

FOOD SAFETY DRIVES FOR SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT- A STUDY**Author****Prof. Chandra K.C.**
Mumbai, INDIA.**ABSTRACT**

National Food Safety Mission has been seen both as a social safety net for vulnerable sections of the population and as an educational intervention aimed at ensuring that children go to school and that their learning is improved by elimination of hunger in the class room. The role of Food safety drives as social safety nets may have been enhanced on the context of the recent and persisting global food, fuel and financial crises and high rates of food inflation in most parts of the world. In this context, the experience of a large and populous developing country like India with respect to Food safety drives becomes relevant for other countries seeking to initiate or to strengthen and expand such programmes. This research study provides a descriptive summary of India's experience with Food safety drives, focusing mainly on the state of Tamil Nadu and its capital city Chennai, where it all started in India, the place that saw the launch of a national initiative in this regard.

STUDY

In September 2012, a High Level Panel of Experts to the United Nations (UN) Committee on World Food Security released a comprehensive report on *Social Protection for Food Security*, with recommendations for combating chronic childhood hunger. One of its recommendations—the concept of a “food security floor”—is worthy of mention. The food security floor recognizes that freedom from hunger is a fundamental human right, defining the minimal steps needed for hunger elimination. These include nutrition literacy, clean drinking water, sanitation, and primary health care.

This research focuses on the Food Safety Drives in India, the largest of its kind in the world, feeding nearly 11 crore school going children every day across different states in India. The MDG's and SDG's with focus on the eradication of poverty, hunger and education brings to light the efforts taken by the Indian government and the Tamil Nadu government in particular with innovative schemes to bring children to school and eradicate class-room hunger. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. About 850 million people, or nearly 15 percent of the global population, are estimated to be undernourished. Despite some progress, nearly one in five children under age five in the developing world is underweight. Children in rural areas are nearly twice as likely to be underweight as those in urban areas. This is the target of the first goal of the MDG with regard to eradicating hunger and poverty. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Enrolment in primary education in developing regions reached 90 per cent in 2010, up from 82 per cent in 1999, which means more kids than ever are attending primary school. In 2010, 61 million children of primary school age were out of school. More than half of them (33 million) were in sub-Saharan Africa and a further one fifth (13 million) in Southern Asia. This is the target of the second goal of MDG with regard to universalisation of primary education. The SFP is India's largest food security programme for the children and the largest such food security programme in the world. This chapter aims to trace the origin and growth of this scheme. Some other countries also have initiated similar programmes in their systems. The United Kingdom introduced the school meal or school feeding programme in 1945, United States of America in 1946, whereas Japan introduced this scheme in 1947, Australia in 1950. India introduced this SFP in 1995 by providing dry rations to the children on a daily basis, and since 2001, cooked meals are provided to the children under SFP.

Evolution of SFP's in India

Two key problems relating to children in India are the large numbers of children out of school and the considerable extent of under-nourishment among children. In 2004, around 15 per cent of children in the age group of 6-14 years were out of school (Right to Food Campaign, 2006). According to the third national family health survey (NFHS 3, 2007) which has 2005-06 as its

reference period, 46 per cent of India's children fewer than 3 years of age are underweight. The corresponding figure is 30 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa while China records 8 per cent and Pakistan 37 per cent (Lal, 2007). India was home to 57 million - or more than a third - of the world's 146 million undernourished children (NFHS 3, 2007). Nutritional anaemia is also widespread among children. The figures imply serious consequences for human resource development and productive potential of the nation. More importantly, they also imply denial of basic human rights to children, such as access to food and education. The policy challenge, in this context, is to address both the educational needs and the nutritional needs of the children in the school-going age group. By 1990-91, the number of States with such provision, either universally or on a large scale, was twelve. Five other States were also implementing similar programmes, with either international funding or a combination of own resources and international funding. It was in such a situation that the Government of India launched the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE, popularly known as Mid-Day Meals Scheme or MDMS) on August 15, 1995.

The objective of the NPNSPE was stated as follows: "The programme is intended to give a boost to universalisation of primary education, by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition of students in primary classes" (GoI, 1995). The scheme's basic objectives were to boost universalisation of primary education (classes I-V) by improving enrolment, attendance, retention, and learning levels of children, especially those belonging to disadvantaged sections, improve nutritional status of students of primary stage, and provide nutritional support to students of primary stage in drought-affected areas even during the summer vacation when schools would be closed.

