

THE GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL MID-DAY MEALS SCHEME

*A Study of Best Practices in the Implementation of
Mid-Day Meal Programme in Punjab*



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Map of Punjab



1. Introduction

1.1 Physical Features of Punjab

Punjab is located in the northwestern corner of India covering an area of 50632 square kilometers and occupies 1.54 % of the country's total geographical area. Punjab is divided in 20 Administrative Districts, 72 Tehsils, 141 CD Blocks, 216 ED Blocks and 12711 villages.

Punjab is an agrarian state with agriculture as the main occupation though the inhabitants are good entrepreneurs. Over 80% of Punjab is cultivated. Major crops of Punjab include Wheat, Rice, Sugarcane, and Cotton. The principal industries are textile manufacturing, yarn, knitwear, sewing machine, sports goods, fertilizer, electrical goods, machine tool, pharmaceuticals etc. Most of Punjab is a fertile plain; toward the southeast semi-arid and desert landscape is found; a belt of undulating hills extends along the northeast at the foot of the Himalayas. Four rivers, the Ravi, Beas, Sutlej and Ghaggar flow across the state in a south westerly direction. The state has an extensive canal system that irrigates more than 95% of its land.

1.2 Demographic Features of Punjab

1.2.1 Population of Punjab

Punjab is having total population of 24.29 million. The rural population comprises of 16.04 million (66.05%) and the urban population constitutes 33.95 % of the total population. Scheduled caste comprises 28.85 % of the total population. Around 13 % population belongs to 0-6 age group. Sex ratio is not favourable for females in the state of Punjab. The number of females per 1000 males in the state was **876** as against **933** at national level. District wise population of state of Punjab is given in Annexure-I.

Table 1: Population of Punjab

Particular	Total	Rural	Urban
Male	12985045	8516596	4468449
Female	11373954	7579892	3794062
Total	24358999	16096488	8262511

Source: Population Total, 2001

1.3 Educational Scenario of Punjab

The literacy rate of Punjab is 69.65% (75.23% male; 63.36% female) which is little higher than the All India average of 64.84%. Large variation is observed in the literacy rates of various districts. Mansa district is having the lowest literacy rates (52 %) and Gurdaspur is having the highest literacy rate with 78 percent. District wise literacy rate as are given in Annexure II.

The state has 20.950 recognised government schools with primary and upper primary grades. The state is having total enrolment of 1.69 million at the primary level of which the girls constitute 45.9 percent of the total enrolment. At the upper primary level the total enrolment is 1.0 million and girls constitute 46.51 % of the total enrolment. The state was having 234 instructional days . Selected educational indicators for the state of Punjab are presented below:

Table 2: Selected Education indicator of Punjab and all India Level (2006-07)

State	No of Recognised schools	% Government Schools	% Private Schools	Ratio of Primary to upper primary schools	Average No. of instructional Days	% Distribution of Schools having Pucca Building	% Distribution of Female Teachers
Punjab	20950	89.87	10.13	2.2	234	96.88	62.34
All States	1196663	80.83	18.86	2.5	208	70.63	41.86

State	Enrolment		% Girls Enrolment		GER		NER	
	I-V	VI-VIII	I-V	VI-VIII	Primary	Upper Primary	Primary	Upper Primary
Punjab	1695350	1006922	45.87	46.05	72.18	66.17	55.49	44.02
All States	131853637	47489180	48.09	46.51	110.86	64.72	92.75	48.45

Source: Flash Educational Statistics, DISE, 2006-07

2. History of Mid Day Meal Scheme in Punjab

In order to improve enrolment, retention and reduce drop out rate of students in primary classes and also to improve the nutritional status of primary students, Government of India, launched a countrywide scheme, 'National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid Day Meal Scheme)' on 15th August-1995 (effective from 2-10-1995). Under this Scheme, students of primary classes were to be provided wheat @ 3 Kg per student per month (for 10 months in a year) subject to 80% attendance and later on the states were to switch over to cooked meal scheme within two years. Punjab did not switch over to cooked meal scheme inter-alia due to paucity of funds involved in the conversion of food grains to cooked meal.

This legislation was further supported in 2001 by a landmark Supreme Court order requiring the State governments to provide cooked mid-day meals to children studying in primary classes (I-V) in all government schools. Under the Mid-Day Meals Scheme, the central government provides 100 grams of wheat or rice per child in attendance per school day, plus a transport subsidy for movement of grains from the nearest storage depot to the schools. The central and state governments share the cost of converting the food grains into meals (cooks' salaries, additional food ingredients, dishes and utensils, etc.). Panchayats and other local governing bodies are responsible for organizing and monitoring the transportation of grains and regular provision of cooked meals in the government schools. Local governments may choose to have the cooked meals provided through NGOs, as long as coverage is limited to government, local body, and aided schools. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme does not normally extend to private unaided schools and non-formal schools. The speed and success of implementation has varied greatly in different states of India.

