

ACTION ALERT!

MID-DAY MEAL FOR CHILDREN?

A STORY FULL OF NON-COMPLIANCE, POOR PERFORMANCE & IRREGULARITIES, SAYS THE CAG FINDINGS

It has been only six days since Delhi's much talked about "*Swaraj Budget*" was presented; the recent CAG Report has raised some tough challenges for the current AAP Government. While on the one hand, the current Delhi Budget has promised more schools, better infrastructure in schools, on the other, the CAG Report has strongly highlighted the lesser spending on Development. The current government, which every now and then, keeps talking about bringing reforms, will have to be more cautious now in translating these promises into reality.

7/1/2015

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FINANCIAL PLANNING

Govt saves but doesn't spend on development

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NEW DELHI: Governments often cite lack of funds as a reason for not carrying out development. But an audit of government finances has shown that ₹4,594.09 crore were left unutilised by the Delhi government.

The CAG, in its report on Delhi government for the year ending May 2014, said the government managed to save ₹4,594.09 crore in 2013-14. "But these savings indicate slackness on the part of the departments in implementing the schemes and deficient financial management," the report says.

The report states that there were persistent savings of more than ₹1 crore in nine cases/sub

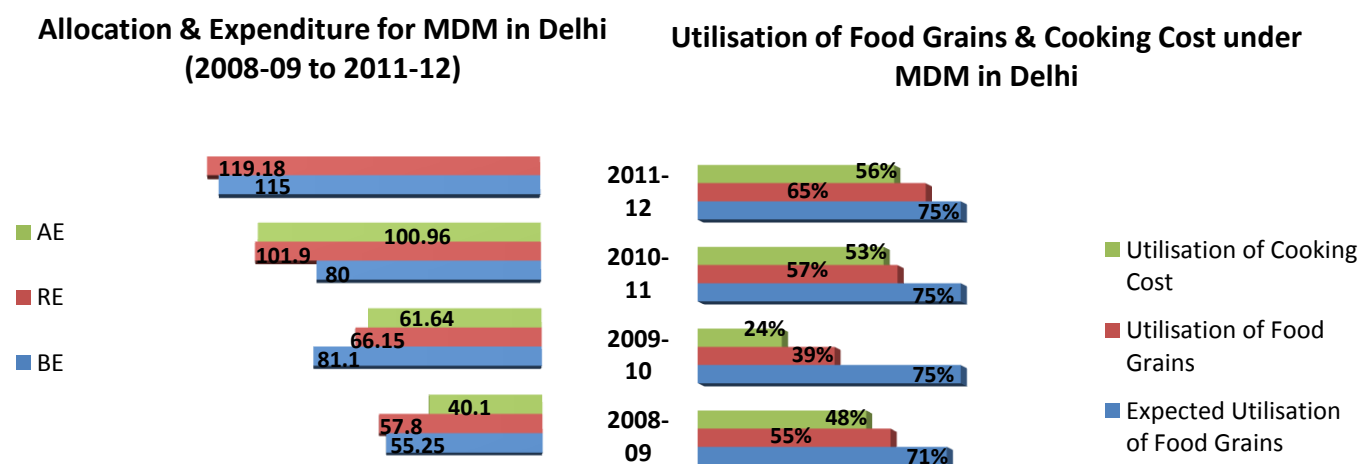
heads under the grant, which were more than 20% of the total grant.

This indicates unrealistic budgeting, deficient financial management and slackness on the part of the government in implementing various schemes including BRT corridors, special project vehicle for redevelopment of Walled City, development of urban villages among others.

CAG states that till March 2014, 5235 grants amounting to ₹26,434.30 crore were released. However, out of these utilisation, 4784 utilisation certificates, which are mandatory to be obtained, amounting to ₹19,064.02 crore were still awaited from various bodies at the end of the stipulated timeframe.

HAQ's Analysis of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Delhi: 2008-09 to 2012-13

The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education is popularly known as the Mid-day Meal Scheme and it was launched in July 2003 in Delhi. Delhi has the largest set up of Mid-day Meal (MDM) and it is being implemented independently by six implementing agencies in Delhi. The Directorate of Education is the Nodal Agency for implementation of the Scheme and coordinates with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), GoI and all other agencies.