The Supreme Court of India & Food safety drives

The right to food is important and it is directly related to the non-derogable right to life that is the foundation of all rights. There is no explicit provision for the right to food in the Constitution of India. However, the issue of right to food gained wider attention when the Supreme Court of India intervened through a writ petition filed by the PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties) against the Union of India, Food Corporation of India, and six state governments under Public

Interest Litigation (PIL) in the year 2000.¹ Responding to the Writ Petition the Supreme Court interpreted the Article- 21 in wider sense and delivered its historic judgment in 2001. In this judgment, the Supreme Court directed all state governments in India to provide cooked meal instead of dry ration to all primary school going children. The apex court asked the government to incorporate the right to food as an essential element in the policy making process. Expressing seriousness over the starvation deaths in Orissa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and growing food insecurity and the state's inaction, the Supreme Court directed to take immediate actions for the free distribution of food grains to the needy instead of storing and wasting it in the state government-owned warehouses and the Food Corporation of India (FCI). The Supreme Court also held the view that priority has to be given to those who are neither able to go for employment nor have the capacity to demand from the State. In this connection, on November 23, 2001, the Court directed all the state governments to implement nearly eight food security schemes.²

¹ The Supreme Court has laid down that where a legal wrong or legal injury is caused to a person or to a determinate class of person by reason of violation of any constitutional or legal right or any burden is imposed in contravention of any Constitutional or legal provision or without authority of law or any such legal wrong or legal injury of illegal burden is threatened and such person or determinate class of persons, is, by reason of poverty, helplessness or disability or socially or economically disadvantaged position, unable to approach the Supreme Court for relief, any member of the public can maintain an application for an appropriate direction, order or writ in the High Courts under Article 226 and in the case of breach of any fundamental right in the Supreme Court under Article 32 seeking judicial redress for the legal wrong or injury caused to such person or determinate class of persons. D.D. Basu, *An Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Wadha Company Ltd., 2001.pp. 54-59.

² The schemes are: (1)the Public Distribution System (PDS); (2) Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY); (3) the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, also known as "mid-day meal scheme"; (4) the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS); (5) Annapoorna; (6) the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS); (7) the National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS); and (8) the National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS). Essentially, the interim order of 28th November 2001 converted the benefits of these eight "schemes" into legal entitlements. A ninth scheme, Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), was not mentioned in this order, but it did figure in the initial list of food-related schemes on which the Supreme Court requested affidavits from the State Governments (on 17 September 2001), and SGRY became the main focus of the next interim order, issued on 8 May 2002.

In subsequent orders, the Supreme Court further strengthened the right of children to a mid-day meal at school. In its orders of 20 April 2004, the Court observed, *inter alia*, that:

- ‘The conversion costs for a cooked meal, under no circumstances, shall be recovered from the children or their parents’.
- ‘The Central Government... shall also allocate funds to meet the conversion costs of food-grains into cooked mid-day meals’.
- ‘In drought affected areas, mid-day meals shall be supplied even during summer vacations’.
- ‘In appointment of cooks and helpers, preference shall be given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes’.
- ‘The Central Government shall make provisions for construction of kitchen sheds’.
- ‘Attempts shall be made for better infrastructure, improved facilities (safe drinking water etc.), closer monitoring (regular inspection etc.) and other quality safeguards as also the improvement of the contents of the meal so as to provide nutritious meal to the children of the primary schools’. These are some of the observations made by the Supreme Court of India with regard to the SFP. The highest court of the land has also appointed Food Commissioners to monitor and report periodically on the status of availability to access to food to the poor and marginalised population and the SFP becomes part of this mechanism as it covers more than 11 crore children across India.

Any investment in the children of our nation or for that matter any other nation is but only the first and fundamental step in planning for the future in terms of national development vis-à-vis human resources development. Healthy and happy children are the assets of a nation. Jawaharlal Nehru, who initially shaped the destiny of a free India, was a firm believer that the children of today build the India of tomorrow. Incidentally 14th November, the birthday of Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister after independence, is celebrated as Children’s Day annually in India. Former President of India Dr. Radhakrishnan opined, “The prosperity and strength or weakness of our nation depends on the care with which children, the future citizens are brought up”. An investment in child development is indeed an investment in human resources development on which depends national development. Provisions for the welfare of the weaker sections and

children's welfare are worthy of special mentions in any developmental policy. Child health and childcare are two vital requirements for the development of a healthy nation.