In Punjab, cooked Mid Day Meal was provided to children of primary classes in one block in every district during the year 2002-03 and the cost of meal was Rs.3.80 per child per day. A writ petition (civil) No. 196/2001 was filed by 'Peoples Union for civil Liberties' in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in which it was ordered on 20.04.2004 to provide cooked meal to all the students of primary classes. In compliance of above orders, Government of Punjab started providing cooked meal to all the students of

primary classes in government schools from September 2004 and since then it has been providing cooked meal in all primary schools. Recently it has also started providing cooked meal to upper primary school children in twenty one educationally backward blocks of seven districts. Tables 3 and 4 provide district wise information on number of institutions and beneficiaries under mid-day meal scheme for primary stage:

Table 3: District-wise information on Number of Institutions under MDM Scheme for Primary stage (Classes I-V) - 2007-08

(As on 30th Sep., 2007)

S.No.	Name of District	No. of Institutions regularly serving MDM				Total
		Classes I-V (Govt+LB)	Classes I - V (GA)	EGS Centres	AIE Centres	
1.	Amritsar*	841	27	83	53	1004
2.	Barnala	181	0	146	8	335
3.	Bhatinda	388	0	139	19	546
4.	Faridkot	249	0	73	24	346
5.	Fatehgarh Sahib	458	0	16	6	480
6.	Ferozepur	1103	11	183	0	1297
7.	Gurdaspur	1559	8	57	12	1636
8.	Hoshiarpur	1284	2	33	35	1354
9.	Jalandhar*	985	11	70	44	1110
10.	Kapurthala	541	0	49	8	598
11.	Ludhiana	1013	10	135	92	1250
12.	Mansa	288	1	121	8	418
13.	Moga	381	0	114	26	521
14.	Muktsar	337	3	114	6	460
15.	Nawanshaher	444	0	16	4	464
16.	Patiala	1022	0	137	25	1184
17.	Ropar*	582	2	3	1	588
18.	Sangrur	672	2	218	3	895
19.	SAS Nagar*/ Mohali	411	0	13	6	430
20.	Taran Taran	546	0	65	40	651
Total		13285	77	1785	420	15567

• Schools of these districts were covered during the field visit

Source: Department of Education, Punjab

Around 15,567 schools are serving the mid day meal at the primary level. The number of beneficiaries of midday meal is given in Table 4.

Table 4: District-wise information on Enrolment and Children availing MDM FOR 2007-08 for Primary stage (Classes I-V)

(As on 30th Sep., 2007)

S.No.	Name of District	Classes I-V (Govt+LB+G)	EGS Centres	AIE Centres	Total
1.	Amritsar	101633	2824	1791	106248
2.	Barnala	26996	3930	220	31146
3.	Bhatinda	59399	4078	672	64149
4.	Faridkot	36470	1758	677	38905
5.	Fatehgarh Sahib	29153	700	140	29993
6.	Ferozepur	115335	8187	0	123522
7.	Gurdaspur	102911	1611	307	104829
8.	Hoshiarpur	79352	1662	1588	82602
9.	Jalandhar	82752	2111	1567	86430
10.	Kapurthala	39870	2146	389	42405
11.	Ludhiana	104244	5874	3436	113554
12.	Mansa	42746	4658	279	47683
13.	Moga	57349	4036	766	62151
14.	Muktsar	50622	3276	152	54050
15.	Nawanshaher	31650	585	172	32407
16.	Patiala	77324	4632	734	82690
17.	Ropar	34974	169	34	35177
18.	Sangrur	75427	5367	99	80893
19.	SAS Nagar/ Mohali	27273	422	180	27875
20.	Taran Taran	49943	2535	1092	53570
Total		1225423	60561	14295	1300279

Source: Department of School Education , Punjab

Around 1.3 million children in Punjab are the beneficiaries of mid day meal scheme. If the scheme is extended to the upper primary level, the information on the total number of upper primary schools eligible for mid day meal is given in Table 5

Table 5 : District-wise information on eligible number of institutions under MDM Scheme for Upper Primary stage (Classes VI-VIII) - 2007-08

(As on 30th Sep., 2007)

No. of Institutions having upper primary classes <u>WITHOUT</u> primary classes (classes I-V) attached to them						
S.No.	Name of District	Govt+LB)	(GA)	EGS Centres	AIE Centres	Total
1.	Amritsar	331	50	0	0	381
2.	Barnala	115	0	0	0	115
3.	Bhatinda	248	13	0	0	261
4.	Faridkot	154	8	0	0	162
5.	Fatehgarh Sahib	142	6	0	0	148
6.	Ferozepur	367	16	0	0	383
7.	Gurdaspur	484	40	0	0	524
8.	Hoshiarpur	415	40	0	0	455
9.	Jalandhar	431	53	0	0	484
10.	Kapurthala	221	18	0	0	239
11.	Ludhiana	515	48	0	0	563
12.	Mansa	175	3	0	0	178
13.	Moga	229	11	0	0	240
14.	Muktsar	201	2	0	0	203
15.	Nawanshaher	190	16	0	0	206
16.	Patiala	322	27	0	0	349
17.	Ropar	168	26	0	0	194
18.	Sangrur	348	22	0	0	370
19.	SAS Nagar	136	0	0	0	136
20.	Taran Taran	232	0	0	0	232
Total		5424	399	0	0	5823

Source: Department of School Education, Punjab

Punjab Government has taken a decision that mid day meal will be provided to the children at upper primary level in twenty backward blocks of seven districts. The number of upper primary schools that will be given funds for mid day scheme are given in Table 6.

