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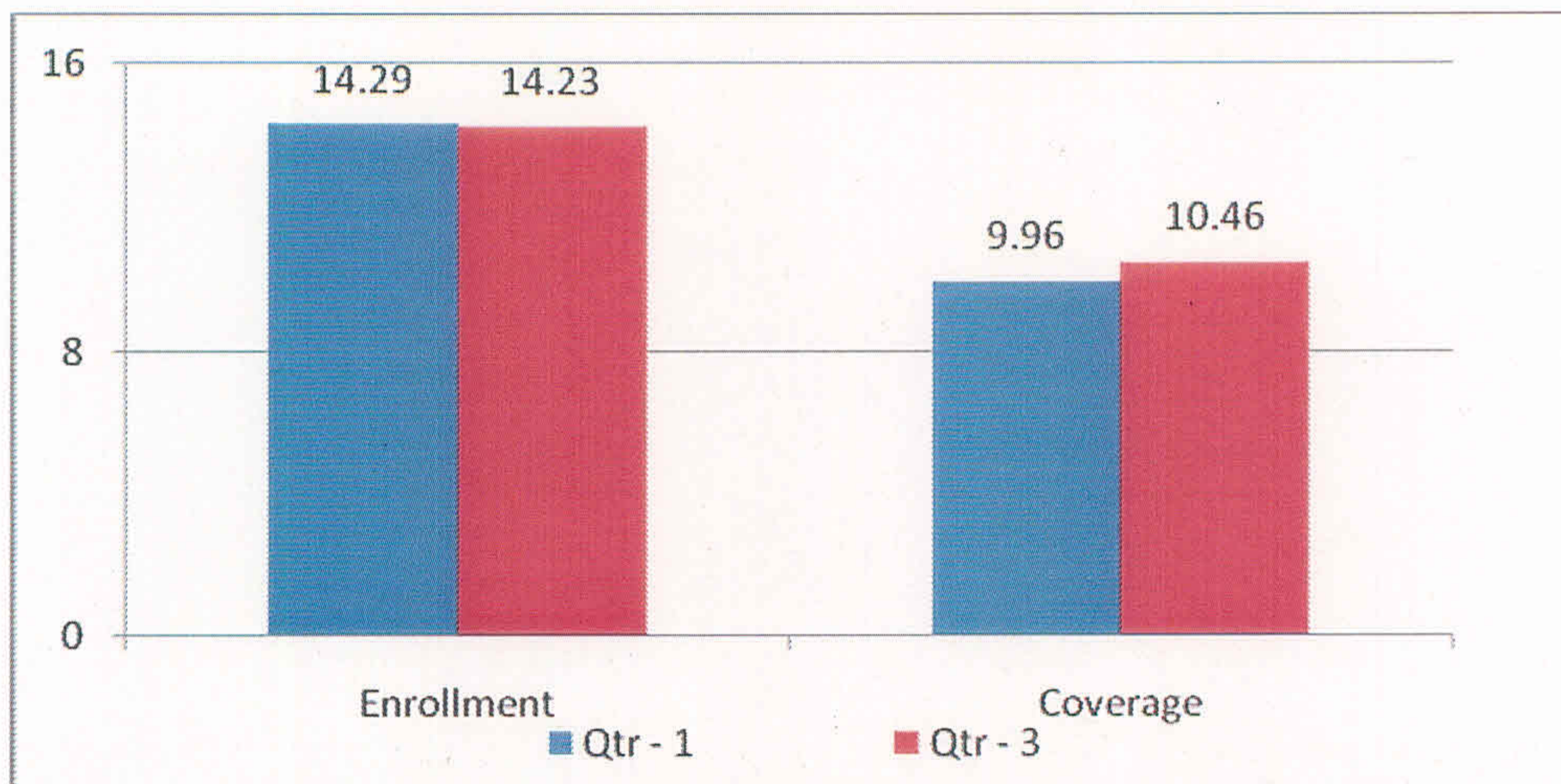
Dated: 11th March 2013

Dear Colleagues

The recently released Annual Status of Education Report (Rural), 2012 (ASER) has highlighted that mid day meal was served in 87% schools. This has been possible only due to your efforts; 10.46 crore children are provided hot cooked meals today in 12.12 lakh schools in the country, under the Mid-Day-Meal Programme, making this the largest noon meal feeding programme in the world! Not only has this helped in preventing classroom hunger, it promotes school participation and retention. It also fosters social equality and gender equity. We greatly appreciate the efforts made by MDMS teams in all the States/UTs in this regard.