Review of Literature

There is enormous literature on the subject and a large number of empirical, theoretical and policy related research studies have been carried out. Most of these studies have highlighted on different issues of the scheme including, nutritional standards, health, the problem of attendance and level of enrolment, relating to child labour, the process of socialization, the problem of infrastructure, the nature of social policy etc. In India, large sections of children are deprived of proper nutrition and diet, which results in children being undernourished in terms of nutrition and underdeveloped in terms of education levels attainable. According to Dreze (2004), nutritional deficiencies are the most significant obstacle for child growth and development in Karnataka, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh. In his study on the state of Andhra Pradesh, a state located to the north of Tamil Nadu geographically. Vijayaraghavan (2004) found that nutritional deficiency was the major troubling factor for school going children. Many researchers also brought to light that many states including New Delhi provide very small amount of food to the children and do not follow the Supreme Court's order and guidelines in this matter. Whereas states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Kerala are providing adequate nutritious food to the children under the SFP in their respective states. This argument is also made by Jain and Shah (2005), De and Noronha (2005) and Afridi (2005). The quantity of food for children varies according to their age, gender, physical growth etc. Jain and Shah (2005) reported a general attitude of negligence in determining the quantities to be cooked. On the contrary, Blue (2005) reports that though the quantity of food distributed appeared to be smaller than 100 gm, out of 67 children who were interviewed, 52 expressed sufficiencies in the quantity provided to them. Researchers who have studied the quality of the food provided under the SFP also say it is also the biggest challenge in most of the states in India. This issue has been studied by many researchers including Rajivan (2004), Dreze and Goyal (2003), Afridi (2005), Blue (2005) and Khera (2006).

Several research studies highlight that infrastructure provision is a major challenge (CES: 2003, Pushpendra and Sood: 2005, Khera: 2002, Dreze and Goyal: 2003, Thorat and Lee: 2005, Blue: 2005). Jain and Shah (2005), Afridi (2005), and Swaminathan (2004) have found that many state governments have laid emphasis on the need for providing water facilities near schools. Swaminathan (2004) finds that as there is no provision for maintenance of buildings, none had been painted a second time. The availability of adequate staff to take care of the cooking is another problem of the scheme. This issue has been raised by several studies (Jain and Shah: 2005, Pushpendra and Sood: 2004, Rather: 2006). The Government of India launched MDMS with varied objectives and these are discussed by many researchers as discussed above. Appreciable many of them dealt with the issues of attendance, enrolment, drop out, socialization, child labour, etc. The literature survey showcases the scholars viewed it as a means to increase attendance and enrolment in schools. Some other issues that have been studied or have come up during research are the social role of the scheme in terms of bridging the gender gap, economic enhancement to poor parents etc. Dreze (2004) in his extensive research on food in general and SFP in particular brought different issues on right to food. More importantly, he argues that the right to food needs to be linked to other economic and social rights relating to education, work, health and information, which together hold the promise of radical change in public priorities and democratic politics. The present study aims to contribute to the existing literature from the perspective of the Tamil Nadu state in bringing to light the history, vision of a single state within a major country such as India, with a limited role of policy-making in bringing about a massive change which has enabled this SFP to become a national policy and be mainstreamed in the policy stream on education and food security to children.

Problem of Study

Another issue is that right to food and right to education. In India we have the RTE Act (Right to Education Act) which makes education a fundamental right of the children in this country. The SFP in its beginnings combined these two spectrums into one to achieve both the goals in one go. Schools need to develop as an environment where overall and holistic development of children can be realized. The SFP so as to be effective must be able to generate a social norm that

children do not go hungry and their fundamental rights of education and food are guaranteed during their time in schools. The SFP has to evolve more in terms of nutrition delivery, rather than food delivery and wholesome development of children with the demands of present population.

Objectives of Study

- This research study aims to understand the functioning of SFP at the grassroots level.
- The study aims to study the impact of SFP on education and attendance attainment.
- The third objective of the study aims to identify problems in programme implementation.

SFP and Objectives

Primarily the SFP when it was introduced set-out to achieve two major objectives i.e. provision of child's nutrition to the necessary level and provision of primary education. In time the SFP evolved to include varied objectives such as:

- Retain school going children
- Enhance enrolment in schools
- Enhance nutrition level of children etc.

The basis for this SFP and its success is that if children attend regular school and consume a nutritious meal provided in their school classroom hunger can be eliminated. This is the foundation for better attendance in schools by children and an added incentive to ensure regular attendance.³ The interventions of the Supreme Court of India also enhanced the SFP in streamlining the process in achieving these objectives. The Court gave directions to all state governments to implement SFP with a provision of cooked meal with a minimum content of 300 calorie and 8-12 grams protein for a minimum of 200 school days in every government and government aided primary schools.⁴ The intervention of the highest court streamlined the SFP by making the state accountable and responsible for its children. At present the SFP is being fully

³ Shantha Sinha, (2004), "Mid-day Meal Scheme and Schools – A Need for Universal Coverage", <http://www.righttofoodindia.org>.