Table 6: District-wise information on number of institutions under MDM Scheme for Upper Primary stage (Classes VI-VIII) - 2007-08

(As on 30th Sep., 2007)

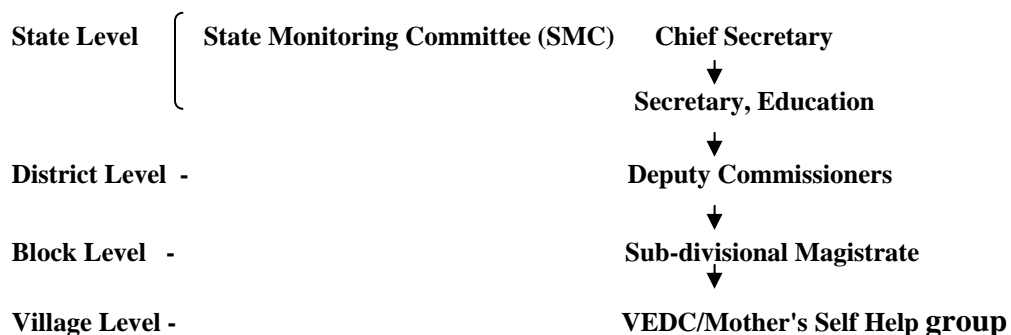
No. of Institutions (in EBBs)						
S.No.	Name of District	Govt+LB)	(GA)	EGS Centres	AIE Centres	Total
1.	Bhatinda	78	0	0	0	78
2.	Ferozepur	496	0	0	0	496
3.	Mansa	175	0	0	0	175
4.	Muktsar	121	0	0	0	121
5.	Patiala	21	0	0	0	21
6.	Sangrur	123	0	0	0	123
7.	Taran Taran	38	0	0	0	38
	Total	1052	0	0	0	1052

Source: Department of School Education, Punjab

2.1 Management Structure for Implementation of Mid-day Meal

For effective implementation of the mid day meal scheme the committees have been constituted at various levels (state, district, block and village) with the responsibility vested with the officers identified. The management structure for implementation is described schematically below:

Figure 1: Management Structure for Implementation of Mid-day Meal



2.2 State Norms on the Quantity of Foodgrain and Expenditure Norms etc.

The allocation of foodgrain is done by Government of India as per the requirement of the districts and the state depending upon the number of schools and the children enrolled therein. Food grains at the rate of 100 gms per child per day are provided free of cost by

Government of India, Food Corporation of India, (FCI). Conversion Cost is given by Government of India at the rate of Rs.1.50 per-child per day and in addition, the state government has made a provision for Rs.0.50 per child per day.

2.3 Collection and Distribution of Foodgrains

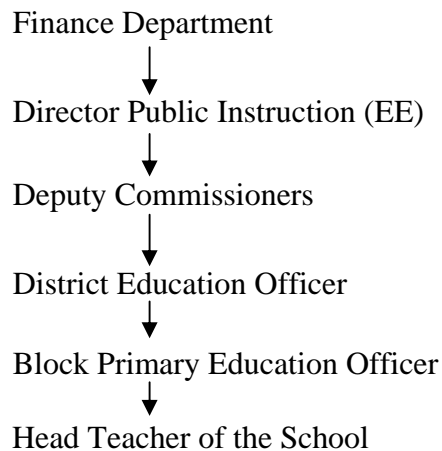
Food grains are received from Food Corporation of India by Nodal Transport Agency, namely *Punjab Civil Supplies Corporation (PUNSUP)* which delivers it to all schools. Deputy Commissioners/District Magistrates have been assigned the responsibility to ensure the quality of food grains lifted.

PUNSUP has prepared the route map for the timely and regular supply of food grains. At the school level, a local committee has been constituted to receive the food grains. The school teacher is a Member Secretary of this committee and is responsible for the maintenance of the record.

2.4 Fund Flow Chart

Funds are sanctioned and released at the state level by Finance Department. Director Public Instructions (EE) draws funds from the treasury and funds are sent to Deputy Commissioners in the form of Bank Draft. Deputy Commissioner releases the funds to the Block Primary Education Officer who in turn gives to the Head Teacher of the school on the recommendation of the District Education Officer (DEO).

Figure 2: Flow of Funds



2.5 System of Procuring Cooking Ingredients (fuel, vegetables, oil etc)

The cooking ingredients and other commodities are purchased at school level. Teachers purchase the cooking ingredients.

2.6 Implementation Model at School Level

It has been directed that the scheme is to be implemented through Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs). However in the meetings with Deputy Commissioners it was decided to constitute Mother Self Help Groups (SHGs) in all the Villages/schools for implementation of Mid Day Meal Scheme in entire state. The quantity/quality aspects are also being ensured by these agencies. In urban areas, Urban Education Development Committees (UEDCs) be constituted to implement the programme.

Cooks are arranged by VEDC / SHGs on temporary basis. Only women workers have been appointed as cooks in various schools. The payment is made to the cooks out of the cooking cost at the rate of Re 0.40 per child.

Kitchen sheds are being constructed in the schools. All the funds have been released but the process of construction of cooking shed is still in progress. Kitchen devices have been purchased except the cooking gas. While some schools are cooking on gas chullah others have still not obtained the gas connections. The teachers supervise the distribution of food and its quality.

