

An Evaluation of The Mid-Day Meal Scheme Implemented in Primary Schools of Sonitpur District of Assam

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ABSTRACT

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was launched by the Indian government in 1995 to provide proper nutrition to children along with education. The main objective of this study is to find out the satisfaction level of primary school teachers, students and parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme implemented in Primary Schools of Sonitpur District of Assam. In this study, the population was all the teachers, students and their parents of government, private and aided primary schools of Sonitpur district of Assam. The investigators have used descriptive survey method and the sample has been selected by using purposive sampling technique. A sample of 50 primary school's teachers, 50 primary school's students and 50 parents are selected. In this study, the investigators have used self-made tool related to Mid-day Meal Scheme which has been developed based on the earlier studies conducted by various researchers to collect data and these data were analysed by using appropriate statistical techniques as percentage. From this study, the investigator found that Majority of teachers exhibit high and above average level of satisfaction, majority of students exhibit above average level of satisfaction and majority of parents exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Keywords: Evaluation, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Implemented, Primary Schools.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme, a centerpiece initiative of the Indian government, offers free lunch to students in government and government-aided schools up to eighth grade. The program began as a test initiative in a few states in 1995 before being made available to all 50 states and the nation's union territories. The initiative aims to raise children's dietary standards, boost education, and motivate regular school attendance. The plan has proven effective in raising the nation's rates of school enrollment, attendance, and retention. One of the biggest school lunch programs in the world, the Mid Day Meal Scheme feeds almost 12 crore kids nationwide.

The MDMS has been crucial in boosting students' academic achievement, decreasing dropout rates, and enhancing school attendance among children, especially those from underprivileged families. The program has had a good effect on children's health and well-being, supporting their overall development and improving their chances for the future by tackling the problem of classroom hunger and malnutrition.

The welfare of the nation hinges upon the education of its people. There are numerous challenges that children in India face, such as poverty, hunger, and economic crises. This initiative for

children is a part of an effort to make schools more appealing, so that they are viewed as a second home, while also enhancing the nutritional value of children.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Mid-Day Meal program in primary schools of Assam, as well as in other parts of India, holds significant importance for various reasons. This scheme was launched by the Government of India in 1995 as part of its effort to improve the nutritional status of children and promote primary education. Here are some key significances of the mid-day meal scheme in primary school:

1. Nutrition and Health: Many children come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and might not have access to nutritious meals at home. The mid-day meal ensures that students receive at least one wholesome and balanced meal during their school day, which can improve their overall health and well-being. Proper nutrition also enhances their cognitive abilities, concentration and learning outcomes.

2. Increased School Attendance: The provision of a free mid-day meal acts as incentive for parents to send their children to school regularly. The scheme has been successful in increasing school attendance rates, as children are motivated to attend school to receive the meal.

3. Reduces Malnutrition: Malnutrition is a prevalent issue in some parts of Assam, particularly among children. The mid-day meal scheme helps combat malnutrition by offering nutritious meals, which can improve the health and well-being of children and contribute to their overall development.

4. Academic Performance: Proper nutrition has been linked to better cognitive abilities and academic performance. By providing a mid-day meal, the scheme aims to enhance the learning outcomes of students, enabling them to concentrate better on their studies and perform well in school.

5. Social Equality: The mid-day meal program helps bridge the gap between children from different socio-economic backgrounds. Irrespective of their economic status, all students receive the same meal, promoting social equality and reducing the stigma associated with hunger and poverty.

6. Employment Generation: The implementation of the mid-day meal scheme involves the employment of cooks, helpers and other personal, thereby generating local employment opportunities.

7. Community welfare: The mid-day meal program often involves the local communities in its implementation, as it requires coordination between schools, government, NGOs, and suppliers. This collaboration fosters a sense of community welfare and shared responsibility.

8. Breaking the poverty cycle: Access to education and proper nutrition can help break the cycle of poverty. Well-fed and educated children are more likely to become productive members of society, leading to improved socio-economic conditions for their families and communities in the long term.

