Lunch as Infrastructure

How One Kitchen Became the Largest Non-Profit School Meal Program

AKSHAYA PATRA · BENGALURU HQ · 19 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES







A centralised kitchen before dawn. The hard part is getting the food to school while it is still hot.

2000
started in Bengaluru
with five schools and 1,500 children

2.3m+
children fed every school day
the largest non-profit-run school meal program

~25,000
schools served
across 19 states and union territories

76+
high-capacity kitchens
most cooking and delivering before 9am

> India's midday meal is a legal entitlement for every government school child. Akshaya Patra took on the logistics of delivering it, one kitchen at a time.

The model is industrial: large centralised kitchens, cooked overnight, delivered in insulated vessels on fixed routes, with the meal in front of the child before the school day is far along.

The state pays part of the cost and donors pay the rest, which makes it a public-private program rather than a charity. The open question is whether centralised kitchens or local self-help-group cooking serves a village better.

HOW YOU CAN ENGAGE

Start with the kitchens. Ask to see a cooking shift and a delivery run, then the school the vessels arrive at.

Go and stand in it.

Akshaya Patra

Every sheet in this set points to a place you can visit: a sorting platform, a solarised health centre, a processing floor, a driving lesson. It is real work, and all of it is open to visitors.

WHERE TO GO



A high-capacity kitchen, Bengaluru or Jaipur

Cauldrons, conveyors and a dispatch deadline.



A delivery route at 8am

Insulated vessels, fixed stops, a hot-food window.



A government school at lunch

Where attendance and the meal turn out to be the same question.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

01 The meal is a nutrition program that works mainly as an attendance program. Which outcome should it be judged on?

02 Centralised kitchens are efficient and distant; village cooking is local and uneven. Which would you fund, and on what evidence?

03 A legal entitlement delivered by a non-profit. What does that arrangement do to accountability?

WHAT WE RUN

Academic programs

Business, leadership, entrepreneurship, healthcare, technology, sustainability and culture. Immersions of 12 to 15 days built around one of them.

Faculty and dean cohorts

Site-based curriculum development with Indian universities, industry and state agencies.

Executive programs

Company visits, policy briefings and operator conversations, tailored to a sector.

Service learning programs

Working visits with non-profits, social enterprises and CSR partners, tailored to your group.

READS WELL WITH: CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK

17 Agriculture & Minimum Support Prices

19 The Health System

SOURCES The Akshaya Patra Foundation's own material and its UK affiliate: founded 2000; more than 2.3 million children daily; close to 25,000 schools; 76+ kitchens; 19 states and union territories.