2.7 Weekly Menu and its Nutritional Assessment

Children are given Dal Roti, Salted Rice and sweet cooked meal (Halwa) five days in a week. Iodized salt is used for cooking of food. There is no system of assessing the nutritional value in every school at present. However state government has communicated calories and protein content to Deputy Commissioners.

2.8 Costing Sheet (Average cost of meal per child per day including cost of oil, foodgrains, pulses, fuel, transport subsidy. Establishment over heads etc. delineating contribution from centre and state)

The food grains are supplied free of cost by Food Corporation of India. Conversion Cost including the cost of oil, pulses, condiments, fuel etc. is given at the rate of Rs.1.50/- per child per day by Government of India and Rs.0.50/- per child per day has been provided by the State Government. All procurements/except food grains are done locally by VEDC/SHGs.

2.9 Statement of Budget Allocation towards the Mid-Day Meal

The budget provision towards the mid day meal for the State of Punjab has been consistently increasing since 2004-05 as can be seen from Table 7

Table 7: Budget Allocation (Rs. In Lakhs)

Year	Provision for MDM in State Budget					
	Allocation			Expenditure		
	Plan	Non Plan	Total	Plan	Non Plan	Total
2004-05	666.00	Nil	666.00	666.00		666.00
2005-06	1309.86	Nil	1309.86	1075.15		1075.15
2006-07	3400	Nil	3400	NA		NA

Source: Department of School Education, Punjab

2.10 Public Private Partnership

VEDC, UEDC & SHGs are involved in the implementation of the MDM scheme. At present state does not have any NGO working in implementation of Mid Day Meal. NGOs will be involved on the pilot basis in three districts i.e Ferozepur, Nawanshahar and Tarantaran from the current academic session.

2.11 Monitoring Mechanisms

(a) Steering cum Monitoring Committees.

Steering cum monitoring committees (SMC) have been constituted at the State level chaired by the chief secretary and at the district level chaired by the Deputy Commissioners and at the block level chaired by the Sub Divisional Magistrate.

(b) Supervision and Joint Inspection of Quality of food grains.

The scheme is implemented through VEDC/SHGs. The quantity and quality aspects are being ensured by these agencies.

(c) Maintenance of Records of the MDM Programme

Teacher incharge of mid day meal maintains the day to day record of the programme. Two registers are supposed to be maintained at school level. One register is for the maintenance of funds and other giving details on the quantity of grain received, number of children present, and accordingly the quantity is utilized.

At the end of the month, every school submits its monthly report of stock register for food grains to the Block Primary Education Officer, who compiles the reports of all the schools and submits it to the District Education Officer. DEO compiles the entire district reports and sends it to the State Mid Day Meal Cell.

Monthly meeting of the DEO are held under the Chairmanship of Director General School Education –cum-Special secretary to Government of Punjab.

(d) Mobilization of Mothers

Steps are being initiated for formation of Mothers Committee in all Schools. However, not much success has been achieved.

(e) Quarterly Assessment of the Programme through District Institutes of Education and Training

At present, this is not being done in Punjab.

(f) External Evaluation of the Programme

External evaluation of the effective implementation and impact of the scheme on enrolment, retention has not been done in the state so far. Kurukshetra University has now been identified for external evaluation.

3. Field Level Observations

The field study focused on the experiences of ten schools in five blocks of four districts which were implementing the Mid-Day Meals Scheme. These blocks belonged to four districts of SAS Nagar (popularly known as Mohali), RupaNagar (Ropar), Jalandhar and Amritsar. A brief description on the selected blocks and the schools is given below:

Table 8: Number of Blocks and Schools in the Sampled Districts

District	Blocks	Schools	
		Primary	Upper Primary
SAS Nagar/Mohali	7	414	139
Rupa Nagar	8	586	185
Jalandhar	19	980	429
Amritsar	18	844	382

Source: District Education Office, Punjab

Field research consisted of planned and unannounced visits to the schools to observe meal preparation and distribution. Detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with government school teachers, cooks, primary school children and their parents. Out of ten schools, the teachers of eight schools had prior information and in two schools it was unannounced visit. Questions and answers were repeated and explained as often as necessary to prevent misunderstanding.

3.1 Details of the Sampled School

Ten schools from four districts and five blocks were selected for the study. Schools were identified by the state department on the basis of good practices followed in the implementation of mid day meal scheme. Two out of ten schools were for boys only and the remaining eight schools were co-education.

The schools visited were having varying enrolments ranging from 71 to 303 in the primary sections. The attendance was short of the actual enrolment in all the sampled schools. Number of teachers also varied from 1 to 15. Except for two schools, the remaining schools did not have sufficient number of teachers. Therefore the involvement of the teachers in the implementation of the mid day meal scheme was observed to be having additional responsibility as the teachers were involved in the multi grade teaching in eight schools. (Detailed particulars of the school visited are presented in Table 9 &10).