Overall, the mid-day meal program in primary schools plays a crucial role in ensuring the holistic development of children, addressing nutritional deficiencies, promoting education, and contributing to the well-being of the society at large.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study has been stated as "An Evaluation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme implemented in Primary Schools of Sonitpur District of Assam".

1.3 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The delimitations of this research work are as follow-

1. The study is confined to the government primary schools.
2. The study is confined to the teachers, students and their parents.
3. The study is confined to the Bihaguri, Gabhoru and Borchala blocks of Sonitpur district only.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the satisfaction level of teachers towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

2. To find out the satisfaction level of students towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
3. To find out the satisfaction level of parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

1.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. Mid-day Meal Scheme: The Mid-Day Mil Scheme was launched by the Indian government in 1995 to provide proper nutrition to children along with education.
2. Primary school: A primary school is an elementary school for primary education of children who are four to ten years of age.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review provided highlights the importance of education and the positive impact of the Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme in India, which aims to provide nutritious meals to children in primary schools. The review covers various studies conducted in different regions of India, exploring the relationship between the MDM program and students' enrolment, attendance, academic performance, and health outcomes.

1. Arya, N. K. (2020) conducted a study on Impact of Mid-day Meal scheme on enrolment- A case study of government primary schools in Varanasi district. In this study, the researcher found that some teachers had said they did not get the money on time and the students and their parents had expressed negative feedback about Mid-day Meal scheme.
2. Ramana, R. (2009) conducted a study on Effectiveness of nutrition and health education integrated with Mid-day Meal programme in MCD schools A study. In this study, the researcher found that children's acceptability of Mid-day Meal was very much influenced by their teacher's attitude.
3. Verma, L. (2015) conducted a study on Consumption pattern and acceptability of Mid-day Meal among 5 6-year-olds a study in government schools of Delhi. In this study, the researcher found that only 28% children liked Mid-day Meal because they feel hunger in school and 52.8% mothers were satisfied with Mid-day Meal.
4. Bhathal, P. (2015) conducted a study on Mid-day Meal scheme in India with special reference to Punjab. The study revealed that Mid-day Meal scheme functioned well in Punjab during 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13.
5. Deodhar (2007) discussed the implementation of the MDM scheme in Gujarat and suggested ways to enhance the variety and nutritional value of the meals provided.
6. Nangia & Poonam (2011) assessed the impact of the MDM scheme on enrolment in the Union Territory of Chandigarh and found that enrolment at the primary and upper primary levels increased after the introduction of the scheme.
7. Paul & Mondal (2012) conducted a study in Burdwan district, West Bengal, to examine the effect of the MDM program on students from high and low economic status. They found a positive impact on enrolment, attendance, retention, and dropout rates, leading to improved academic performance.
8. Sengupta (2012) illustrated the success of the MDM scheme in Tamil Nadu, leading to a significant increase in school participation and enrolment rates.
9. Gupta & Singh (2013) explored four key areas, including access to education, enrolment, retention, and academic achievement, and found increased enrolment of both boys and girls in MDM schools compared to non-MDM schools.
10. Nath and Nath (2015) assessed the impact of the MDM program on enrolment and retention of primary school children in Bolpur Sriniketan block, Birbhum district, and found positive effects on enrolment, retention, and attendance.

Overall, the literature review consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between the Midday Meal scheme and various educational outcomes, such as increased enrolment, attendance, and academic performance. It also highlights the program's role in addressing socio-economic

disparities and providing essential nutrition to economically disadvantaged children, contributing to the goal of universal primary education in India.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In this study, the investigators have used descriptive survey method to conduct the study of satisfaction level of teachers, students and their parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

3.1 POPULATION

In this study, the population was all the teachers, students and their parents of government, private and aided primary schools of Sonitpur district of Assam.

