



## A CASESTUDY ON AKSHAYA PATRA'S COMMITMENT TO FOOD SECURITY

*By The Akshaya Patra Foundation*

The Akshaya Patra Foundation, an implementing partner of India's Mid-Day Meal Scheme, doesn't just add another dimension to food security by ensuring continued availability of meals, their hygiene and safety, but also aids overall health of the child by improving the nutritional quotient, thus aligning itself with international expectations. The paper outlines how Akshaya Patra ensures the availability of the food on time, and how the organisation works efficiently to provide hope and life to the underserved section of the society. How it works towards realising innovative and efficient developments to ensure the cooked meals meet the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA), while retaining the taste and consistency on a massive scale, consequently, providing an irrefutable proof of food security. It further attests the latest developments and the future plans of the organisation aimed at bringing meaningful change in the lives of our beneficiaries

**Keywords:** *Akshaya Patra Foundation, Mid-Day Meal, Nutrition*

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The need:**

Power of one hot meal is only realised by the truly famished. In a nation which ranks 103rd of 119 in Global Hunger Index 2018, it is imperative that attempts are made to eradicate hunger, and where children are involved, the need is even higher.

*"Our food security is seriously threatened by economic, ecological, and social factors. Eternal vigilance is essential for safeguarding our food security."* – M. S. Swaminathan (Indian Geneticist)

Whether food insecurity leads to poverty by waning the cognitive power of a child or poverty primes to food insecurity by decreasing the retention in the education system; the link is very difficult to establish. This vicious circle is shaped and twisted in a developing country because of various developmental factors.

Two Articles of the Indian Constitution are fundamental to the healthy growth of a society: Article 21 which guarantees every Indian citizen the "right to life" and Article 47 which explicitly states that "The State shall

regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties..." Till the end of the 4th Five Year Plan (1969-74), India's main emphasis was on the aggregate growth of the economy and reliance was placed on the percolation effects of its growth. An alternative strategy of development, comprising an anterior attack on poverty, unemployment and malnutrition in the face of continuing poverty and undernourishment; malnutrition became a national priority from the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards. This shift in strategy gave rise to a number of interventions to increase the purchasing power of the poor, to improve the provision of basic services to them and to devise a security system through which, the most vulnerable sections (viz. women and children) could be protected. Nutrition came to the forefront of policy making in India in the mid-1990s, with the 1993 National Nutrition Policy (NNP) and the 1995 National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN).



## The Policies:

### National Nutrition Policy (NNP)

Under this landmark policy, the Government of India adopted an all-inclusive and wide-ranging approach towards the colossal problem of malnutrition and undernutrition, by implementing various policies and nutrition schemes.

#### The policies under the NNP, aimed at

- Increasing the production of food grains
- Better utilisation of food resources by applying better technology
- Educating the common man about the benefits of the food that already existed
- Protecting the vulnerable groups by protecting them against certain nutritional deficiencies and diseases
- Supplementary feeding of the most vulnerable groups

One of the key interventions conceptualised to address food insecurity under the NNP was the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The programme was designed and launched to improve the nutritional status of school-age children nationwide by serving them free lunches on school days.

Since its launch, the programme has undergone several changes. With an aim to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance, and simultaneously improve nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NPSE) was launched as a centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15 August, 1995.

In 2001, the programme became a cooked Mid-Day Meal Scheme under which every child in Government and Government-aided primary schools were to be served a prepared mid-day meal with a minimum content of 300 calories of energy and 8-12-gram protein per day for a minimum of 200 days. The Scheme was further extended in 2002 to cover not only children studying in Government, Government-aided and local body schools, but also to children studying in Education

Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE) centres.

The Scheme went through another revision in April 2008, post which the MDM programme extended to both recognised and unrecognised Madrasas/Maqtabs supported under *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*. Presently it serves 94 million children in over 11 lakh schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, as the largest feeding programme in the world.

Over the years, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme has done much to eradicate hunger and promote education, but these are not the only two areas where the scheme has helped. There also exist other areas where the indirect impacts of the same have been felt massively. For instance, in realising the goals set by countries to attain the resolutions of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- To achieve universal primary education
- To promote gender equality and empower women
- To reduce child mortality

#### Objective of the study:

The objective of this case study is to understand Akshaya Patra's contribution to food security and process involved to make it a successful initiative.

### ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY

#### Akshaya Patra's Role

##### The beginning:

Akshaya Patra refers to the magical vessel with unending supply of food... an inexhaustible vessel. The Foundation intends to provide nutritious meals to school children so that they don't have to forfeit education because of hunger.

Looking out of a window one day in Mayapur, a village near Calcutta, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, saw a group of children fighting with stray dogs over scraps of food. From this simple, yet heart-



breaking incident, was born a determination that no child within a radius of ten miles from our centre should go hungry.

His inspiring resolve has helped in making The Akshaya Patra Foundation, as what it is today.

In June 2000, The Akshaya Patra Foundation started the mid-day meal programme in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The initial days of implementation were not smooth sailing for the organisation. But soon came the helping hands of Mohandas Pai, who took the initiative of donating the first vehicle to transport food to the schools; and Abhay Jain, who promised to bring in more donors to contribute for the further expansion of the programme.

The humble beginnings of the Foundation started with serving of the mid-day meals to 1500 children across five Government schools in Bengaluru.

The programme embraced the vision that –

***“No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger.”***

The Akshaya Patra Foundation since its genesis in 2000, has dynamically strived to address escalating issues of food insecurity in the form of ‘classroom hunger’ – a matter of national priority.