Table 9: Description of the Sampled Schools

School	Block	District	Category of School	Enrolment		Attendance		Teachers	
				Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Male	Female
Govt Model School	Kharad	Mohali	Coed.	149	128	125	104	3	12
Peer Sohna Primary School	Kharad	Mohali	Coed.	41	30	36	27	2	1
Govt.elementary school Khanpur (I-V)	Kharad	Mohali	Boys	141		121			4
Govt elementary School, Gopal Nagar	Amritsar	Amritsar	Coed.	182	121	102	120		8
Govt elementary school Chugawan Sadhpur	Tirsikha	Amritsar	Coed.	77	67	56	42		4
Govt elementary school, Channan ke	Tirsikha	Amritsar	Coed.	71	66	68	46		2
Govt Primary School, Kartarpur	Kartarpur	Amritsar	Coed.	53	51	52	33	1	1
Govt Primary school, Abadpura	Kartarpur	Amritsar	Boys	110		97			3
Govt Primary School, Jhalian Kalan	Ropar	Ropar	Coed.	41	35	37	35	2	1
Ropar Primary School, Railway Colony	Ropar	Ropar	Coed.	29	67	26	56	2	0

Source: Enrolment and No. of Teachers, Education Department/ Head teacher
Attendance (on the day of visit), School Register

Table 10: Enrolment and Attendance of the Sampled Schools on the day of Visit

School	Enrolment			Attendance			% Attending School		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Govt Model School	149	128	277	125	104	229	83.9	81.3	82.7
Peer Sohna Primary School	41	30	71	36	27	63	87.8	90.0	88.7
Govt.Elementary school Khanpur (I-V)	141	-----	141	121	-	121	85.8	N.A	85.8
Govt Elementary School, Gopal Nagar	182	121	303	102	120	222	56.0	99.2	73.3
Govt Elementary school Chugawan Sadhpur	77	67	144	56	42	98	72.7	62.7	68.1
Govt elementary school, Channan ke	71	66	137	68	46	114	95.8	69.7	83.2
Govt Primary School, Kartarpur	53	51	104	52	33	86	98.1	64.7	82.7
Govt Primary school, Abadpura	110	----	110	97	----	97	88.2	N.A	88.2
Govt Primary School, Jhalian Kalan	41	35	76	37	35	72	90.2	100	94.7
Ropar Primary School, Railway Colony	29	67	96	26	56	82	89.7	83.6	85.4

Source: Enrolment and No. of Teachers , Education Department/ Head teacher Attendance (on the day of visit), School Register

It is clear from the above table that in most of the schools 80 to 85 percent children were attending school on the day of visit except for two schools in which only around 68 to 73 percent children were present on that particular day. In one of the schools around 95 percent children were attending school and all the girls enrolled had come to school.

The school attendance has implications for the mid-day meal as the meal needs to be cooked for those children only who are attending the school on that day. The trend in attendance also may mean that mid day meal is one of the significant incentives for children to attend the school more regularly. Some of the schools reported that the children are more regular after the introduction of mid day meal. The children do come to school after finishing their household responsibilities though they may be late. One of the

school known as model school reported that children come to their school from better socio-economic background as the school is popular on academics ground. Mid day meal is an incentive for few children only in this particular school.

In each school, cooks and teachers freely admitted the shortcomings of the meal program, at least those that resulted from inadequate funding and facilities. And since the visits were made while the cook was preparing the school meal or serving the school meal, the possibilities of altering its quantity or quality were limited.

4. Findings and Analysis on Management of Meal Provision in Schools

In each of the schools visited, interviews with a variety of people (teachers, parents and students) as well as personal observation confirmed that the school normally provided cooked mid-day meals on a daily basis (six days per week). In all the schools, the teachers said that the provision of meals was never interrupted though there has been delay in the delivery of funding. Teachers were able to keep the meal programme going either by spending out of their pockets or borrowing from the store and vegetable vendors on loan basis.

In all the schools a cook was hired to prepare the mid-day meals. In five schools a helper was also hired and in rest of the five schools only the cook managed the cooking and washing of utensils. The food was served by the cooks under the supervision of the teacher responsible for mid day meal.

Bags of wheat/rice were generally stored in a corner of one of the kitchen or store room. Three schools had container for storing the grains but rest of them kept in the jute bags only.

In four schools the meals were prepared over wood fire either in the open area or in kitchen, and in six schools the meal was prepared on the gas chullah.

Although an amount of Rs 60,000 has been sanctioned for building the kitchen shed only two schools had built these sheds. The head teacher found this amount to be insufficient for building the kitchen shed.

It was also observed that only four schools had dishes for all the primary school children but in rest of the schools the children brought their own dishes from home.

Teachers and cooks in all the schools said that wheat and rice was delivered on time but funding was often late. All the schools reported that they were always supplied with enough wheat and rice for the needs of the meal program. All the head teachers of the schools felt that the programme was inadequately funded and they especially mentioned that the charges paid to the cook were meagre and may be increased.

Personal observation and interviews with teachers, cooks, and school children indicated that the bulk of the food prepared was given to the intended beneficiaries: children in primary classes (I-V) who were attending class at the government school. However two schools were having ECCE Center and those children were also given meals. In one school, Alternative Education Center was functioning as a bridge course and those children were also given meals. Sometimes a few of the younger (three- to five-year-old) siblings of these students often accompanied them to school, sat in the classrooms all day and were given meals along with the others. Teachers said that they too ate small amount of meal half an hour before it is served to the children. It was also observed that a small amount of leftover food was put away in one of the schoolrooms or taken home by the cook to be eaten by her family.

