



Transforming lives through education

August 2014



## Meals for 100,000 students Inauguration of new Mid-Day Meal Kitchen

Mr Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha, inaugurated The Akshaya Patra Foundation (TAPF) Mid-Day Meal Kitchen in Cuttack, Odisha, on 8 July 2014. Delegates attending the event included State and Government officials and representatives from Kusuma.

The Kusuma Trust UK (The Trust) is the major funder of the kitchen with a grant of £916,400 to TAPF towards the construction of the Mid-Day Meal Kitchen and a further £201,000 for the first year's Mid-Day Meal feeding programme. The Government of India's Mid-Day Meal Scheme is a national programme supplying free lunches to children in schools to improve their health and encourage them to attend school. Funding from The Trust supplements the Government scheme to ensure children receive a hygienically prepared, nutritious and hot meal in school every day.

The inauguration was attended by other guests including the Honourable Minister for Industries, Schools and Mass Education of Odisha and the State Nodal Officer for the Mid-Day meal programme in Odisha. The Chair of the Kusuma Foundation (KF), General Surat Singh Sandu, and Pankaj Vinayak Sharma, the Country Leader also attended.



The Chief Minister and Chair of KF serving meals at the Kitchen Launch  
Photo: The Akshaya Patra Foundation

Guests were given a tour of the kitchen, inspected the distribution vehicles, and had the opportunity to serve a mid-day meal to students from local schools. Mr Naveen Patnaik presented Kusuma with a plaque to thank them for their support before planting a tree sapling at the kitchen to mark the occasion.

The kitchen has been fitted with brand new equipment to cook and provide food for up to 100,000 children. The equipment includes new boilers, rice cleaning machines, a cold storage, custom made utensils, conveyer belts and hygienic packing and cleaning facilities. Each day the kitchen will cook 5.5 tons of rice, 3.5 tons of vegetables and 1.2 tons of dhal. The food prepared in the kitchen is transported to schools using custom designed vans that are heat insulated, dust-free and have the ability to keep the food fresh.

With support from The Trust the Mid-Day Meal Kitchen will initially provide food for 45,000 children in 190 schools. From 2015, the feeding will be scaled up to provide meals to 100,000 students.

*“The Mid-Day meal programme encourages attendance at school, provides a nourishing meal and enables children to concentrate better in class. We are delighted to support such a large scale programme that makes a real difference to so many children,”*

Dr Balwant Singh,  
Chief Executive, Kusuma Trust UK

**Our mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities for children and young people**

## Delivering Mid-Day Meals in Odisha

Pankaj Vinayak Sharma of the Kusuma Foundation, an independent organisation that monitors projects funded by The Trust in India, spent a day with staff at the kitchen.

*“My work as Country Leader often takes me to interesting places. One recent trip was to witness the preparation of food at the Kusuma supported Mid-Day Meal Kitchen in Odisha and then travel with the food delivery vans to schools.*

*TAPF staff were in the kitchen at dawn to prepare high-quality meals for distribution to schools. All the staff knew their roles and were systematic in preparing, tasting and loading the food. There was a buzz in the air as the team was excited about what they were doing for children in primary schools.*

*As the vans prepared to set off from the kitchen at 9:45am, I was impressed with the planning of the routes by the team. Each driver knew the teacher in charge of the Mid-Day Meal feeding at each school and was confident about meals reaching the schools on time. The van I was in travelled 60 kms and visited 7 schools in the planned time. At each school the team checked the temperature and quality of the food, and*

*reminded teachers about a hand-washing campaign before delivering the food. The staff also asked students at each school to give feedback on the quality and taste of the food.*

*At the final school, I stayed on to talk to the children and teachers. The smile on the face of pupils upon eating the meals and the thumbs-up from them was proof that the programme is making a difference.”*



Students give positive feedback about their Mid-Day Meal.  
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

*Kusuma takes a holistic approach to improving education outcomes. In addition to the Mid-Day Meal programme, Kusuma supports improvements in school governance, management and teaching, enables schools to build toilets and other facilities, and provides a wide range of resources from books and computers to laboratory kits.*

## New toilet blocks encourage attendance

In the Annual Status of Education Report 2013<sup>1</sup>, the percentage of usable toilets for girls increased from 33% in 2010 to 53% in 2013. However 47% of schools in India still do not have separate toilets for girls, increasing their chances of dropping out of school. The Trust is funding schools to build new toilet cubicles with running water in 50 schools in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, and Sambalpur, Odisha. In Government Inter College Sandila, there was only one toilet with running water. Students had to wait in long queues to use the toilet. Following support from The Trust, there are now five new toilet cubicles with running water, providing the girls with clean and hygienic conditions.



The newly built toilet block at the Government Girls Inter College Sandila.  
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

## Book banks and libraries promote reading

The Trust supports schools to encourage students to read more in school and at home. Initiatives proving popular with students are the introduction of book banks and school libraries. In partnership with schools in Hardoi and Sambalpur, the Trust provides training to teachers to set up libraries and gives funding to purchase books. Teachers have established book bank schemes where graduating students give their old textbooks to new students to ensure that those from poorer backgrounds can continue to study. In Adarsh Inter College in Hardoi, The Trust provided 162 books and provided 18 students with a full set of textbooks from the book bank. The school now subscribes to newspapers, thereby encouraging students and teachers to keep updated with current affairs. The Head teacher has introduced weekly library sessions for students to access reference material as well as a lending service enabling students to take books home.

*“Since our partnership with Kusuma, students are taking full advantage of the new school library and book bank. Weekly library time has been introduced into the school timetable to encourage our students to read more.”*

Mr. Birendra Kumar, Principal  
Adarsh Inter College, Thamarwa

<sup>1</sup> [www.asercentre.org](http://www.asercentre.org)