

Midday Meal Scheme

The Mid-day Meal Scheme is a school meal programme of the Government of India designed to better the nutritional standing of school-age children nationwide.[1] The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in government, government aided, local body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the ministry of labour.[2] Serving 120,000,000 children in over 1,265,000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, it is the largest of its kind in the world.[3]

Under article 24, paragraph 2c[4] of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which India is a party,[5] India has committed to yielding "adequate nutritious food" for children. The programme has undergone many changes since its launch in 1995. The Midday Meal Scheme is covered by the National Food Security Act, 2013. The legal backing to the Indian school meal programme is akin to the legal backing provided in the US through the National School Lunch Act.

Initiatives by the central government

President Pranab Mukherjee launching mid-day meal scheme at a Central Government-run school

The government of India initiated the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) on 15 August 1995.[3] The objective of the scheme is to help improve the effectiveness of primary education by improving the nutritional status of primary school children. Initially, the scheme was implemented in 2,408 blocks of the country to provide food to students in classes one through five of government, government-aided and local body run schools. By 1997–98, the

scheme had been implemented across the country. Under this programme, a cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 12 grams of protein is provided to all children enrolled in classes one to five. In October 2007, the scheme included students in upper primary classes of six to eight in 3,479 educationally backward blocks,[13] and the name was changed from National Programme for Nutrition Support to Primary Education to National Programme of Mid Day Meals in Schools.[14] Though cooked food was to be provided, most states (apart from those already providing cooked food) chose to provide "dry rations" to students. "Dry rations" refers to the provision of uncooked 3 kg of wheat or rice to children with 80% attendance.

Supreme court order

In April 2001, the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) initiated the public interest litigation (Civil) No. 196/2001, People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India & Others[15] – popularly known as the "right to food" case. The PUCL argued that article 21 – "right to life" of the Indian constitution when read together with articles 39(a) and 47, makes the right to food a derived fundamental right which is enforceable by virtue of the constitutional remedy provided under article 32 of the constitution. The PUCL argued that excess food stocks with the Food Corporation of India should be fed to hungry citizens. This included providing mid day meals in primary schools. The scheme came into force with the supreme court order dated 28 November 2001,[16] which requires all government and government-assisted primary schools to provide cooked midday meals.[17]

Website - <http://mdm.nic.in/>