### **The Reach:**

Growing from strength to strength, and with the continued support from Government, stakeholders and well-wishers, the Foundation today has 40 kitchens across 12 states of India, reaching wholesome meals to over 1.76 million children every school day.

Last year, Akshaya Patra commemorated serving of 2 Billionth meal in the presence of the then President of India, Honourable Shri Pranab Mukherjee. This year, on 11 January 2019, serving of 3 Billionth meal was commemorated by the Prime Minister of India, Honourable Shri Narendra Modi.

(For the complete reach please refer [ANNEXURE I](#))

Unlike the developed countries where the school lunch programme is a supplementary

source of nutrition; in India, it is an indispensable hunger alleviation tool. It creates traction for parents to send their wards to school as they have fewer worries about finding money to feed them.

Often, for many children, one square meal in a day, is a luxury which they simply cannot afford. Therefore, it would not be erroneous to say that Akshaya Patra’s meals act as an encouragement, attracting countless children to enrol in schools, secure in the knowledge that there will be that one hot, wholesome meal with their names on it.

With its vision of ***‘No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger’***, Akshaya Patra has galvanised a strategic partnership with the Government of India and the various State Governments to implement its school meal programme. Under this unique Public Private Partnership, Akshaya Patra acts as a diligent implementing arm of the Government’s Mid-Day Meal Programme.

Apart from making concerted efforts to nourish children with wholesome nutritious meals, Akshaya Patra through its School Meal Programme concurrently endeavours at achieving the two most critical United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 1: **Zero Hunger** and SDG 2: **Quality Education**.

Recognising the pivotal role that effective community players can bring about in fostering universal food security, the Foundation has also signed a declaration as a part of the **Zero Hunger Challenge - an initiative by the United Nations**. This gesture is a demonstration of Akshaya Patra’s alacrity and commitment to work towards realising a world without food insecurity.

## **ESSENTIALS OF FOOD SAFETY**

### **Hygiene and Nutrition**

Every kitchen has a set schedule, which it adheres to so that food is delivered on time, every school day. Every day begins with the important activity of kitting of raw materials issued for production ending with pre-processing of vegetables and other



housekeeping activities to ensure that the kitchen is primed for the next day's preparation.

(Please refer to the Table in [ANNEXURE II](#) for the detailed list of daily activities.)

### **Hygiene:**

At Akshaya Patra kitchens, measures such as maintaining personal hygiene, quality check during procurement of raw materials, quality maintenance during storage of raw materials, quality and safety during cooking, safety measures during transportation and delivery, post-delivery quality check processes like audits and feedbacks are mandatory.

The Foundation believes that hygiene has a crucial role to play when it comes to food safety. In order to prevent food contamination, it is ensured that the kitchen staff abides by best hygiene practices. These include wearing clean uniforms, hairnet or a cap, gloves, and proper shoes at all times, washing their hands with running water and soap, use of hand sanitisers, etc. Those who are suffering from sore throat, runny nose, inflammations, open wounds, or any infectious disease are not allowed in the food preparation area. Each employee has to undergo medical check-up at the time of joining and subsequently, every year. Similarly, elaborate measures are taken to maintain cleanliness at the premises.

### **Nutrition - The core substance:**

Akshaya Patra through its healthy and nutritious meals, attempts to address twin issues of hunger and malnutrition for its beneficiaries, every school day. The Foundation's Mid-Day Meal Programme is strictly in compliance with the **Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA)** for children, i.e., 450 calories and 12g protein for children studying in class I – V and 700 calories and 20g protein for children in class VI – VIII. The menu is planned in such a manner that children automatically get their daily intake of food items which are imperative for increasing nutritional levels, such as, fresh vegetables, dairy products, cereals, beans, legumes and oils imperative for increasing

nutritional levels. Akshaya Patra also makes a sentient effort to bring a change in the menus in an appropriate and timely manner so that children avail more variety and acquire a change of taste in terms of the food served. A variety of seasonal vegetables are also espoused in the recipes to make the meals wholesome and more appetising.

The recipes are decided by individual kitchen units on the basis of regional preference and Government suggestions (State MDM departments) along with the local involvement which may include parents of the beneficiaries. Inputs are also provided by the quality team from Akshaya Patra Head Office.

Akshaya Patra caters to different local palates, taking that into consideration, the menus are custom tailored to match the North Indian and South Indian palates. Regional preferences dictate rice-based menu for South Indian locations and wheat-based menu for North Indian kitchens. As with the menu in South India, even in Assam and Orissa, the menu is generally rice-based. On special occasions, milk and curd is also served along with fruits and sweets; this also acts as an incentive to their daily meals.

It is a conscious effort to ensure that food is in abundance, and children eat only healthy and nutritious food thereby conforming to the essence of food security while aligning with the Foundation's vision of '**No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger**'.

### **Supply Chain Management:**

Each facet of the supply chain management is encompassed in the folds of the Quality Management System (QMS) - right from selection of vendors to the cooking process to the delivery of the meals to schools. Supplier Quality Management System (SQMS) is implemented to ensure the quality of suppliers is at par with the set standards, and only those suppliers are partnered with for the programme. This also verifies that quality norms set by the governing body of Mid-Day Meal Scheme are observed.





The underpinning quality norms set by Akshaya Patra have been the backbone for a strong quality base for the kitchen operations, galvanising the society into setting predetermined standards for food quality and the nutrition therewith. The Foundation believes in the adage of 'Every morsel counts', and to ensure that, it follows strict norms for quality and nutrition. This forms the foundation thought for serving children safe, nutritious and hygienic food. Every kitchen follows and tracks standard procedures meticulously.

