

Nutritional intervention for poor children in the primary schooling system in Gujarat

WAGHELA HEMANGINI SURENDRASINH

Key Words : Nutrition, Nutritional status of children, Malnutrition, Primary education and Nutrition

How to cite this article : Surendrasinh, Waghela Hemangini (2012). Nutritional intervention for poor children in the primary schooling system in Gujarat. *Food Sci. Res. J.*, 3(2): 242-247.

For many years, India had been a colony of the British Empire. Nonviolent resistance to colonialism under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi brought independence in 1947. Since gaining independence, a succession of Indian governments worked to spur economic growth. Recent annual GDP growth of about 6.5 per cent helped the country reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day. Nevertheless, 80 per cent of India's population lived in rural areas, and poverty was concentrated largely in the regions which were often the most challenging to serve. According to a United Nations report, there remained many social needs to address in India, especially in the areas of health, primary education, and gender equality. Food insecurity and poor nutrition remain a problem in many developing countries and can have profound effects on children's health and their development. The Midday Meal Scheme in India is a programme covering primary school children to improve nutrition as well as increase educational enrolment, retention and attendance. This policy brief examines the effect of the scheme on nutrition and on children's learning. We find significant evidence of positive, protective effects, particularly for children growing up in communities affected by drought, suggesting there are substantial benefits of school feeding schemes for children's learning and development. My Research Paper Subject is Nutritional intervention for poor children in the primary schooling system in Gujarat.

Historical challenges in Gujarat related to primary education and nutritional status of children:

Primary education:

The main emphasis of Gujarat has been universalisation of primary education through a decentralized community driven process. Over the years, innovative measures like the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) have been adopted for universalizing access to primary schools. As a result of these strategies the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Primary Schools has risen from 76.5 per cent in 1996 to 96.2 per cent in 2000-2001.

However, even while the enrolment has increased the problem of retention persists. Only about 70 per cent of the children survive till the primary cycle with girls being the biggest casualty. The number of out of school children (which comprise of the never enrolled and the dropout children) in the age group of 6 - 14 years is as high as 13.28 lakhs, which is 11.2 per cent of the target population. The number of out of school girls is 7.2 lakh, which is 54.5 per cent of the total out of school children. Never enrolled children are 9.4 lakh; out of which 5.2 lakh are girls, which is 55.3 per cent of the total never enrolled children. The total dropout children are 3.88 lakh; out of which 2.04 lakh are girls, which is 52.6 per cent of the total dropout children (Source: Lok Sampark Aabhiyaan 2000 - 2001).

It is evident from the data above that a clear focus is required on out of school children *i.e.* the never enrolled and dropout category. Despite the universalisation of access and increase in the provisioning of infrastructure and teachers, the problem of retention, substantial reduction of dropout and improved learning levels of children remains. In rural government schools there are clear indications that poverty has a negative effect on all key educational indicators.

● AUTHOR FOR CORRESPONDENCE ●

WAGHELA HEMANGINI SURENDRASINH, Department of Home Science, Shri. P. K. Chaudhari Mahila Arts College, GANDHINAGAR (GUJARAT) INDIA

Email: whemangini@gmail.com