3.2 SAMPLE

In this study, the investigators have used purposive sampling technique for selecting the sample. A sample of 50 primary school's teachers, 50 primary school's students and 50 parents are selected.

3.3 TOOL USED

The investigators have used self-made tool related to Mid-day Meal Scheme which has been developed based on the earlier studies conducted by various researchers.

3.4 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

In this present study, the investigators have used percentage to obtain the result.

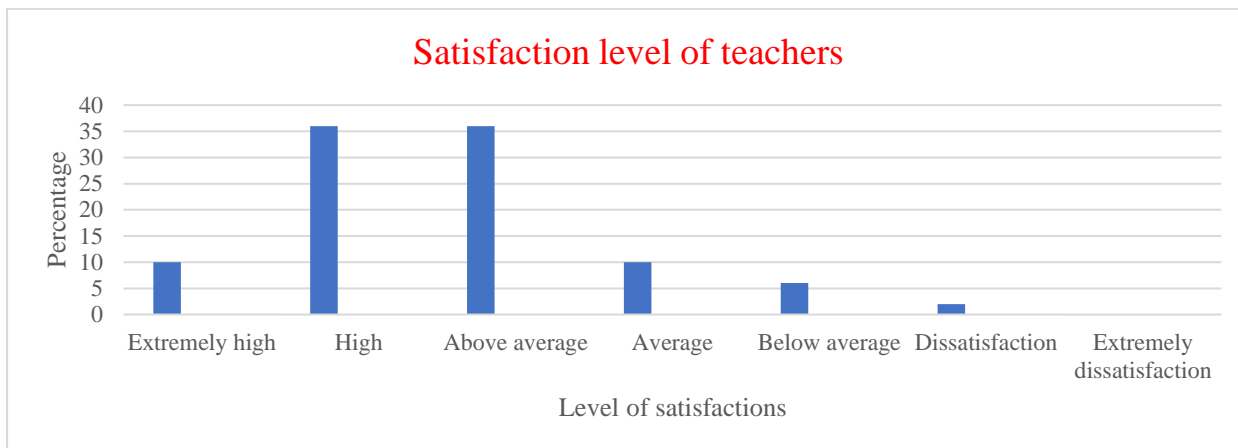
4.0 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Objective 1: To find out the satisfaction level of teachers towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Table 1: Satisfaction level of teachers towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme according to their satisfaction score

Level of satisfactions	No of primary school teacher	Percentage
Extremely high	5	10
High	18	36
Above average	18	36
Average	5	10
Below average	3	6
Dissatisfaction	1	2
Extremely dissatisfaction	0	0

Figure 3.1 showing graphical representation of the level of satisfaction of primary school teachers towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme



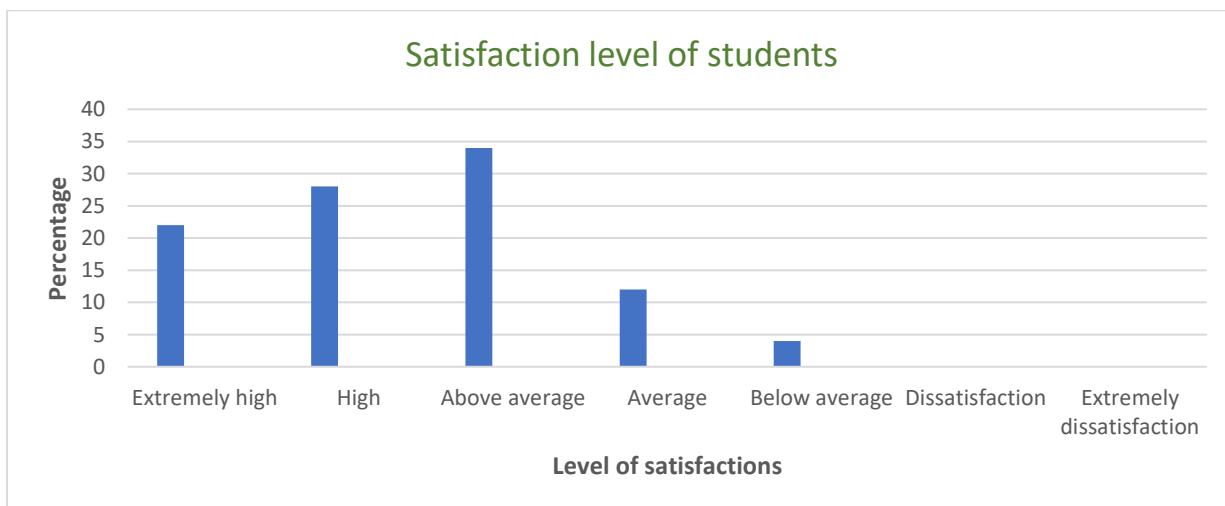
On the basis of above table 1, it is found that 10% teachers exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction, 36% teachers exhibit high level of satisfaction, 36% teachers exhibit above average level of satisfaction, 10% teachers exhibit average level of satisfaction, 6% teachers exhibit below average level of satisfaction and 2% teachers exhibit dissatisfaction level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Objective 2: To find out the satisfaction level of students towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Table 2: Satisfaction level of students towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme according to their satisfaction score

