

## Nutritional status of mid day meal beneficiaries: A comparison with non-beneficiaries

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The study aimed to find out the nutritional status of mid day meal beneficiaries (MDM) and to compare the same with non beneficiaries (NMDM). A sample of 250 girls from schools having the MDM scheme and 250 girls from schools not having MDM scheme in Allahabad district, Uttar Pradesh were selected randomly. The girls were students of class 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. All the information was recorded on a survey schedule. Heights and weights were measured and diet survey carried out by standard procedure. Nutritional status of the children was assessed by Gomez classification as well as by IAP classification. Results showed that children having PEM in MDM category formed 76 per cent and in the NMDM category 84 per cent based on the NCHS 50<sup>th</sup> percentile values. As per the ICMR reference values of well-to-do Indian children, the per cent of PEM affected subjects were 46.4 per cent in the MDM and 51.2 per cent in the NMDM category. On the whole the MDM beneficiaries had better nutritional status than the non beneficiaries, although neither the international nor the national standards of anthropometric status could be met by majority of the subjects in MDM as well as NMDM subjects.

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### INTRODUCTION

Children contribute to the vital human potential and impart strength to the national economy and development. Nutrition is the most important basic need, being a major determinant of health, labour productivity and mental development. Better the nutritional status of the children, higher will be the nation's growth. Protein energy malnutrition (PEM) and certain micronutrient deficiencies continue to be widespread in India. The government introduced the mid day meal (MDM) scheme in schools on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1995 with the objectives of enhancing enrollment, retention of attendance and improving

nutritional status of children. Until the year 2007 the meal was provided to the primary school children only, but thereafter has been extended to 8<sup>th</sup> standard (middle school). Under the scheme, lunch is provided to the children on all working days. As per the government- guidelines the meal served in primary school must provide 450kcal and 12g protein whereas for the middle school beneficiaries the energy must be 700kcal and protein 20 g per child per day. The main objective of the present investigation was to assess the anthropometric nutritional status of school children who are MDM beneficiaries and to compare the same with non-beneficiaries.

### METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in eight schools of rural areas of Allahabad district, Uttar Pradesh. Four schools had mid day meal facilities and remaining four did not. They were coded as MDM and NMDM, respectively. From each of the two categories 250 children were selected randomly, forming a total of 500 subjects. The age group of children selected was 5 to 16 years.

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