#### **Transition from 'Food' to 'Food Systems':**

Akshaya Patra's Central Strategic Sourcing(CSS) team is always seeking to connect with Farmer consolidators or millers to source the raw materials used for cooking at various kitchens. This is done, primarily, to promote agriculture while ensuring quality and low cost. The CSS ensures that the procurement is done at the **first point of Finished Goods Food Chain**, thus eliminating dependency on middle-man. Ingredients such as tur dal, chana dal, desi chana, mung dal, white lobia etc are procured from the local farmer collectives closest to the kitchen locations.

- Though Akshaya Patra's primary focus has been on serving that 'one hot meal' to over 1.76 million children every school day, but it aims to go beyond the current definition of their meals and reach out to local farmer communities who can truly address agriculture in its multidimensional nature and make substantial contribution to food security of the nation.
- Akshaya Patra has advanced a sustainable food system that aids in providing fresh, healthy and nutritious food in collaboration with **small-scale farmers or farming communities that build on their agro-ecological knowledge**.
- It continuously endeavours to identify small- to- mid-size locally grown produce as it not only provides better nutrition

and taste to Akshaya Patra beneficiaries but also improves the **economic vitality** of these local producers.

- Akshaya Patra also strives to source ingredients directly from farmers. The locations from which the ingredients are sourced are selected keeping in mind the logistics and the kitchen sites. Nearest local catchment areas are recognised and the ingredients are sourced from miller / farmers collectives.
- This is done in order to make the taste of the meals as authentic and close to the local palate, and traditional recipes as possible. For eg: Odisha prefers low to medium pungency and spicy food, procuring ingredients from the local farmers ensures that the taste of the land is maintained.

**Frequent feedback** is taken to collect active responses to modify the ingredients and recipes accordingly.

- The price for purchase of these materials are fixed by an **internal joint committee** (Comprising – Procurement, production, quality, finance and school distribution teams), and the Foundation continuously strives to reduce dependency on urban *mandis* (markets).
- Constant monitoring of **commodities price trending and frequent price benchmarking** in various urban markets nearest to the kitchens is practised to ensure procurement takes place at the right time and at fair price.
- This in turn creates a trust field to encompass the food security concerns in its fold while dealing with concerns that the local producers might have.

Apart from sourcing from these local producers and the various stakeholders who form a major component of this food system, Akshaya Patra integrates the farm-to-school approach to ensure that the beneficiaries have a wide variety of choices when it comes to their meal menu warranting taste and enhanced nutrition at the same time.



### Food Safety assurance:

Akshaya Patra kitchens are Food Safety and Management System (FSMS), and GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) compliant. These standards are set by FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India).

Food safety management systems are as per ISO 22000:2005, reviews are conducted as below:

- Half-yearly internal audit by regional quality team
- Third-party audit (half yearly) by DNV GL

GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) compliance is done by regional quality team

- Quarterly for ISO kitchens
- Once in 2 months for non-ISO kitchens

Some of the parameters set include First in First out (FIFO), and First Expiry First Out methods are implemented while issuing raw materials to the production which ensures all perishable items are used efficiently. Raw material is inspected as per FSSAI standards and only good materials is accepted and stored in centralised stores. Production follows all the sterilisation & sanitisation techniques to ensure safety and hygiene.

Well-trained cooks and production supervisors manage and supervise the production in all Akshaya Patra kitchens. Quality Team based out of Head Office and the respective unit's quality team conduct training programmes for the employees. Training workshops are carried out at regular intervals.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan is established to eliminate or reduce the food safety hazards to an acceptable level. It's an integral part of ISO 22000 certification. Critical Control Points (CCPs) such as cooking temperature, among others, are checked and logged at regular intervals to safeguard the quality of the meal. Quality Check is done by the Quality Officers in each kitchen. Cooking temperature is measured for each batch/cauldron by

production using a calibrated stick thermometer.

The Foundation has two **Food Safety and Quality Labs (FSQC Labs)**; one in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, and the other in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The FSQC Lab at Ahmedabad recently got certified by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

It has a mobile food testing lab at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. This lab will be able to aid multiple functions such as onsite analysis, Food safety & Quality monitoring, adulteration analysis in raw materials, generation of awareness, training while also performing surprise inspections and audits. Since it is a mobile lab, it will be able to render its services to various locations where the Foundation operates in Andhra Pradesh.

The Ahmedabad lab was opened in May 2015 in collaboration with the Mysore-based Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI). The lab in Lucknow was opened in October 2016. These state-of-the-art food safety labs are equipped with latest technology and high-precision testing instruments to facilitate evaluation of products ranging from raw materials to cooked meals. The refractometer, for instance, helps in testing the total soluble solids, fat purity, adulteration in oils, etc. Similarly, the Duran-make glassware and weighing scales with 0.0001g accuracy facilitate utmost accuracy when it comes to physical, chemical, and microbiological analysis of food. These labs help Akshaya Patra ensure food safety, and improve the health of children by maintaining nutritional levels as per Mid-Day Meal guidelines while aligning with food security expectations.

### Automation:

What distinguishes Akshaya Patra from other mid-day meal programmes is the centralised kitchen approach, backed by technology driven process. In each region, the capacity of the kitchen varies depending on the number of children to be fed. The customised kitchen is a mechanised marvel with a capacity to cook food for more than one lakh children



simultaneously without compromising on quality.