Level of satisfactions	No of primary school teacher	Percentage
Extremely high	11	22
High	14	28
Above average	17	34
Average	6	12
Below average	2	4
Dissatisfaction	0	0
Extremely dissatisfaction	0	0

Figure 3.2 showing graphical representation of the level of satisfaction of primary school students towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme



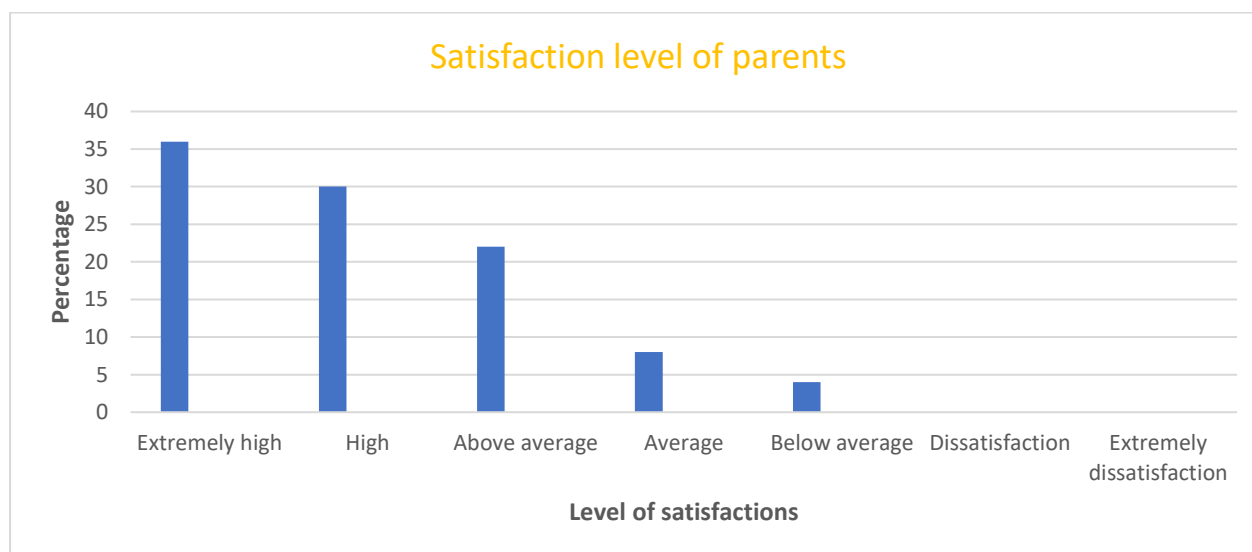
On the basis of above table 1, it is found that 22% students exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction, 28% students exhibit high level of satisfaction, 34% students exhibit above average level of satisfaction, 12% students exhibit average level of satisfaction and 4% students exhibit below average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Objective 3: To find out the satisfaction level of parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Table 3: Satisfaction level of parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme according to their satisfaction score

