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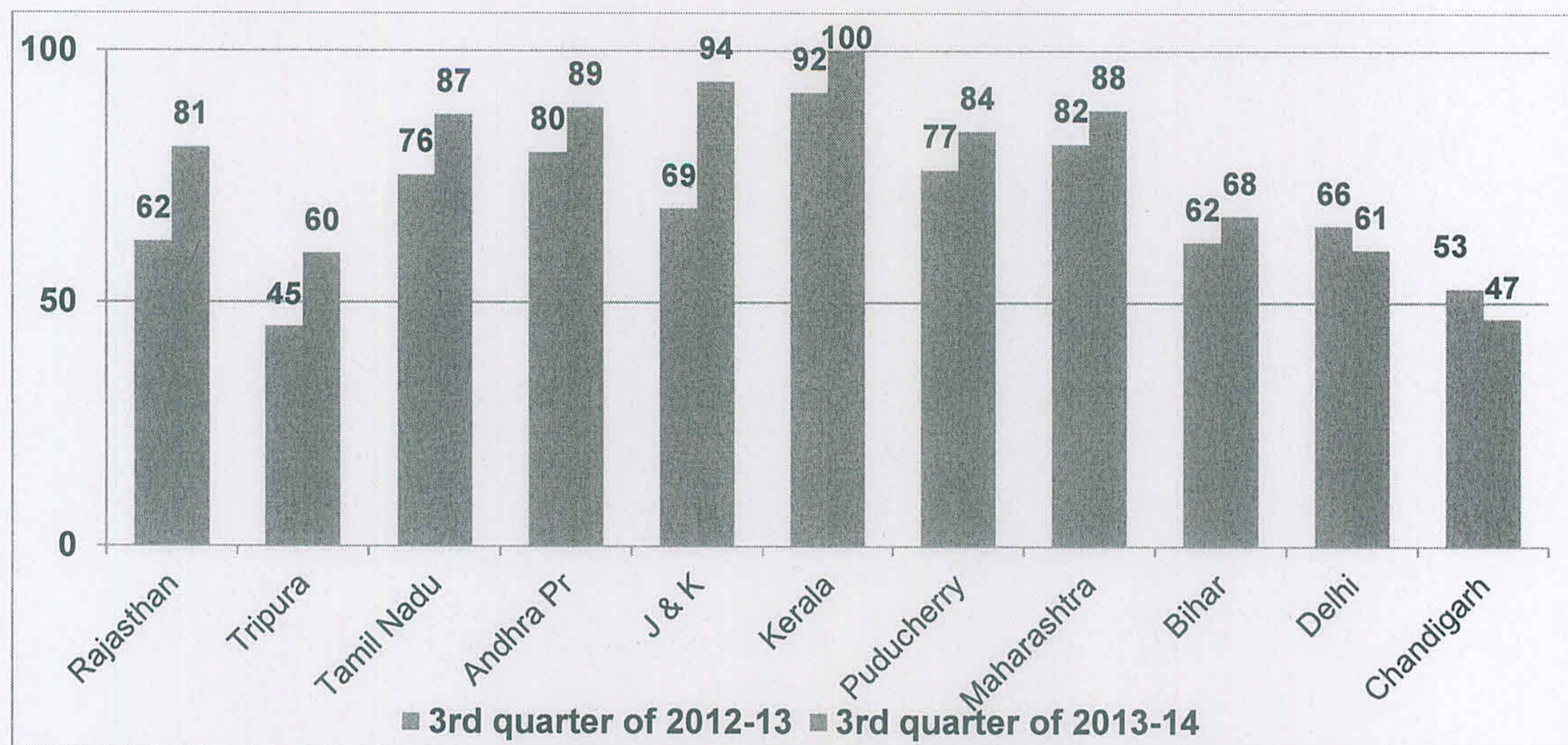
Dear *Colleagues*,

The recent Annual Status of Education Report (Rural), 2013 (ASER) has highlighted that Mid-Day Meal was being served in 87.2% schools on the day of their visit. Of the total enrolled children, about 70.7% of the enrolled children at primary level and 71.8% children at upper primary level were benefitting from Mid day meal on the day of visit. These findings have been validated by the Public Evaluation of Entitlement Programmes (PEEP) Survey, 2013 for twenty districts of ten States (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh) in May and June, 2013. The survey, carried out by *Prof. Jean Dreze and Ms Reetika Khera and published as a cover story in the Outlook* confirms that MDM was served to the children almost everywhere, even in the most deprived and remote villages in Bihar and Jharkhand; 61% of the parents interacted were satisfied with quality of the meal served.

2. This is all thanks to your efforts, 10.80 crore children are provided hot cooked meals in 11.58 lakh schools in the country, under the Mid-Day-Meal Programme. This is an increase of 90 lacs over the 9.9 crore children served MDM during the first quarter of 2013-14. The comparison of data on MDMS for the third quarter of 2013-14 with the corresponding period of 2012-13 reveals that coverage has increased by almost 4% at primary and 5% at the upper primary levels. Not only has this helped in preventing classroom hunger; it promotes school participation and retention. It also fosters social equality and gender equity.