### **Centralised Kitchens:**

In order to increase cost-efficiency and decrease human drudgery the multi-storey kitchens are designed using basic theories of gravity flow. Cleaned and chopped vegetables are dropped through holes in the floor into the cooking vessels placed below. From the cooking vessels, rice and vegetables move through funnels into large containers made of 304 Grade steel. This system required less overall labour and ensures in maintaining health and safety standards within the kitchen facility. Once the food is prepared, it is packed into tight-lid stainless steel containers and loaded into custom-built vehicles that ply on fixed routes. Security personnel escort each vehicle to ensure safe delivery of meals to schools. The time required to deliver the food vessels to school depends on the distance of the school from the kitchen.

Akshaya Patra utilises automation and mechanisation as much as possible to ensure hygiene. For example, after the vegetables for the sambhar are sorted and cleaned, they are moved from the holding vessels to an automatic cutting machine.

### **Decentralised Operations:**

Locations where factors like difficult geographical terrain and improper road connectivity make it difficult to establish a centralised unit, the decentralised kitchen format is the ideal solution.

In areas like Baran in Rajasthan, and Nayagarh in Odisha, Akshaya Patra has adopted this alternate approach of cooking and delivery of food. These kitchens are run by the women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the guidance and supervision of Akshaya Patra's kitchen process and operations module.

It is important to note here, that 16 Akshaya Patra kitchens are ISO certified. The certification process can take from 6 months to 1 year, it differs from unit to unit according to their resource requirements.

### **Innovation:**

**Route optimisation tools** have also been developed to improve efficiency. Besides enabling GPS tracking technology, the Foundation has also initiated several innovations in logistics operations. This ensures that the meals reach on time as more than 1.6 million children look forward to their lunch time which is approximately at 1 pm, every school day. Its state-of-the-art centralised kitchens are equipped to cook meals for over 100,000 children at a time, courtesy the use of big data analytics to optimise the cooking and food delivery process and roti-making machines which dish out 40,000 roti's in an hour.

Keeping abreast with changes in information technology (IT) is crucial to Akshaya Patra scalability and increased productivity.

Akshaya Patra uses **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)** systems. With the introduction of ERP and the peripheral systems, the organisation is now able to connect all locations on a single platform on a real-time basis.

Akshaya Patra also uses **Microsoft Dynamics, AX2009 as ERP** for all the aforementioned processes with the aid of Central Servers at Bengaluru. Pan India connectivity to the servers, the daily processes and all MIS reports on operations are generated out of the ERP.

### **GO GREEN INITIATIVES**

In a bid to ensure environmental harmony, Akshaya Patra has always strived to inculcate best go green initiatives. Some of the initiatives implemented at various kitchens are:

#### **Biogas Plants:**

Under the Go Green initiative, Akshaya Patra has adopted organic waste to biogas systems in its *Ballari* and *Vasanthapura* kitchens in Karnataka. These plants convert organic waste into energy thereby reducing cost and dependency on Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). Besides this, it also produces volumes of enriched organic manure that help



supplement chemical fertilisers. The biogas plants also help in eco-friendly handling of food wastages of approximately 20 metric tonne every month.

#### **Solar Plant:**

The solar plant installed in the Vasanthapura kitchen runs with the use of photovoltaic (PV) cells that convert sunlight to direct electricity. The electricity generated is not only sustainable but also environment friendly as solar plants produce no environmental pollution (zero emissions). The solar plant generates 1100 units of power thereby saving up to Rs. 8,000 per month on electricity.

#### **Biomass Briquette:**

These are perfect substitutes to coal and charcoal and are used extensively in Akshaya Patra kitchens. Through this, the Foundation attempts to conserve the much depleting non-renewable sources of energy like coal.

#### **Effluent Treatment Plants:**

These plants help in scientific handling, disposal and recycling of runoffs and kitchen wastes. This helps in reducing smell and spillage thereby preventing environmental pollution.

#### **Impact studies:**

The impact of Akshaya Patra's initiative can be seen in 12 states at different locations, formal studies have corroborated the Foundation's existence and its exigency. Hope stories from around the country further substantiates the programme and the agenda of Food Security.

*(Please refer: [FINDINGS](#) for impact studies*

*For more hope stories:*

<http://www.hopestories.in/>)

Various studies have been conducted to understand the impact of Akshaya Patra's meals on children. According to **Sigma Research and Consulting Pvt Ltd** - 'Assessment of Mid-Day Meal Programme in 8 States' report, the impact was seen on the nutritional levels of the children.

Another report by **AC Nielsen** focuses on the impact the meals have created on the socio-behavioural section apart from the nutritional quotient of the children. Increase in enrolment numbers, improvement in attendance, improved social behaviour was observed.

In an important study done by **M.S. Ramaiah Medical College** revealed that in rural areas the number of children below the optimal nutrition level was reduced along with reduction in anaemia and other diseases confirming that the meals were indeed providing better sustained nutrition amongst children.

*([\*These validations have given us the impetus to grow and reach out to more children, in line with our vision of – No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger.\*](https://www.akshayapatra.org/impact-of-mid-day-meal-programme, n.d.)</a>)</i></p></div><div data-bbox=)*

#### **THE CURRENT AND THE FUTURE**

#### **A continuous and renewed focus on Food Security provided by Akshaya Patra**

In an endeavour to actualise its vision of '**No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger**', Akshaya Patra has continuously renewed their focus on nutrition with effective food planning and sustainable delivery. A continuous dialogue with Government and participation in various forums provide an opportunity for Akshaya Patra to be a part of solving nation's hunger concerns. Akshaya Patra has also collaborated with NITI Aayog (A Government of India policy think-tank) on various fronts to provide its expertise on the country's food security concerns. Akshaya Patra feels the need to start from the premise that the school lunch provided should not only comply to the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) but should also facilitate and ensure the delivery of nutrition that makes meaningful impact on the lives of our beneficiaries.