The following issues need your personal attention for further improving the implementation of the scheme:

2. The comparison of data on MDMS for the first three quarters of 2012-13 and the corresponding period of 2011-12 reveals that though the proportion of average number of children to enrollment benefitting from MDMS has increased from 73% to 74%, in absolute terms, coverage has gone down to 10.46 crore from 10.54 crore children earlier. One of the reasons for this shortfall is the significant decrease in enrolment, which has gone down to 14.23 crore in 2012-13 from 14.71 crore during the reference period in 2011-12. The data analysis for different quarters of 2012-13 also reveals variations in terms of coverage of children, 9.96 crore out of total enrolled 14.29 crore (70%) children were covered during first quarter; this increases to 10.46 crore (74%) out of enrollment of 14.23 crore in the third quarter.



मध्याह्न भोजन योजना
Mid Day Meal Scheme

This reflects on the importance of prepositioning of resources like food grains and cooking cost because non availability of food grains and cooking cost may be a reason for the less coverage during the first quarter of the year. Considerable delay in release of funds to the implementing agencies has been highlighted in reports of monitoring institutions and also observed by the Review Missions in most of the States. I request you to remove these bottlenecks in supply chain of funds and food grains and ensure their timely availability with the schools as per MDM guidelines. We need to identify the reasons for the shortfall and the quarterly variation in the number of beneficiaries and devise suitable strategies to address the issues.

3. We have been able to utilize only 60% of the food grains and cooking cost by the end of third quarter. This is ironic, on the one hand a large portion of our children are anemic and facing serious nutritional deficiencies, on the other hand the resources which are meant to tackle this issue remain unutilized. It is an established fact that the level of malnutrition increases during the school years. As a result, the children are not able to concentrate on their studies. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme therefore, plays a critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of our elementary school system; it contributes significantly, towards increasing retention as well as quality of education. It is therefore important that apart from effectively implementing MDMS, we identify children with low body mass index (BMI) and address their needs appropriately.

4. We have identified the special focus districts where coverage of children is considerably low (list enclosed). We need to understand the reasons for the same; research studies are being initiated at the national level for the purpose. You may also undertake studies to identify the reasons for the same. Funds earmarked for MME, **where there is only 52% utilization hitherto**, could be used for this purpose. We have also initiated the process of Social Audit of the scheme in 2 districts in Andhra Pradesh on the pilot basis, the findings of which will be shared with you soon.

5. The data entry position in the online portal of MDMS is heartening; thanks to your efforts annual data entry has been completed for more than 99% schools. The monthly data entry as at the end of December has been completed for more than 72% of the schools. We need to ensure full coverage; as well as accuracy of the data entered in the portal, as huge variations have been observed in the data entered in portal and submitted through QPRs. The training for data entry for Fund flow mechanism and food grains management have been completed, the States/UTs must ensure data entry for the same. *Imagine the benefits; this will give you immediate data for better management of the scheme, as against the current manual system, where we are talking about the December end data today.*

6. The following critical issues need your immediate personal attention:

- Timely release of funds from the State level, replication of Green Channel initiative of Government of Andhra Pradesh
- Regular SSMC meetings in every quarter,
- Identification of districts where performance is not satisfactory and taking corrective measures,
- Addressing mismatch in lifting of foodgrains and utilization of transportation assistance,
- Timely payment to cook-cum-helpers, as well as FCI,
- Better convergence with NRHM for full coverage of children under the School Health Programme,

- Timely submission of QPR by States/UTs.
- The ASER report indicates lack of useable toilets for girls in the schools (45%), and lack of drinking water facilities in (27%) of the schools. This issue needs to be addressed

These MME funds for effective monitoring of these issues are available with the states, however, they are not fully utilized! This indicates lack of monitoring mechanisms in many States/UTs. These issues could also have been addressed in the SSMC meetings, which are to be held once in every quarter for each State/UT, however, only 29 meetings of SSMC have been held up to the 3rd quarter of 2012-13.

7. Despite availability of additional funds for reimbursement of additional expenditure on the usage of LPG, due to the withdrawal of subsidy, many States/UTs are yet to submit their proposals for the same. We have also written to you for training of cook-cum-helpers with the help of "Institutes of Hotel Management" in your respective States/UTs. You may kindly co-ordinate with them.