3. While most States have shown an improvement during the third quarter; the States of Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Maharashtra have improved their coverage significantly from the third quarter of 2012-13 to third quarter of 2013-14. Tripura has also shown considerable improvement; however it is still well below the national average. Overall, 78% of the enrolled children have been covered at both primary and upper primary levels.





4. The coverage has gone down in Delhi and Chandigarh. We have shared the list of poor performing districts with you, the same is again attached. The issue of poor coverage of children in these districts has been discussed in detail with you during the PAB meetings. I shall appreciate if you pay special attention to these districts and put in place effective strategies to enhance the coverage in these districts.

5. The Fifth JRM visited 20 States/UTs and surveyed 12762 children (6103 boys and 6659 girls) and found 950 children (546 boys and 404 girls) were severely malnourished (BMI below-3SD). These children require urgent medical attention. JRMs have suggested that the States may identify such children through periodical health check-ups. The identified children should be given special care during the serving of MDM. They further found 2226 children (1201 boys and 1025 Girls) were moderately malnourished (having BMI below -2SD). These moderately malnourished children (BMI-2SD) require additional meals - more calorie dense food, for improvement in their nutritional Status. The parents of these children also need to be made aware of the situation to provide additional calorie or protein dense food/fruit like banana, Channa, Peanuts, jaggery as well as chikki etc to such children at home. It is now an established fact and the data on nutrition also indicates that the level of malnutrition increases during the school years. As a result, the children are not able to concentrate on their studies. In the light of these facts the critical role of Mid-Day Meal Scheme for our country is clearly evident. Apart from improving the quality of education, effective implementation of MDMS can contribute towards increase in retention at the school level.

6. In spite of the above evidence, the utilisation of foodgrains is suboptimal in the States of Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Assam, which have high levels of malnutrition. The utilisation of cooking cost is poor in Manipur, Meghalaya, UP and Mizoram. This is an area of major concern; on the one hand a larger portion of our children are anemic and facing serious nutritional deficiencies, on the other the resources, meant to tackle this issue remained under utilized. This also reflects delayed release of fund from the State level to the schools.

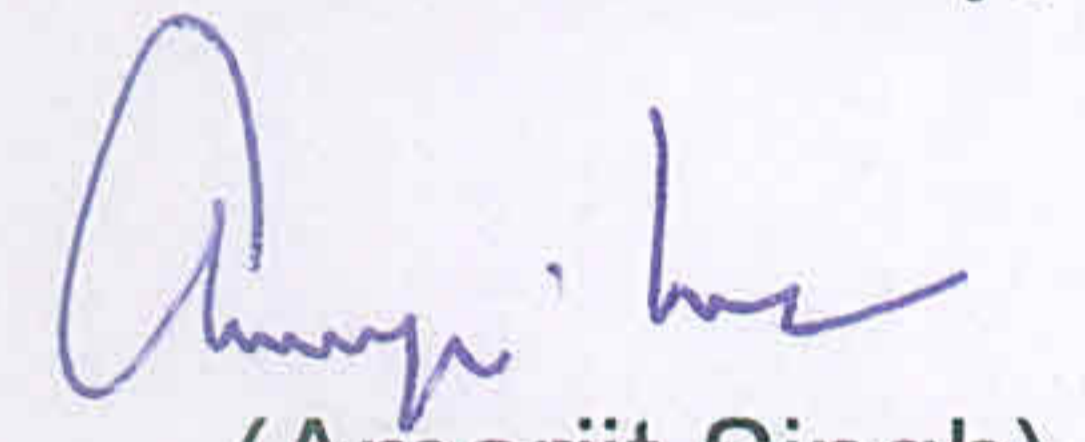
7. Similarly, there are serious concerns on the availability of basic infrastructure; the report referred to above indicate, that there was no provision of separate toilet for girls in 19.3% of the visited schools. Even in schools having separate toilet for girls only 53.3% were in useable condition. Likewise drinking water facilities were not available in about 26% of the visited schools. The State Governments may constitute State Review Missions similar to the Joint Review Mission of the Government of India for monitoring the performance of the scheme in the poorly performing districts and taking corrective action where required.

8. The State-wise position on the key components of the MDMS can be seen in the Annexures. I would like to urge upon the MDM teams in all the States/UTs for putting in an extra effort to ensure quality mid day meal for every child in school. This could be facilitated by effective mechanisms for community participation and social audit. A little effort on your part will go a long way to ensure not only, that no child remains hungry in the school but also, that the basic health and hygiene needs of the children are met in a safe and serene atmosphere without hampering the duties of the teachers.

9. I shall appreciate if action is taken on the issues raised above under intimation to this office. We shall also appreciate if the data for the QPRs is sent in a time bound manner and duly validated before it is sent to us. We received the QPR for the second and third quarter from Nagaland on 25th March, 2014!

With regards

Yours sincerely,


(Amarjit Singh)

To

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