⁴ Supreme Court's Order on MDMS, dated 28th February and 28th May, 2002.

implemented in 20 states in India and 7 Union Territories. The scheme is partially implemented in 8 states of India.⁵ Despite the national guidelines some states implemented the SFP in a dynamic manner. Tamil Nadu and Kerala implemented the SFP from primary to secondary classes.

Table 1: Central Government norms for per child allotment under MDMS

SL. NO.	CATEGORY	2004 GUIDELINES (per child per day)	2006 GUIDELINES (per child per day)
1	Protein	300 Kcal	450 Kcal
2	Nutrients	8-12 grams	Minimum 12 grams
3	Micro-nutrients	Not prescribed	Adequate quantities of micro-nutrients like iron, folic acid, vitamin-A etc.
4	Cooking cost	Re. 1/-	Re. 2/-

Table2: Break-up of Nutritional Value of Food-SFP

S. No.	Items		Primary		Upper Primary		
			Require-ment under MDM (in gms)	Energy content (in calories)	Protein Content (in gms)	Require-ment under MDM (in gms)	Energy content (in calories)
1.	Food grains (Rice /	100	340	8	150	510	14

⁵ Assam, Bihar, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Punjab, Utter Pradesh and West Bengal.

	Wheat)						
2.	Pulses	20	70	5	30	105	6.6
3.	Vegetables	50	25	--	75	37	--
4.	Oil & Fat	5	45	--	7.5	68	--
5.	Salt & Condiments	As per need	--	--	As per need	--	--
			480	13		720	20.6

Source: MHRD, Government of India

Meal Provision

The Mid Day Meal is the world's largest school feeding programme reaching out to about **12 crore children** in over 12.65 lakh schools/EGS centres across the country. Mid Day Meal in schools has had a long history in India. With a view to enhancing enrollment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (**NP-NSPE**) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on **15th August 1995**, initially in 2408 blocks in the country. By the year 1997-98 the NP-NSPE was introduced in all blocks of the country. It was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children in classes I -V of Government, Government aided and local body schools, but also children studying in EGS and AIE centres. Central Assistance under the scheme consisted of free supply of food grains @ 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of Rs 50 per quintal. In **September 2004** the scheme was revised to provide cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes I – V in Government and aided schools and EGS/ AIE centres. In addition to free supply of food grains, the revised scheme provided Central Assistance for (a) Cooking cost @ Re 1 per child per school day, (b) Transport subsidy was raised from the earlier maximum of Rs 50 per quintal to Rs. 100 per quintal for special category

states, and Rs 75 per quintal for other states, (c) Management, monitoring and evaluation costs @ 2% of the cost of food grains, transport subsidy and cooking assistance, (d) Provision of mid day meal during summer vacation in drought affected areas. In **July 2006** the scheme was further revised to provide assistance for cooking cost at the rate of (a) Rs 1.80 per child/school day for States in the North Eastern Region, provided the NER States contribute Rs 0.20 per child/school day, and (b) Rs 1.50 per child/ school day for other States and UTs, provided that these States and UTs contribute Rs 0.50 per child/school day. In **October 2007**, the scheme has been further revised to cover children in upper primary (classes VI to VIII) initially in 3479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs). Around 1.7 crore upper primary children were included by this expansion of the scheme. From 2008-09 i.e. w.e.f. 1st April, 2008, the programme covers all children studying in Government, Local Body and Government-aided primary and upper primary schools and the EGS/AIE centres including Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under SSA of all areas across the country. The calorific value of a mid-day meal at upper primary stage has been fixed at a minimum of 700 calories and 20 grams of protein by providing 150 grams of food grains (rice/wheat) per child/school day.