### Fortification:

Identified as a top priority aimed at decreasing micronutrient deficiency in children, Akshaya Patra joins forces with local implementers on the ground and national and local governments to invest in adding micronutrients to common staple foods that significantly improves the nutritional quality of the food served as a part of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and effectively improves children's health with minimal expense and complication. In Akshaya Patra, fortified rice is provided. The production of fortified rice is a two-staged process. During these processes, essential minerals and nutrients are added such as Vitamin A, B1, B3, B6, B9 and B12.

Akshaya Patra has already set up fortification blenders at two locations and third location is scheduled to be up and running **by the time this document is published**. The number of children currently availing fortified rice is more than 4, 45,000 in as many as 2,665 schools.

Akshaya Patra will be installing blending machines required for fortification in more locations. They will also be signing an MoU with Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and Food Fortification Resource Centre (FFRC) to scale-up food fortification to develop IEC (Information, Education and Communication) material, and to provide training to quality personnel. They are also exploring other avenues to aid wheat flour fortification and fortification of other materials.

### Aim to provide healthier lives to Women and Children with Singular Attention on the Girl Child:

Akshaya Patra is working with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and with State Governments to come up with specific development models/schemes that will further enhance the girl child's nutritional and educational status within school in the form of:

- Health, Nutrition and Hygiene Education
- Micronutrients supplementation

- Psychosocial Support Education
- Establish world class food manufacturing processes that set a new benchmark for social feeding programmes.
- Build a culture of accountability and transparency, unique to the NGO sector in the country.

Akshaya Patra's proven model of scalability and good governance is a reference standard not only to the NGO sector, but also for profitable entities.

Most importantly, it has given a voice to the needs and aspirations of the most important section of the society, children, especially the girl child emphasising on socialism and gender empowerment.

### Other Feeding Initiatives:

With an aspiration to contribute to food security not only for our MDM beneficiaries but also for other marginalised people, the Foundation has taken the following feeding initiatives, as a step to extend its continuum of care:

- Anganwadi feeding
- Feeding expecting and lactating mothers
- Feeding programmes in old-age homes
- Feeding programmes in special schools
- Feeding runaway children
- Feeding the homeless
- Subsidised lunch for the economically disadvantaged

### Integration of Neglected & Underutilised Species in the MDM:

Keeping in mind the need for an integrated approach, Akshaya Patra leverages food supply chains to improve nutrition and scale-up the use of Neglected & Underutilised Species (NUS) – ragi, jowar, bajra, rich in essential micronutrients that holds much promise when it comes to nutrition.

It incorporates local NUS, specifically millets, into Akshaya Patra meals and uses the Mid-Day Meal Programme to promote the nutritional and economic benefits of NUS to its beneficiaries and their families.

It aims to support farmers by expanding the market for NUS and initiate sustainable buying partnerships. It also strives to utilise the Mid-Day Meal Programme as an ideal outlet to challenge current food systems, uphold agricultural communities, and back the integration of NUS in the mid-day meal to revitalise children's nutritional intake. Moreover, it monitors the outcomes with the intentions of creating a programme model that can be shared across India, and even globally.

### APPRECIATION FOR THE FOUNDATION

"The Akshaya Patra Programme has exhibited how compassion of the people combined with support from the Government can bring a wonderful and meaningful impact. I appreciate and express my gratitude for your real and benevolent practice which is rooted in the fundamental spiritual principle of compassion, especially by helping the young children who are facing challenges in their physical and mental upbringing.

I pray that you continue your generous help to the young and old alike as long as their difficulties persist."

- His holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

"There is no better expenditure of money and it's really important for these kids to stay in school and learn. I love this programme; this is one of the finest commitments ever made in the 10 year history of Clinton Global Initiative."

- Bill Clinton, Former USA President

"Akshaya Patra is a success story of hope, fairness, justice and opportunity for all children"

- N. R. Narayana Murthy, Founder, Infosys

### CONCLUSION

Today, as the Foundation progressively strides towards its 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it grows more conscious of its duties towards ensuring food security for India's children. In addition, it also urges every individual to associate with its philosophy of 'unlimited food for education'

reaching hot nutritious meals to some of the most vulnerable and undernourished children of the country. Food security is crucial to prevent the imminent danger of malnourishment. Akshaya Patra sees food security as an ongoing and continuous requirement and is conscious of its implementation while scaling up of the organisation. Hunger alleviation is a need for India and through the implementation of Government's Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Akshaya Patra aims to provide better food security. It is vital that sufficient, nutritious food is available to ensure continuous food security to ameliorate the society in aid of nation building.

### FINDINGS

#### Impact Stories from Akshaya Patra

##### *Bishnu Naik - Rourkela*

Bishnu's story is a prime example of how one incident can change the fortunes of a family. The 13-year-old is a student of Ishwar Pathak Nodal Upper Primary School in *Jaraikela* village in *Bisra* Tehsil of *Sundargarh* district in Odisha.



As with most families living on the periphery of forests, even Bishnu's family was dependent on the forest for food and firewood. They keep a part of the forest produce for themselves and sell the remaining in the local market.