8. For the States/UTs, where PAB meetings have not yet been held, I shall appreciate if you pay special attention and come up with the strategies to address the above issues. Please ensure the approval of AWP&B 2013-14 by your State Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee before submission to this Department by the date fixed for this purpose.

9. I shall appreciate if you kindly attend to these issues personally and ensure full coverage of eligible school going children under MDMS. The findings of the Monitoring Institutions need to be carefully addressed and we need to evolve mechanisms for greater community participation. A little effort on your part will go a long way in ensuring that no child remains hungry in the school but also the basic health and hygiene needs of the children are met in a safe and serene atmosphere without hampering the duties of the teachers. ***Friends, this is truly God's own work, which we all are privileged to carry out! We CAN surely ensure that the poor children entrusted in our charge by the People of India have at least one hearty nutritious meal a day.***

The detailed analysis of the QPR for the quarter ending December, 2012 in respect of all the States/UTs is enclosed for your perusal. Please do let us know if we can facilitate this noble mission further in any manner.

With regards

Yours sincerely



(Amarjit Singh)

To

Principal Secretaries/Secretaries of all the States/UTs implementing Mid Day Meal Scheme

**Analysis of the implementation of MDMS during the first three quarters for the year 2012-13
based upon the Quarterly Progress Report (QPRs)**

i) Coverage of children against enrolment:

A major goal of MDMS is to provide mid-day meal to each and every child in the eligible schools to enhance enrolment and retention for universal Elementary Education in the Country. At the national level 73% of the enrolled children have been covered under Mid-day-Meal Scheme. The States/UTs of Lakshadweep (100%), Haryana (98%), Arunachal Pradesh (97%), Himachal Pradesh & Meghalaya (94%), Assam (94%), Nagaland (93%), Goa, Mizoram & Kerala (92%), Karnataka (91%), Assam and West Bengal (90%) have reported more than 90% coverage. On the other hand the MDMS coverage in the States / UTs of Tripura (47%), Jharkhand (51%), Chandigarh (53%), Uttar Pradesh (55%), Bihar & Rajasthan (62%), Delhi (66%), Gujarat and Jammu & Kashmir (69%) is below the National Average. Although the States of Bihar, and Gujarat have improved on the performance of 1st quarter however a lot is still desired. This also shows that the resources allocated under the scheme have not been fully utilized in these States (**Annexure-I**).

ii) Coverage of working days:

The guidelines for MDMS provide that mid-day meal should be served to all children attending school on each working day. All the States/UTs have covered more than 90% of the approved days at primary level. At upper primary only Assam (87%) has covered less than 90% of the approved days. (**Annexure II**)

iii) Utilisation of foodgrains and cooking cost vis-à-vis allocation:

The Scheme aims to provide 450 and 700 calories of energy for primary and upper primary students respectively. To facilitate this, the scheme provides for 100 grams of foodgrains for primary and 150 gram for upper primary students every day. In addition cooking cost is provided at the rate of Rs 3.11 and Rs 4.65 for primary and upper primary students respectively to add nutrition value to foodgrains by way of pulses; vegetables as well as oil and fat.

Ideally the consumption of food grains and utilisation of cooking cost should match with each other, which is almost matching as can be seen in **Annexure III** at the national level with 60% utilisation of foodgrain vis-à-vis 61% utilisation of cooking cost against the annual allocation. However there is a mismatch between the consumption of food grains and utilisation of cooking cost in various States/UTs. While, the utilisation of cooking cost is higher as compared to utilisation of food grains consumption in the States/UTs of Chandigarh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal it is vice-versa in the States/ UTs of Sikkim, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Puducherry, Manipur, and Lakshadweep.

In the States/UTs of Sikkim, Chandigarh, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Haryana, Jharkhand, Puducherry, and Uttar Pradesh the consumption of food grains is less than the national average of 60% (**Annexure-IV**). As far as utilisation of cooking cost is concerned Sikkim has reported nil utilisation of cooking cost, whereas Utilization of cooking cost in the States/UTs of Puducherry, Manipur, West Bengal, Gujarat, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand, A&N Islands, Bihar, Kerala, Tripura, Chhattisgarh, and Delhi is less than the national average of 61% (**Annexure-V**). This is ironical; on the one hand the children in these States suffer from debilitating, malnutrition and anaemia, on the other hand available resources under MDM scheme are being utilised sub-optimally. Moreover, the lack of synchronisation between utilisation of food grains and cooking cost also reflects a lack of focus and effective monitoring.

