate the following sways of PM-POSHAN in achieving goals are:

- In government aided schools, the Cooked PM-Poshan scheme has been effective in reducing classroom hunger.
- Cooked PM-Poshan Meals are said to have provided an arena for kids from all socioeconomic backgrounds to eat together, thereby making it easier to achieve the goal of social equity.
- It has also been noted that the program has caused teachers and students to focus more on activities related to it than on teaching and learning activities, which has a negative impact on academic performance.
- It was observed that there was a general shortage of basic infrastructure, including manpower, which is essential for the Cooked Midday Meal program to succeed. It was found that the majority of the states did not follow to the instructions from the

- Government of India to deliver food grains at the school point by Public Distribution Scheme dealer, which led to food grain leakage. There have been instances where stolen and adulterated food grains were supplied because of the lengthy supply chain.
- The Cooked Meal Program appears to have contributed to an increase in school attendance nationwide.
- The PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) Report's key findings showed that 84 per cent of households reported that their kids eat a hot lunch prepared by cook-cum-helper and enjoy a variety of food options. Schools teach healthy habits like washing your hands before and after meals. Enrolment rates have increased thanks to incentives like PM-Poshan.
- An empirical study on the PM-Poshan programme in the Orissan district of Khurda found that cooked midday meals promoted socialisation among the children and helped boost enrolment and attendance at afternoon classes. The scheme has given underprivileged sections new employment opportunities.
- According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2021, 83.4 per cent of schools served PM-Poshan on the day of a visit, and nearly the same percentage (81.3 per cent) of schools had kitchen sheds for preparing lunch. The availability of meals had significantly improved, which had contributed to the rise in enrolment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, India's PM-Poshan programme has come a long way since 1925, when it was officially implemented by the British Government on 15th August 1995 at Madras. For over 20 years, PM-Poshan has been a part of daily life in public schools across the country. The process has stabilized over time, but accidents still occur. Funds for the centre are flowing well, but there are many challenges in procuring food.

Despite these advantages, the scheme is observed as donations rather than community responsibility. As a result, the PM-Poshan is associated with poverty, both in community perception and in state-owned policies.

In short, the PM-POSHAN system has undoubtedly been widely admired since it was mandated by the Supreme Court decision. It is the largest program of its kind in the world and its ability to reduce hunger in classrooms, reduce gender inequality and improve academic achievement has played an important role in realizing the right to food.

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