The Coverage of SFP

In all 8.41 cr Primary children and 3.36 cr Upper Primary children i.e. a total of 11.77 cr children were estimated to be benefited from MDM Scheme during 2009-10. 11.04 Crore children were covered under MDM Scheme during 2009-10. During 2010-11 11.36 Cr children i.e. 7.97 cr. children in primary and 3.39 cr. children in upper primary are expected to be covered in 12.63 lakhs institutions. Today, mid day Meal scheme is serving primary and upper primary school children in entire country. Though the SFP is a centrally sponsored scheme, Central Government and the state government have a 25:75 shares. Central government provides wheat and rice at the rate of 100 grams per student per day. Besides, the Central government also provides subsidy for transportation of food grains upto a maximum of Rs. 75 per quintal from the nearest FCI depot to the primary schools. But the cost of cooking and provision of essential infrastructures are the responsibility of the state government. It includes vegetables, pulses, oil, kitchen-cum store, water supply for cooking, cooking devices, and containers for storage of food grains and other

ingredients and utensils for cooking and serving. In December 2003, the Planning Commission asked the state governments to use a minimum 15 per cent of additional central assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) to meet the cooking costs of SFP.

Table 3: Budget Outlay for SFP

Year Wise Outlay under Mid Day Meal Scheme (Rs. in Crores)			
Year	BE	RE	Releases
2007-08	7324	6678	5835.44
2008-09	8000	8000	6539.52
2009-10	8000	7359.15	6937.79
2010-11	9440	9440	9128.44
2011-12	10380	10380	9901.92
2012-13	11937		4343.14 as on 27-7-2012

Source: www.mdm.nic.in

Government's Assistance and Allocation of Food Grains

Panchayats and *Nagarpalikas* which are local bodies are assisted by the Central government by providing wheat and rice at the rate of 100 grams per student per day. Further, the Central government also provides subsidy for transport of food grains from nearest FCI Depot to the primary schools at the rate of Rs 50 per Quintal and Rs 75 for hilly regions. Special provision of a Hill Transport Subsidy (HTS) is provided to those states which are hilly, and geographically disadvantaged and economically backward.⁶ The following are the broad principles of allocation of food grains:

- Allocation of food grains is made on a quarterly basis through FCI,

⁶ Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura.

- Allocation of food grains is totally based on the enrollment data collected by the Department of Education,
- Further allocations are based on three factors: figures received from the FCI, district wise utilization certificate and enrollment data received from the state Education Department,
- The food grain allotted by FCI units is valid for which allotment is made and can not be carried forwards to the subsequent quarters,
- Based on the allocation made for each district by the government of India, the district collector further allocates the entitlement of each school.

Cost of cooking, which is a major provision of SFP, includes mainly that of ingredients e.g. pulses, vegetables, cooking oil and condiment, cost of fuels, and remunerations payable to personnel or agencies. Planning Commission asked state governments in December, 2003 to earmark a minimum 15 per cent of Additional Central Assistance (ACA) under the *Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana* (PMGY) from the financial year 2004-05.

Impact of SFP on Child Education

In all 8.41 cr Primary children and 3.36 cr Upper Primary children i.e. a total of 11.77 cr children were estimated to be benefited from MDM Scheme during 2009-10. 11.04 Crore children were covered under MDM Scheme during 2009-10. During 2010-11 11.36 Cr children i.e. 7.97 Cr. children in primary and 3.39 Cr. children in upper primary are expected to be covered in 12.63 lakhs institutions. Today, mid day Meal scheme is serving primary and upper primary school children in entire country. During 1995-96, 378 districts, 225,000 schools and 33.5 million children have been covered with an expenditure of Rs. 4,412 million. In 1996-97, the scheme was extended to cover 55.4 million children with an expenditure of Rs. 8,110 million. The scheme has become fully operational in 1997-98 covering nearly 110 million children in primary classes. A positive impact on school enrolment and retention has been reported.

Suggestions and Conclusion

1. Menu:

Weekly menu was centrally decided by the State. Menu should be locally decided by involving community members. School managements/VEC/PTA may also be encouraged to seek local support for drawing out varied, but wholesome and nutritious menus. Menu should be painted in a noticeable place for creating awareness among people.

2. Provision of Eggs to children of NCLP Schools:

In 5 districts, eggs are provided to the children of NCLP schools in the State. The State Government is requested to provide eggs to children of NCLP schools in all the districts as these children are malnourished. Directors of NCLP schools are not aware of availability of funds with PAs (NMP). A general advisory may be issued to all Directors of NCLP & PAs (NMP).

3. Coverage of Upper Primary children

Coverage of Upper primary students in Krishnagiri and Namakkal districts needs to be increased. Awareness campaign should be started in the district educating people about the benefits of the programme.

4. MDM logo should be painted in a noticeable place which can be seen by everybody.

5. Transparency and Accountability

In some schools the vouchers for purchase of vegetables were not maintained by the Noon Meal Organizers. The team recommends that full transparency has to be there at the school level as a part of social accountability.