Once heavily dependent on the forest, Bishnu's family now hesitates to go to the forest because of one tragic incident.

Two years ago, when Bishnu's parents and other people were collecting sweet potatoes, they were attacked by a wild elephant. The tragic encounter resulted in the death of Bishnu's mother and another young girl from the neighbourhood. The family has not been able to cope with her loss and even today, two years after the incident, hesitate to go to the forest. *"We are scared for our lives now. It is not uncommon to sight herds of wild elephants in this area."*

The tragic incident had a ripple effect on the family. As they stopped going to the forest to collect food, they had to make alternate arrangements. Bishnu's father and elder brother, Biru started doing odd jobs, earning barely enough to feed the family. His elder sister, Jashoda had to drop out of school and look after the house. She too, started working whenever opportunity presented itself—mostly as a farm labourer.

Given the situation, Akshaya Patra's Mid-Day Meal Programme comes as a blessing for the family as it assures a square meal for Bishnu and his younger brother, Karan who studies in the same school in class III. When asked if he likes the food, Bishnu enthusiastically tells us that dalma and chana-aalu are his favourite, but he also likes kheer and paneer.

His grandfather wants him to study and do something to get the family out of poverty. Bishnu's elder siblings had to discontinue their studies because of the circumstances. Hopefully, his case will be different.

### **Ranathi Ekka - Rourkela**

Ranathi Ekka, an 11-year-old girl from Manko Upper Primary School in Sundargarh District, is a student of class III, Ranathi came across as a shy child barely audible if she at all spoke. Her answers were to the point and her demeanour, that of the child who would hide behind others when it came to a photo opportunity. All this, however, changed the moment she stepped on the playground with her friends. One could sense the enthusiasm in the little girl as she ran around, giggling all along. The transformation was nothing short of dramatic prompting the question *"is this the same girl?"*

Ranathi lost her father when she was a toddler. It got worse when her mother perhaps worried about how she would raise a child on her own left without informing anyone. Ranathi was left at the mercy of her maternal grandparents, and despite having a host of problems -poverty being one of them, the couple decided to raise the girl as their own child.



Ranathi's grandfather, who works in other people's fields as a daily wage employee, narrates the story of how they mustered the courage to send the little girl to school.

*"We live in a bad condition. Most of our energy is spent in trying to figure out how to get a proper meal for ourselves and her (Ranathi). The thought of sending her to school was there. We couldn't give our son proper schooling, and as a result, he is out there in the city doing odd jobs that come his way. We didn't want Ranathi to suffer the same fate. So we wanted to (send her to school), but couldn't figure out how to do that."*

Ranathi's grandparents had heard about meals being distributed in the school every afternoon, but they were under the assumption that they will have to pay to get that food.

One day when he was passing by the school, he saw Akshaya Patra vehicle delivering food to the school. He mustered courage to ask the vehicle driver where this food was coming from and how much he would have to pay for it. *"When he said I won't have to pay anything, I was surprised,"* he remembers. He was elated at the idea of his granddaughter getting a plateful of food every day, something that she



was not guaranteed at home. Thus, started Ranthi's journey of schooling, and along with good food, she also got access to proper education.

Ranthi symbolises the story of hundreds of children from these parts of Odisha, for whom school is the route to better life. These children come to school either because they get good food or because they get to play.

At 11, Ranthi may not understand the importance of nutritious food, but it is vital for her growth. At home, they mostly eat rice gruel with salt or chilies, typical meals in this region.

At school, however, she gets a variety of food, including her favourite *daal paneer*, *kheer*, and *soyabadi*. It is this nutritious meal that helps Ranthi make the most of the playtime at school.

### **Sohil Khan- Rajasthan**

Madari Basti in Sanganer, Jaipur, has become synonymous to street magic, for this is the source of bread and butter for most people residing here. Almost every household here has to its credit one street magician. For these street-magicians-in-making, the right of passage is making coins vanish in thin air and appear in someone's pockets or behind someone's ears. One such entertainer-in-making that we came across was 12-year-old Sohil Khan.



A IV standard student in the Government Upper Primary School in *Pratapnagar*, Jaipur, Sohil is among the many children from *Madari Basti*, for whom school is the silver lining in the cloud and their way out of poverty. Street magic has long been a form of art which has

been passed on from one generation to the next. Of late, however, it has lost its sheen.

After Sohil's mother expired, his father, *Umad Khan* married again. He has three sons from his first wife: *Sohil*, *Ronit*, and *Taufiq*, and three from his second wife, *Jafran*, namely *Mohit*, *Tauheed*, and *Shoaib*. Sohil or his younger brothers, Ronit and Taufiq live with their grandmother who lives a few blocks away. Young Sohil aspires to become a doctor and is willing to work hard to realise his dream. He likes studying in general, but Mathematics and English are his favourite subjects. His intention is to earn good money and get his grandmother and his entire family, including his stepmother and stepbrothers out of the throes of poverty.

*"We have a small house, which is not in good shape. I want to renovate it and maybe add another story, so that all of us can live together,"* he says. For now, though he is stuck in their family business. *"My grandfather taught magic to my father and he, in turn, taught it to me,"* he told us. *"I don't really like it, but I don't hate it either."* Like other children, even Sohil likes to play with his friends. After returning from the school, he completes his homework and then steps out to play usual hide-and-seek or catching the ball.

The idea of banter with friends brings a smile to his face. Then there are days when, instead of stepping out to play, he has to step out to support the family. On a good day, he earns Rs. 50-100 But on most days, it's around Rs. 10-20.