Level of satisfactions	No of primary school teacher	Percentage
Extremely high	18	36
High	15	30
Above average	11	22
Average	4	8
Below average	2	4
Dissatisfaction	0	0
Extremely dissatisfaction	0	0

Figure 3.3 showing graphical representation of the level of satisfaction of parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme



On the basis of above table 1, it is found that 36% parents exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction, 30% parents exhibit high level of satisfaction, 22% parents exhibit above average level of satisfaction, 8% parents exhibit average level of satisfaction and 4% parents exhibit below average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

5.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted to know the level of satisfaction of primary school teachers, students and parents towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. In this study, the investigators found that-

- 10% teachers exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

- 36% teachers exhibit high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 36% teachers exhibit above average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 10% teachers exhibit average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 6% teachers exhibit below average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 2% teachers exhibit dissatisfaction level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- Majority of teachers exhibit high and above average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 22% students exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 28% students exhibit high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 34% students exhibit above average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 12% students exhibit average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 4% students exhibit below average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- Majority of students exhibit above average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 36% parents exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 30% parents exhibit high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 22% parents exhibit above average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 8% parents exhibit average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- 4% parents exhibit below average level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
- Majority of parents exhibit extremely high level of satisfaction towards various aspects of Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be strengthened because it has the potential to improve school learning as well as school enrollment. Better social integration is facilitated by the fact that kids from various castes and groups dine together. With MDMS, it will be simpler for teachers to keep kids in the classrooms and for parents to convince their kids to go to school. It might encourage children to behave well in social situations and eliminate caste-based prejudice.

By enhancing children's nutritional status and consequently lowering malnutrition, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme contributes to increasing the effectiveness of primary education. It can benefit UEE by increasing enrollment, regular attendance, and lowering dropout rates. It helps bridge the gap created by social distance and ends classroom hunger.

The MDM Scheme has a number of potential advantages, including bringing girls, Dalits, and Adivasi children to school, increasing regularity, nutritional advantages, socialization advantages, and advantages for mothers.

7.0 SUGGESTIONS

A serious and earnest brainstorming session is urgently required to move the Mid-day Meal Scheme's effective implementation forward after encountering numerous obstacles and bottlenecks. Following a lengthy conversation with the Mid-day Meal Scheme stakeholders, the following suggestions are made:

- **Food grains supplied in a timely manner:** It is advised that PUNSUP provide food grains to schools on a regular basis. Rather the food grains should be provided well in advance to school authorities so that they can serve the food to students regularly. All the payments to the FCI for food grains should be made on time so as to avoid delays in delivery.
- **Appropriate amount of food grains:** PUNSUP should take extra care to check food grain theft so that the amount of food grains delivered to the schools matches the amount of food grains allocated by the government for Mid-day Meal Scheme. The school administration is also advised not to accept the hampered bags.
- **Quality food grains:** To supply children with nourishment, cut down on cooking time, and prevent food waste, the government should provide good quality food grains to schools as part of the midday meal programme. Prior to distribution to the schools, bad foodgrain stocks that give off an unpleasant scent or stocks that are infested with pests should be destroyed. The grain suppliers or contractors must satisfy the school authority regarding the grain quantity.
- **Timely release of funds:** One of the biggest obstacles to the proper operation of the Mid-day Meal Scheme is the flow of funds for the settlement of outstanding debts. To ensure that the Mid-day Meal Scheme runs smoothly and that teachers don't have to use their own finances or borrow food from grocers, the government should make monies accessible to schools well in advance.
- **Solution to the scarcity of funds:** The problem of a lack of cash can be resolved by urging donors, such as NRIs, industrialists, and other renowned figures, to donate generously to this honourable project. They may provide something in kind or money. They can participate in the plan by contributing their thoughts and opinions as well. They could assist with developing, executing, monitoring, and evaluating the Mid-day Meal Scheme as part of their social responsibility. By doing this, they will be able to equally share the burden of fostering and educating our country's future generations.
- **Funding for the purchase of cooking and eating utensils:** The government should provide the funding necessary to buy cooking and eating utensils for the schools where they are not currently available. It should also examine the properness of the utilisation of the funds allocated for the purchase of cooking and eating utensils.
- **Storage drums and containers:** The government should allocate cash to the schools to purchase storage drums and containers for the hygienic storage of foodgrains, pulses, spices, and condiments. Although the schools were told to purchase the storage barrels, payment is still outstanding in those instances as well.
- **Gas cylinder supply:** The government should make plans to provide gas cylinders on time. To prevent their theft, special cylinders labelled with the phrase "MID-DAY MEAL" should be distributed. The gas companies need to be severely ordered to replenish the cylinders designated for the Mid-day Meal Scheme right away. If at all feasible, provide the schools two cylinders so they won't have to rush to get the gas replenished or resort to using other fuels like wood or cow dung cakes if the gas runs out in the middle of cooking. The government should also investigate the availability of gas pipes and regulators with ISI markings.
- **Observe the menu provided:** The mid-day meal is a balanced diet that is prepared with the developing children's nutritional needs in mind. It ought to be adhered to strictly. A mid-day meal pricing index should be created to address the issue of skyrocketing prices of all the ingredients needed to turn food grains into cooked meals. This index would take price changes for items crucial to the programme into account and help determine the cost of cooking for each child per day. Accordingly, money may be disbursed.
- **Provision of prepared or packaged food:** The Mid-day Meal Scheme was established with the intention of meeting the children's dietary needs by giving them freshly prepared, hot food. However, pupils can be given ready-to-eat/package foods such fruits, fruitcakes, cookies, and juice on days when the weather is unfavorable. Uncooked food grains should not be distributed to pupils in schools.
- **Addition to the meal's menu:** To improve the Mid-day Meal Scheme's effectiveness, the government should periodically change the food menu to reflect the season and the preferences of the students. Fruits, eggs, "paneer," milk, cookies, and sweets may be added. Parents recommended giving the students curd and Missi Roti since it is highly nourishing.

- **Justified remuneration to cooks:** Cooks should receive fair compensation that is commensurate with their workload, along with merited raises, and it should be paid on schedule to maintain their morale. Appointment letters should be presented to them. Cooks should be provided with identification cards, and medical insurance should be set up to cover the cost of treating accidents and injuries sustained while cooking. To address the hygiene and safety issues, they should be provided with the appropriate attire, footwear, headgear, masks, and gloves.
- **Cooks with training:** At the time of hiring, a minimum level of education for the cooks should be determined. Only those candidates who have prior training or expertise in mass and hygienic cooking should be hired. They should occasionally be sent to specialised training to learn safe and hygienic cooking, serving, and handling medical crises procedures.
- **Maintenance of health cards properly:** All schools are required to keep their health cards, which are provided by the government. After doctor appointments, school staff members should check health cards. In order to have a significant impact, the Mid-day Meal Scheme could serve as a platform for improving the school health programme.

8.0 CONCLUSION

At the end, the Mid-Day Meal scheme is amongst the most crucial programs to increase the dietary adequacy of children and to uplift the education in India. Mid-Day Meal scheme has helped in increasing the number of children going to school, in terms of enrolment, in terms of attendance, in terms of retention, in terms of physical and mental health. The scheme has also helped in increasing the local economy by using locally sourced ingredients and by encouraging the community to participate in the scheme. The Mid-Day Meal scheme is a great example of how a government program can make a difference in the life of children and in the lives of their communities. We must continue to support this program and strengthen it in order to provide every child in India with a nutritious meal and education.

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