Teachers in all the sampled schools reported that the school meal scheme had increased their workload significantly. The teachers are expected to keep meticulous and detailed account of the receipt of wheat and funding, daily attendance and amount of meal prepared. They were also responsible to supply all the ingredients necessary for the preparation of meal. Teachers also need to buy grocery items and vegetables. Teachers reported that in the beginning they found it burdensome but now they have got accustomed to it. However teachers in two schools said that this responsibility has impact on their teaching time as it certainly took time away from their teaching. Teachers in eight schools reported that it did not have any impact on their teaching activity.

Meal breaks takes place between 1100 and 1130 hrs and lasted for half an hour. Children sit on the tatpattis or mats and are served food.

Cooks reported that it took them about three to four hours to prepare the school meals depending on the number of children enrolled in primary sections. They were also expected to provide their own cooking fuel if the food is cooked with firewood.

Cooks were interviewed separately from teachers and generally endorsed the information teachers had provided about the management of the meal program at their school. The cooks complained of their meagre salaries considering the time they spend for cooking and washing utensils.

Funding for the school meals was provided through the Block Education Officer or Cluster Coordinator. Schools are supposed to be paid in advance and the amount to be adjusted based on the actual attendance of students. However in many cases they are not paid on time resulting into taking loans from stores and the cooks also do not receive their salaries on time. The amount of spending on cooks' salaries and additional food ingredients varied widely from school to school.

Brief field level observation on the management and implementation of mid day meal for each school is reported below in Table 11

Table 11: Management of Meal in Schools

	Govt Model School	Peer Sohna Primary School	Govt. elementary school Khanpur (I-V)	Govt elementary School, Gopal Nagar	Govt elementary school Chugawan Sadhpur	Govt elementary school, Channanke	Govt Primary School, Kartarpur	Govt Primary school, Abadpura	Govt Primary School, Jhalian Kalan	Ropar Primary School, Railway Colony
<i>Class I-V Enrollment</i>	277	71	141	303	144	137	104	110	41	29
<i>Estimated Daily Attendance</i>	229	63	121	222	98	114	86	97	72	82
<i>Cook hired</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Wheat provision</i>	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough	On time and enough
<i>Funding provision</i>	Late and not enough	Late and not enough	Late but enough	Late but enough	Late and not enough	Late and not enough	Late but enough	Late but enough	Late but enough	Late but enough
<i>Students help prepare meals</i>	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
<i>Disrupts schoolwork</i>	Yes	No	No	Yes	no	yes	no	no	No	No
<i>Burdensome for teachers</i>	Yes	No	No	Yes	no	no	no	no	No	No

<i>Teachers: increased enrollment</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Teachers: increased attendance</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Teachers: meals were cause of increase</i>	No	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes	One of the causes

Source: Analysed on the basis of Data Collected during Field Visit

5. Case Study of the Sampled Schools

On the basis of field observation and discussion with the teachers, head teacher, parents, students and cook, a brief description about the way the mid day meal is managed by each school is presented below:

5.1 Government Model School, Kharad, Mohali is coeducational senior secondary school. The school building is under construction. The school has 277 children in the primary sections. We visited the primary section at the time when mid day meal was being served. As this is a model school, demand for the admission is very high. Children are not from very poor background and most of them are properly fed by their families. However the children liked the school food and most of them would take the food.

Children of first and second standard sit on the tat patti and eat their meals. Children of IIIrd to Vth standard would eat meal while standing as the school had built a platform for that purpose. The grocery and other items are purchased by the teacher. Even if the funds do not reach the teachers spend, contribute and does not stop the meal. The parents' representatives have weekly duty and two of the parents were there to supervise the meal.

The food is being cooked on gas stove. The school provides the meal as per the menu prescribed by the district. However they do make alterations as per the demand of the children. In this school, the parents take keen interest and extend full support to the school in carrying out the mid day meal activities.

The food prepared was as per the taste of children with less spices. Children were given enough to eat and they found the food to be tasty.

5.2 Peer Sohna Primary School: The school has only 71 children. Children belong to very poor families. For majority of them it is the first food of the day. The school has built new kitchen shed and the cooking takes place on chullah with firewood. The cook brings the firewood. MTA committee members make the surprise visit once in a fortnight to supervise mid day meal. Cluster coordinator and Block Primary Education Officer visit once in week/ fortnight to monitor the activities of the school including mid day meal.

The salary of the school cook is meagre as school has low enrolment but she cooks with great care. Children of this school were very happy to receive the meal in the school and found it delicious.

5.3 Government Elementary School Khanpur (I-V) Head teacher of the school was not informed and thus it was a surprise visit. The school appeared to be functioning very well though one of the teachers was on the election duty. We did not reach either at the time of cooking or during the time it was served. Rice and Curry was prepared as we could see from the left overs. The meal was prepared as given in the school menu. The food was cooked on stove. An alternative school was also running within this building of the school and those students will be given meals after the summer break.

The school is having a good toilet facility and water cooler donated by the community. The school is having eight children with special needs. The head teacher mentioned that it is difficult to provide the food in the amount sanctioned. She is very dynamic and takes keen interest in the purchase of food items, supervising the cook and also arranging the food items even if the funds are not released on time. She informed that the amount had not reached them since last one month.

The head teacher suggested that either an agency be appointed for cooking and distributing the food or big school should be made a nodal school for cooking and distributing food to the neighbouring schools.

