

**Performance audit report on National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Midday Meal Scheme)**

**Highlights**

The Midday Meal Scheme is a laudable programme of the Government of India designed to improve the status of primary education by addressing the societal problems of poverty and hunger. Several improvements have been made in the contents of MDM as the scheme progressed. For instance, in the revised scheme of 2006, the calorie content has been increased from 300 calories to 450 calories and the protein content from 8-12 grams to 12 grams. The performance audit has sought to examine the implementation of the scheme and suggest ways whereby the delivery of the scheme can be improved and direct and indirect outcomes are measured and evaluated. Following are the highlights of the audit findings.

- Even after more than a decade of running the programme, there is a lack of clarity regarding the objectives to be achieved by the scheme. There was a qualitative shift in the focus of the Scheme in September 2006 from education (with its emphasis on enrolment, learning levels and attendance) to nutrition and health.
- Ministry had not assessed the impact of the programme in terms of increase in enrolment, attendance and retention levels of children. The data collected from schools selected for audit did not disclose any definite pattern in enrolment, attendance and retention levels of children over the years.
- The Ministry has been unable to establish a system of reliable data capture and reporting by the states. Many states resorted to over-reporting of the enrolment while projecting the requirement of funds. There was no system of cross checking the data of enrolment furnished by the state Governments.
- One of the objectives of the scheme was to positively impact the nutritional and health levels of primary school children; which was the main objective of the revised scheme in September 2006. The Ministry was yet to collect data on the nutritional status of children covered under the midday meal scheme. Nor were linkages with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the

health checks prescribed under the scheme followed up by the Ministry. In most states the children were not administered micro nutrient supplements and de-worming medicines.

- The audit of the implementation of the scheme countrywide displayed weak internal controls and monitoring. The provisions for programme evaluation and regular monitoring and inspections in the scheme design, were not effectively followed nor the results analysed for review of errors and introduction of changes on the basis of lessons learnt. The steering and monitoring committees set up by the Ministry to monitor the scheme at national and state level did not meet regularly. While at the national level, the committee met only twice since its inception in 2005 against the scheduled five meetings, the states fared even worse.
- In most of the schools sample checked in audit, regular inspections were not carried out to ensure the overall quality of midday meal served and nor were basic records such as issue and receipt of foodgrains, meal quality and evidence of community participation (through village education committees and parent teacher associations) maintained.
- Audit of the implementation of the scheme in the states disclosed leakages, deficient infrastructure, delayed release of funds and inflated transportation costs etc.
- The Ministry failed to put in place an effective system to ensure that teachers are not assigned the responsibilities that would interfere with teaching activities. Many instances of the teachers spending considerable teaching time in supervising the cooking and serving of meals were noticed, resulting in loss of teaching hours.