Sohil remembers his father telling him to concentrate on school because he believed that it will help him in the future.

When we went to see Sohil's grandmother at their place, the first thing that we noticed was that they led a frugal existence. She told us that she worked at a scrapyards sorting garbage for a living. This would earn her 200 rupees every day, which she would then spend on her grandsons.





*“The only reason I work is because I want to give them a good life,” she told us, “they don’t have anyone but me.”*

When we asked her about her son’s (i.e., Sohil’s uncles), she said even though they live with her, they are busy with their respective families and now her only worry was what will happen to Sohil and his brothers after she is gone.

Sohil had told us how his grandmother would wake them up and send them to school. She told us that even though she is glad that they had learned to perform magic, she didn’t want them to pursue it as a career. “We just taught them these tricks so that they can earn for themselves if need be, but I would prefer if they work hard and get a proper job instead of depending on 40-50 rupees that they earn from performing on the streets.”

Sohil’s family was actually living in such difficult conditions, so it wasn’t surprising when he told us that he likes the variety of food that is served at school.

*“My favourite is daal-chawal, but we also get roti, halwa, kheer, rabdi, and even biscuit and bananas at times,”* he told us. Even his grandmother said that they tell her what they had for lunch whenever they are in good mood. She is thankful that the three of them get one good meal in school.

When Sohil starts performing, he makes sure that he gives his 100 percent. The enthusiasm on his face is hard to miss. As with born performers, he can magically connect with his audience by merely interacting with them. It’s too early to say if he is destined to make it big in the world of magic, or whether magic will just be a hobby for him. As for confidence, there will certainly be no dearth of it.

#### **References**

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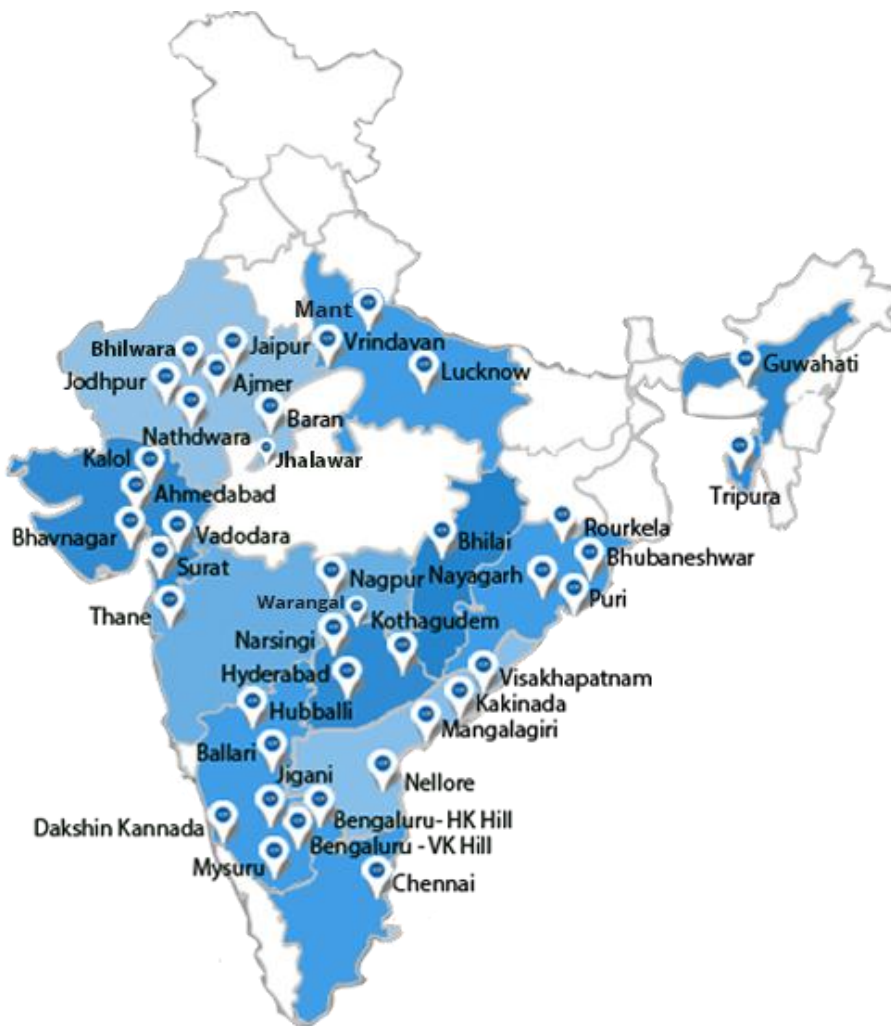
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## ANNEXURE I