5.4 Government Elementary School, Gopal Nagar

We arrived at the Government Elementary school at 9:30 AM. The children were sitting in their respective classrooms and the teachers were teaching them. We observed the food being prepared on gas chullah. The school is having total enrolment of 303 students; however only 222 were present on that day probably it was raining on that day. Food was prepared as prescribed in the weekly menu. Kichari was prepared with mixing of rice and cereal. We tasted the food and it was properly cooked with less of spices. The kitchen was neat but the children did not have utensils. They would bring the utensils from home. However the ration in the bins was not much left over and the block education officer reported that it would be given to them soon. The cooks once again complained of the meagre amount they are paid.

5.5 Government Elementary School, Chugawan Sadhpur

Government Elementary school is located in the interior of Amritsar. The school is having total enrolment of 144 children but only 98 children were present on that day. The students could not come as it was raining heavily and they do not have umbrellas. Kitchen was not found to be clean and even the grain was not stored properly. When the cook was ready to serve the meal, the children sat in a row on the ground outside the classrooms. Most of the children appear to be from very poor families as they were not wearing the uniform. The school was provided with utensil by a Trust. The cook gave each child a helping large enough to fill a medium-sized bowl. When I tasted the food it seemed adequately cooked with sufficient oil and spices. All the children finished all that was given to them. They ate sitting in a row, chatting quietly with each other, and seemed to enjoy the food and break. They did not talk loudly may be because we were observing them. When asked about the taste and quantity of food, all of them replied that they were getting food regularly sufficient and also liked the preparation of the cook. No one from outside the school came to share the meal. However, while the children ate, the cook had a bucket with her and she asked for the second helping which only six to seven children took. After finishing the meal children went and washed their utensil as well as their hands. The children then went back to the classrooms and the cook washed the

cooking utensils with a leaf and some ash from the fire. The meal break took about half an hour. The bags of wheat/rice were stored in the corner of one of the kitchen, but there were no other food ingredients.

5.6 Government Elementary School, Channan ke

The school has a total enrolment of 137 children and out of these total, 114 children were attending school on the day of the visit. The school is having two regular teachers for five classes. Retired teachers are helping by taking classes, providing uniforms and notebooks to the children. Kitchen shed has not been built, and the cooking takes place in the open or in verandah of the school. The utensils for the children (plates) have been presented to them by the community. The food is prepared by the cook and the helper on gas chullah. Teachers purchase the grocery items and vegetables. The food is prepared under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher reported that they have not received any amount towards the purchase of grocery items for last two months. Despite this the teachers have not stopped the supply of mid day meal. They have either taken it on loan basis and some amount is being spent out of their pocket.

The kitchen was clean but wheat and rice was not there in the store bins. The Block Education Officer reported that it would reach in a day or two. The sweet rice were served to the children, which were very much liked by them. The quantity was sufficient and even they had the provision to give the second helping to the children.

BEO makes surprise visit to the school and monitors the serving of mid day meal. Two parents had also come. When asked they expressed their satisfaction on the regularity, quantity and quality of the mid day meal.

5.7 Government Primary School, Kartarpur

The school is of small size with total enrolment of 104 children only. On the day of visit only 86 children were present. The school is having only two teachers for five classes. Multiple grade teaching is practiced. The children were served rice and cereal on the day of the visit. The school had not built the kitchen shed and the food was being cooked in one of the rooms only. The kitchen was not very well maintained. In this school also the

bin were empty and did not have either rice or wheat. The schools were to be closed for summer vacation in one week and one wonders if they would be supplied the grains.

The teacher informed that the parents are not able to come regularly to help in the distribution of meal but once a week one or two parents come and monitor the meal activities. They are present either at the time of the preparation of food or at the time of the distribution of food.

5.8 Government Primary School, Abadpura

The school has total enrolment of 110 boys and 13 children were absent on the day of visit. The school has not built the kitchen shed and the food is being cooked in a room. Parents come once or twice to supervise the food preparation and distribution. The teachers reported that most of the times they were getting funds on time, but due to low enrolment the cook was being paid less amount. They were of the opinion that minimum salary should be raised for the cooks or some agency may be employed at the cluster level to prepare the food. The children were sitting in verandah and taking food in the utensils brought from their home. Kitchen was not well maintained and even while serving the hygiene was not maintained. Children belonged to very poor families as for some of them it was the first food of the day. The children were not wearing uniform. When asked about the taste of food, all the children were satisfied and some of them even commented that the food is tastier than what they eat at home.

5.9 Government Primary School, Jhaliakala

The school has a small size with total enrolment of 76 children only and 72 children were present on the day of the visit. The school had displayed on the board the children present on that day. The board also displayed the quantity of the foodgrains used and the amount spent towards the vegetables. The school appears to be very lively, well maintained with lots of charts and pictures on the walls prepared by students.

Uniform, has been given to all the children of school by Red Cross. Even they have given desks and the utensils for children.

The school has a good infrastructure. The School building has two floors. The food is served on the first floor in a big hall. The children were sitting in a row and the cook served the Khichari to the children. The food was sufficient even for the second serving to the children. It was a pleasure to see in this school that the hygiene and cleanliness was maintained while cooking the food as well as serving the food. Parents regularly come to school to help the cook in serving the food. Teachers were mainly responsible for supervising the cooking and serving of food.