iv) Lifting of food grains and utilization of transportation assistance vis-à-vis allocation for the first two quarters:

Like utilisation of cooking cost and foodgrains, utilisation of transportation assistance and lifting of foodgrains should also match with each other. The analysis of the data on lifting of food grains and the utilization of transportation assistance shows that at the National level 61% of the allocated food grains have been lifted and the utilisation of transportation assistance is only 48% for the corresponding period. State wise analysis of utilisation of transportation assistance reveals that while Arunachal Pradesh (121%) has utilised more than the allocated transportation assistance grant, Manipur has not shown utilisation of the transportation assistance, whereas, Tamilnadu, Sikkim, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, West Bengal, Delhi, Jharkhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand have utilised less than 50% of the annual allocation (**Annexure VI**). The lifting of food grain is less than the national average of 61% in the States/UTs of West Bengal, Chandigarh, Assam, Haryana, Bihar, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat (**Annexure VII**). The low utilisation of transportation assistance may be due to non-payment of bills of transporters which needs to be looked into.

v) Payment to Food Corporation of India (FCI) as on 30.9.2012

The position relating to payments of bills to FCI is precarious; as per the status provided by FCI, out of the total bills raised by FCI upto 31st December, 2012 amounting to Rs. 1041.22 Crore, an amount of Rs. 628.47 Crore only has been paid and almost 40% of the billed amount i.e. an amount of Rs. 412.74 Crore is still pending for payments to be made to FCI by various States/ UTs (**Annexure-VIII**). This huge pendency of bills may result into stoppage of supply of foodgrains to the defaulting States which will adversely affect serving of MDM.

vi) Construction of Kitchen-cum-Store

Provision of infrastructure facilities such as kitchen-cum-store are an essential component for proper implementation of the MDM scheme for supply of healthy, hygienic and hot cooked meal to the children and also safe storage of food grains at the school level. The Government of India has sanctioned 9,55,479 units of kitchen sheds for schools up to 2011-12. So far the States/UTs have constructed only 5,99,768 units (63%).

The pace of construction of kitchen-cum-store is very slow and needs urgent attention in the States / UTs of Andhra Pradesh (4%), Kerala (13%), Mizoram (26%) , Maharashtra (28%), Tamil Nadu (30%), Jharkhand (32%), Manipur (38%), Uttarakhand (45%) Haryana (47%), and Odisha (48%) etc. where less than half of the sanctioned kitchen cum stores have been constructed (**Annexure-IX**). The States / UTs are again requested to work out a time bound plan for of construction of kitchen-cum-stores for safe storage and hygienic cooking of MDM.

vii) Engagement of cook-cum-helpers

States/UTs have engaged 2548208 cook-cum-helpers during the first quarter against the approval of 2770375. 16 States/ UTs have engaged 100% cook-cum-helper as approved by PAB. In the States of Haryana (64%), Kerala (69%), the engagement of cook-cum-helpers is still less than 70% (**Annexure X**). The national average of utilisation of funds for honorarium to cook-cum-helpers is 65% of the annual allocation for the Central Assistance. The States/UTs of Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh have utilised more than 75% of the allocated funds, on the other hand Manipur, Goa, Jharkhand, and Kerala have utilised less than 50% of the allocated funds. (**Annexure-X**).

State/UT governments are requested to engage the cook-cum-helpers as per the norms and requirement on the basis of enrolment of children in the schools and avoid wastage of precious teaching and learning time. Necessary arrangements are required to be put in place for timely payment of honorarium to the cook-cum-helpers to keep them incentivised.

viii) Utilisation of MME

Monitoring is an integral part of implementation of the MDM scheme and utilisation of MME funds shows the performance of the States/UTs in monitoring of the MDMS. The total allocation of MME fund for the financial year 2012-13 is Rs. 19354.20 lakhs against this Rs. 10048.05 lakhs (52%) has been utilized by all the States/UTs. Only 11 States/UTs viz. Arunachal Pradesh (102%), Nagaland (97%), Madhya Pradesh (89%), Karnataka (83%), Bihar (78%), Lakshadweep (71%), Uttarakhand (69%), Tripura (59%), Rajasthan (58%), Odisha and West Bengal (53%) have utilised more than 50% of the allocation. On the other hand Puducherry, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Tamilnadu, Manipur, and Goa have not utilised the MME grant at all. **(Annexure-XI)**

