

Impact Assessment of Health, Hunger and Nutrition Focussed Intervention – Singupuram, Srikakulam

Executive Summary



The following report is an impact assessment of a CSR intervention of Aurobindo Pharma Foundation (APF) carried out by an objective third party organisation – Poverty Learning Foundation. The CSR contribution was made by APF to Hare Krishna Movement Charitable Foundation (HKMCF), a trust which works towards providing vulnerable communities in India with food security as a means to break the cycle of poverty. The contribution was made

towards the construction of a community kitchen in, Singupuram, Srikakulam with a capacity to provide up to 50,000 meals a day which was later leased to Akshaya Patra Foundation – a sister trust catering to mid-day meals of children in schools and hot cooked meals of pregnant and lactating mothers in Anganwadis. The intervention was based on Theory of Change Framework, as is this assessment.

Relevance – *Is the intervention meeting intended purpose?*

The establishment of the automated community kitchen in Singupuram was a unique and relevant intervention, especially since there was no such kitchen in and around this region and it is the only one till date. Since the kitchen was inaugurated in September 2019, it has served a cumulative of 60,45,045 meals until the end of FY 20-21. Akshaya Patra Foundation has successfully catered to 307 schools across 3 mandals in the surrounding region of the kitchen. Mid-day meals for up to 23,000 children are cooked in this kitchen on a daily basis. The kitchen has been crucial in cutting costs of the mid-day meal, providing the children with a healthy, hygienic and hot meal as well as ensuring there is no compromise in the quality of ingredients used. The centralisation of the cooking has played a big role in this.

Impact – *What difference does the investments make?*

The results of research determined that the program is successfully catering to the school going children in Srikakulam. With respect to the quality and quantity of the meal, the feedback from both teachers and parents was overwhelmingly positive. An extremely small number of headmasters reported that the quantity of food being delivered was excess to what they required. The parents and headmasters also reported that feedback was collected from them as well as the children on a regular basis and course correction was done with immediate effect.

In depth analysis of the data showed that children who were regularly accessing the meals tended to show higher attendance rates and the meal was actually a driving factor for children attending school. This is an indication that the kitchen management is doing an efficient job with rotating the menu and providing excellent quality of food even over a long duration of time, despite the menu being decided by the government.

Effectiveness and Efficiency – *Is the intervention effective to reach defined objectives and how well are resources being used?*

Despite the quantity of meals and number of locations being, coverage of the program and its scope being expanded, the kitchen in Srikakulam has been able to meet all of these demands with apparent ease. In the case of an increase in cost of the meal, the management has been able to adopt measures like changing transportation routes or changing the kitchen equipment to be more cost-efficient. It has to be noted that there was no centralized kitchen earlier, and it was the first time that a centralized community kitchen was set up in Srikakulam, which is being used by the Akshaya Patra Foundation to provide meals under the MDM program. From the study, it is clear that given careful organization of the supply chain in which the processes of procurement, processing, production, and distribution are standardized, it saves human labour, time and most other resources.

The quality of ingredients used and food cooked is closely monitored throughout the supply chain on a daily basis and this plays a key role in ensuring that the beneficiaries receive high quality, tasty and nutritious food. Procured raw materials are stored in a clean and dry environment, washed multiple times before cooking and cooked using methods which preserve the nutritious value of the food. The kitchen staff are thoroughly sanitised before entering the kitchen and are required to wear cap, gloves, mask and boots to ensure they do not come in direct contact with the food. The use of the automated kitchen has minimised human interaction with the food to a large extent. The vessels in the kitchen and kitchen itself are meticulously cleaned, both before and after usage.

Sustainability – *Will the benefits last?*

Evaluation of the financial standing of the program strongly indicates that the sustaining of the program faces no problems and that it has over 300 donors who are committed to contribute to its running expenses, year-on-year. It also has no problems with respect to reaching the target beneficiaries and requiring to increase visibility – as it manages to do both with apparent ease. With respect to the Sustainable Development Goals, it plays a vital role in addressing goals such as No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Reduced Inequality, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Responsible Consumption and Production. The program has no negative impact on the environment as it consumes relatively clean energy for cooking and minimises waste production by recycling garbage to nearby piggeries and hatcheries.

Recommendations – *What more can be done?*

Obtaining permissions to change the menu to fit local tastes and requirements of the children would be crucial for the further success of the program in the region. Apart from this, some simple technological integration such as RFID, grinders, etc would make a large qualitative difference in terms of the effort required on behalf of the kitchen staff. The introduction of a breakfast scheme is also seen as crucial by the stakeholders to help the children focus better during the morning session of school. Adopting a formal method of feedback collection from students, parents and teachers and incorporating the same into the running of the Akshaya Patra kitchen could be crucial in improving quality of food and satisfaction level among the beneficiaries even further. Accompanying this with a health survey would ensure that the health impact of the program is captured along with disease burden, nutritional indicators and reduction of health expenditure among the children.

Conclusion

Overall, the program is very viable, sustainable, and scalable. In fact, for a developing country like India, disaggregated community kitchens located in every district of the country which cater to the mid-day meal program would be immensely effective in magnifying the success of the program at the national level. While the introduction of the mid-day meal program resulted in enormous benefits in terms of improving attendance rates, increasing the attention span of children and providing them with a nutritious meal, it has been riddled with problems of pilferage, corruption, irregularity and dilution of quality. Akshaya Patra

Foundation's community kitchens provide a solution to all of the above problems and at the same cost to the government.