5.10 Ropar Primary School, Railway Colony

The school has a total enrolment of 96 children and 82 students were attending the school on the day of visit. The school has a poor infrastructure and mostly the children from nearby squatter settlements are enrolled in this school. The food is cooked on the firewood chullah. With the support of an NGO, the children are provided with free uniform, stationery items and utensils for eating the mid day meal. The food was cooked as per the menu for that specific day (Rice and Curry). The cooks had kept the kitchen clean and even the food prepared was delicious. The grains were kept in clean utensils. Most of the children belonged to very poor socio-economic background and therefore mid day meal was a big incentive for them to come to school. The parents desired that the food may be given during the vacations also.

6. Suggestions for Improvement in the Management of Mid-day Meal

- In Punjab, the role of VECs/ Ward Committees and Self-help Group is not significant in the implementation of mid day meal scheme. Majority of the parents of the children who are studying in Government schools belong to the poor socio economic background and in most of the cases both of them are working. Therefore they are not able to contribute much in the school activities. An effort should be made to involve the women who are not employed. They may be told that it is like the service (*Kar Seva* in which they help in the cooking and serving the food to the pilgrims visiting) that they are are doing in Gurudwaras.
- In few cases the parents come to supervise the quality of the food served to children. They ask their wards as to what was given to them in the school and if they find that the children do not like food few of them visit the school and talk to the teacher.
- It was pointed out by most of the school that the cooking should take place at cluster level and then the food may be distributed to all schools situated within the cluster. It was suggested that the common cooking needs to be done for schools within 3 to 5 kms of radius so that the food may be distributed on cycle or scooter. Teachers may visit on rotation basis to supervise the cooking of food.
- It was pointed out that the funds do not reach to school on time. In order to avoid delay advance payment for two months may be given to the head teacher.
- Some nodal agency or NGO may be identified to take charge of the mid day meal, and to monitor the quality of food the head teachers on rotation basis visit the place where the cooking is being done.
- In Punjab the average number of teachers in elementary schools is 3.6. Therefore it becomes difficult to take additional responsibility of supervising the meal and

managing the financial accounts. Volunteers or para teachers may be appointed till the full time teachers are appointed.

- Additional staff like peon may be provided to help in the smooth implementation of the mid day meal scheme.

Highlights of the Successful Practices on the Implementation of Mid day Meal in the Selected Schools of Punjab

- In all the schools the provision of meals was never interrupted though there has been delay in the delivery of funding.
- Teachers were able to keep the meal programme going either by spending out of their pockets or borrowing from the store and vegetable vendors on loan basis.
- Teachers make an extra effort and purchase the grocery items and also take food item on loan so that the children get food regularly.
- Though the activity of the teachers has increased on account of the preparation and supervision of mid day meal, but they do not find it as burdensome. It was an encouraging finding that most of the teachers take it as one of their pleasant duties and many teachers get pleasure to feed the hungry children as they believe no learning is possible with empty stomach.
- Teachers are approaching the trusts and NGOs for resource mobilization. In two of the schools, NGOs have provided utensils, note books and uniform to all the children of school. In one of the schools retired principal was regularly coming to school to help in the management of school. Such support may be sought by other schools.
- The food prepared was delicious in all the schools and the students were seen to be having second helping. Some of the students reported that they found it to be better than prepared at home.
- In few schools the parents were regularly visiting to supervise the quality of food grains and also the cooked food.
- All the schools had displayed on board the attendance for the day. Some schools had also displayed the quantity of food cooked on that day and the expenditure incurred on it.

Table: District-wise Population of Punjab

District Name	Male	Female	Total
Amritsar	1162761	1012638	2175399
Bathinda	632809	550486	1183295
Faridkot	292596	258296	550892
Fatehgarh Sahib	290137	247904	538041
Ferozepur	926224	819883	1746107
Gurdaspur	1113077	990934	2104011
Hoshiarpur	765132	715604	1480736
Jalandhar	1040177	922523	1962700
Kapurthala	399623	354898	754521
Ludhiana	1662716	1370115	3032831
Mansa	366446	322312	688758
Moga	474139	420715	894854
Mohali	639093	534271	1173364
Muktsar	411217	366276	777493
Nawanshahr	306902	280566	587468
Patiala	987390	857544	1844934
Roopnagar	332949	295897	628846
Sangrur	1069289	930884	2000173
Taran Taran	487828	432850	920678

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table: District-wise Literacy Rate of Punjab

District Name	Male	Female	Total
Amritsar	72.6%	61.3%	67.3%
Bathinda	67.8%	53.7%	61.2%
Faridkot	68.1%	55.0%	62.0%
Fatehgarh Sahib	78.3%	68.3%	73.6%
Ferozepur	68.7%	51.7%	60.7%
Gurdaspur	79.8%	67.1%	73.8%
Hoshiarpur	86.5%	75.3%	81.0%
Jalandhar	82.5%	73.1%	78.0%
Kapurthala	79.0%	68.3%	73.9%
Ludhiana	80.3%	71.9%	76.5%
Mansa	58.9%	45.5%	52.4%
Moga	68.0%	63.5%	58.5%
Muktsar	65.4%	50.3%	58.2%
Nawanshahr	82.9%	69.5%	76.4%
Patiala	75.9%	62.9%	69.8%
Roopnagar	84.0%	71.4%	78.1%
Sangrur	65.8%	53.4%	60.0%

Source: Census of India, 2001