Low utilisation of MME fund indicates poor monitoring of the programme and therefore poor health of implementation of the programme and need for a proper and comprehensive MME plan. These State/UTs are requested to make more efforts for strengthening the monitoring mechanism, training of MDM functionaries, display of MDM logo and publicity for proper implementation of the scheme. Analysis of QPR reveals that 19 States/UTs have shown good performance in inspection of schools by State/District/Block officials and more than 70% of the schools have been inspected during the first three quarters in these 19 States/UTs **(Annexure XII)**. Rest State Governments /UT administration are advised to put in more emphasis on inspection of MDMS in school level for better implementation.

ix) State Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee (SSMC) Meeting:

SSMC, headed by Chief Secretary is an apex body at the State/UT level for guiding, monitoring and implementation of the scheme at State/UT level. The meetings of SSMC at regular intervals are required to review the Scheme and suggest policy measures for effective implementation of the programme. QPR analysis shows that only 29 SSMC meetings **(15 meetings during 3rd quarter, only 5 meetings during 2nd quarter and 9 meeting during 1st quarter)** have been held in all the States/ UTs during the first three quarters of 2012- 13 against 105 meetings i.e. one meeting in every quarter for each State/UT.

Two SSMC meetings have been held in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Manipur, and Meghalaya **(Annexure XIII)**. The States / UTs are advised to convene SSMC meetings once in a quarter with prior intimation to Government of India, allowing us time to send our representative in the meeting. Representative of respective monitoring institutions should also be invited to attend these meetings and present their findings before the Chairperson of the SSMC.

x) School Health Programme:

The Mid Day Meal has addressed the issue of classroom hunger and malnutrition amongst the school children. It also provides nutritional support for the school children through distribution of micronutrients to the children. In convergence with National Rural Health Mission regular health checkups of school children are supposed to be carried out at least twice a year. In addition distribution of Iron Folic Acid, De-worming tablets and Vitamin A has to be undertaken for the school children, as per the schedule of the Department of Health. The State/UTs are supposed to ensure implementation of this programme in convergence with the health dept.

While the status of coverage of children under School Health Programme is satisfactory in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, TamilNadu, Puducherry and Chandigarh (**Annexure-XIV**). In the States/ UTs of Assam, Haryana, Kerala, Manipur, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh no child has been reported to be covered under SHP during the first three quarters. These states should give special emphasis on this component, especially when sufficient funds are available under National Rural Health Mission to meet the health needs of the school children. Studies have shown that 18% of the out of school children do not go to school as they can't see and their refractive errors need to be corrected. Similarly, other illnesses and disabilities keep children out of school and are also responsible for dropout/absenteeism.

xi) Availability of Gas based cooking and Drinking Water:

Gas based cooking in the schools is important from environmental perspective. All the States/UTs are encouraged to introduce gas based cooking in schools wherever possible. The States/ UTs where more than 60% schools are using Gas for MDM cooking are Daman & Diu (99%), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (99%), Haryana (98%), Karnataka (96%), Punjab (86%), Himachal Pradesh (84%), Nagaland (80%), Gujarat (75%), Uttar Pradesh (64%) and Tripura (62%) (**Annexure- XV**).

It is a known fact that our children particularly from rural India suffer from water borne diseases namely diarrhoea, due to supply of contaminated water. The ASER, 2012 data reveals that drinking water facility was available in 73% of the visited schools. It is the responsibility of the schools to make available safe drinking water for maintaining normal health. The facility of drinking water is available in 100% schools in only 15 States/UTs namely Mizoram, Karnataka, Daman & Diu, A&N Islands, TamilNadu, Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Odisha, Puducherry, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. In the remaining States/UTs where drinking water is not available to children in some of the schools; efforts need to be made by the State Governments to ensure the availability of safe drinking water in all the schools as well as to inculcate hygienic habits like washing hands and eating in clean utensils

xii) Submission of Information:

Timely submission of information like QPR, MPR etc. helps in effective monitoring and taking appropriate action in time for proper implementation of the scheme. The States/UTs are requested to submit the QPRs, MPRs and other information within the prescribed time line, to enable us to review the information and take corrective action wherever required. QPRs for the 3rd Quarter have been received in time from only 9 States/UTs. The 2nd QPR is delayed by 1 day to 10 days in respect of 6 States/UTs. 15 States/UTs has submitted 2nd QPR with delay of 10 to 31 days. 5 States/UTs have submitted the 1st QPR after more than 31 days (**Annexure XVI**). **The delay also reflects the effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms at the State/UT levels.**