State / Location	Number of Children	Number of Schools	Type of Kitchen
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	<b>62,024</b>	<b>612</b>	
Visakhapatnam	15,273	88	Centralised Kitchen
Kakinada	13,504	74	Centralised Kitchen
Mangalagiri	14,650	165	Centralised Kitchen
Nellore	18,598	285	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Assam</b>	<b>32,292</b>	<b>585</b>	
Guwahati (ISO 22000:2005)	32,292	585	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Chhattisgarh</b>	<b>13,139</b>	<b>175</b>	
Bhilai (ISO 22000:2005)	13,139	175	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Gujarat</b>	<b>3,99,112</b>	<b>1,545</b>	
Ahmedabad (ISO 22000:2005)	1,00,355	426	Centralised Kitchen
Bhavnagar (ISO 22000:2005)	14,410	56	Centralised Kitchen
Vadodara (ISO 22000:2005)	1,05,533	618	Centralised Kitchen
Surat (ISO 22000:2005)	1,64,554	352	Centralised Kitchen
Kalol	14,261	93	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Karnataka</b>	<b>4,49,079</b>	<b>2,887</b>	
Bengaluru – HK Hill (ISO 22000:2005)	73,424	496	Centralised Kitchen
Bengaluru -Vasanthapura (ISO 22000:2005)	74,647	507	Centralised Kitchen
Ballari (ISO 22000:2005, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001)	1,12,474	559	Centralised Kitchen
Hubballi (ISO 22000:2005, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001)	1,32,165	849	Centralised Kitchen
Mangaluru	12,284	134	Centralised Kitchen
Mysuru	15,542	144	Centralised Kitchen
Jigani	28,543	198	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Odisha</b>	<b>1,50,375</b>	<b>1,980</b>	
Bhubaneshwar	46,479	829	Centralised Kitchen
Puri	46,904	598	Centralised Kitchen
Nayagarh	21,330	249	Decentralised Kitchen
Rourkela (ISO 22000:2005)	35,662	304	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Rajasthan</b>	<b>2,18,479</b>	<b>2,314</b>	
Jaipur (ISO 22000:2005)	1,14,464	1,123	Centralised Kitchen
Jodhpur	11,871	132	Centralised Kitchen
Nathdwara (ISO 22000:2005)	42,806	602	Centralised Kitchen
Ajmer (ISO 22000:2005)	15,016	110	Centralised Kitchen
Baran	11,478	119	Decentralised Kitchen
Bhilwara	10,926	82	Centralised Kitchen
Jhalawar	11,919	146	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Maharashtra</b>	<b>22,203</b>	<b>207</b>	
Nagpur	13,707	154	Centralised Kitchen
Thane	8,497	53	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Tamil Nadu</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>1</b>	
Chennai	731	1	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Telangana</b>	<b>1,36,970</b>	<b>1,100</b>	
Kandi	90,399	682	Centralised Kitchen
Narsingi	13,143	192	Centralised Kitchen
Kothagudem	12,842	225	Centralised Kitchen

State / Location	Number of Children	Number of Schools	Type of Kitchen
Warangal	20,586	1	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Tripura</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>02</b>	
Kashirampara	910	02	Centralised Kitchen
<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	<b>2,76,819</b>	<b>3,294</b>	
Lucknow (ISO 22000:2005)	1,04,833	1,324	Centralised Kitchen
Vrindavan (ISO 22000:2005)	1,65,619	1,849	Centralised Kitchen
Math, Vrindavan	6,366	121	Centralised Kitchen
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,762,133</b>	<b>14,702</b>	



**ANNEXURE II**

<b>No</b>	<b>Activity Description</b>	<b>Start time</b>	<b>End Time</b>
1	<i>Kitting of raw materials issued from production, verification of items issued for production</i>	<i>11:00 AM</i>	<i>1:00 AM</i>
2	<i>Preparation of coconuts for grinding</i>	<i>1:00 AM</i>	<i>5:00 AM</i>
3	<i>Cutting of the processed vegetables</i>	<i>2:00 AM</i>	<i>5:00 AM</i>
4	<i>Boiler Operations</i>	<i>2:00 AM</i>	<i>8:00 AM</i>
5	<i>Masala preparation &amp; Seasoning</i>	<i>2:00 AM</i>	<i>6:00 AM</i>
6	<i>Dhal Cooking &amp; offloading</i>	<i>2:00 AM</i>	<i>4:00 AM</i>
7	<i>Sambar Cooking</i>	<i>4:00 AM</i>	<i>8:00 AM</i>
8	<i>Rice Cooking</i>	<i>3:30 AM</i>	<i>7:30 AM</i>
9	<i>Rice Packing &amp; Loading onto the trucks</i>	<i>4:30 AM</i>	<i>8:30 AM</i>
10	<i>Sambar Packing &amp; Loading onto the trucks</i>	<i>6:00 AM</i>	<i>9:00 AM</i>
11	<i>Cleaning of cauldrons &amp; Housekeeping activities</i>	<i>9:00 AM</i>	<i>10:00 AM</i>
12	<i>Vehicle dispatch</i>	<i>7:30 AM</i>	<i>9:30 AM</i>
13	<i>Vegetable Arrival, inspection and collection</i>	<i>9:30 AM</i>	<i>12:00 PM</i>
14	<i>Vegetable chlorination, pre-processing, weighment &amp; Storage combined with housekeeping activities</i>	<i>10:00 AM</i>	<i>1:30 PM</i>
15	<i>Cleaning of raw materials for the next day, receipt of materials from the suppliers, quality inspection etc</i>	<i>10:00 AM</i>	<i>4:00 PM</i>
16	<i>Vehicles return from route</i>	<i>12:30 PM</i>	<i>3:00 PM</i>
17	<i>Collation of indent for the next day by the distribution team</i>	<i>1:30 PM</i>	<i>4:30 PM</i>
18	<i>Vessel cleaning and vehicle washing</i>	<i>2:00 PM</i>	<i>5:00 PM</i>
19	<i>Material issue from stores to production</i>	<i>4:30 PM</i>	<i>6:00 PM</i>
20	<i>Preprocessing of vegetable continues</i>	<i>5:00 PM</i>	<i>6:00 PM</i>
21	<i>Housekeeping activities</i>	<i>5:00 PM</i>	<i>6:30 PM</i>

*Daily activities in a Kitchen (Sample)*