Allocation for MDM has been very inconsistent as is evident in the graph. In 2008–2009, a total of ₹55.25 Crore were allocated which was further increased and made ₹57.80 Crore with no effect as the actual expenditure was less than the BE.

In the year 2008–2009, the MDM programme for upper primary was implemented only in 60 schools of NDMC and rest of the schools could not start this programme in this year. Again in 2009–2010, the allocation under the scheme remained unutilised due to suspension of supply of mid-day meals to approximately one lakh students in East Delhi for 42 days and non-supply of mid-day meals in all the government schools of NCT Delhi for 11 days due to hospitalization of children, closure of schools in extreme cold in Delhi, pending bills due to various reasons and attending of less number of children due to examination and late implementation of the scheme in upper primary level.

In fact allocation under MDM has shown persistent saving of more than ₹100 Crore indicating unrealistic budgeting, deficient financial management and slackness on part of the department in implementing the scheme.77 Programme Approval Board (PAB) of Mid-day Meal programme

for Delhi also acknowledged the underutilisation of funds and resources allocated to the State. Similarly, there has been underutilisation of lifting of food grains and cooking costs every year

Utilisation of Food Grains and Cooking Cost under MDM (in Per Cent)				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Expected Utilisation of Food Grains	71%	75%	75%	75%
Utilisation of Food Grains	55%	39%	57%	65%
Utilisation of Cooking Cost	48%	24%	53%	56%

Source: MDM-PAB Meetings, 2008-2009 to 2011-2012

Findings of the Performance Audit of the Department of Education, GNCTD

- **Out of 18000** children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, only **1154 children were covered in 2013-14.**
- Government in its reply (dated April 2015), stated that only 2047 children are studying in 19 centres being run by NGOs/*Madrasas* and they will be covered under the MDM scheme from April 2015. **The reply indicated towards flawed planning of the Directorate for identifying and covering all children of EGS and AIS centres. The reply was silent regarding coverage of children under SSA.**
- As per a MHRD circular (dated 22 July 2013), the Directorate of Education is supposed to create awareness about Mid Day Meal Scheme among stakeholders through TV, Radio,

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EDUCATION SECTOR

Mid-day meals lack nutrition: Report

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NEW DELHI: About 89% of the samples of the food that is served to poor school children in government-run schools in Delhi failed the test for nutritive value, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has said in its latest report.

According to the report, 2102 samples of cooked food from 37 service providers that were tested during the period 2010-14, 1876 samples failed the test. In certain selected districts for 2013-2014, the failure rate of samples was even 100%.

The Mid-Day Meal scheme was first implemented in municipal schools in Delhi in 2003 and was later extended to government schools in 2014.

Unlike other states, the supply of mid-day meal has been outsourced in the Capital with 43 NGOs cooking the meal in semi-automated kitchens. They are also responsible for transporting the food to schools every day.

According to the guidelines issued by the human resource development ministry, a cooked meal served to children in classes 1 to 5 should provide a minimum of 450 calories and 12 grams protein. For children in classes 6-8, the midday meal should offer 700 calories and 20 grams protein.

As per the report, 412 children were found underweight in five primary schools and 1,187 children anaemic in 10 schools.

The report also said that the service providers did not obtain mandatory license from the food and safety department and were running kitchens without no objection certificates from civic

NO CHECKS

- 412 children were found underweight in five primary schools and 1,187 children anaemic in 10 schools.
- Scrutiny of inspection reports of east district showed that pest control was not carried out in the kitchens
- The scheme has also not been able to increase enrolment, attendance and retain students in schools

agencies and the fire department.

"As per the agreement, the service providers were required to install and maintain water purification systems in their kitchens. Also scrutiny of inspection reports of east district showed that pest control was not carried out. Thus audit could not derive an assurance on regular fumigation and pest control in kitchens," the report stated.

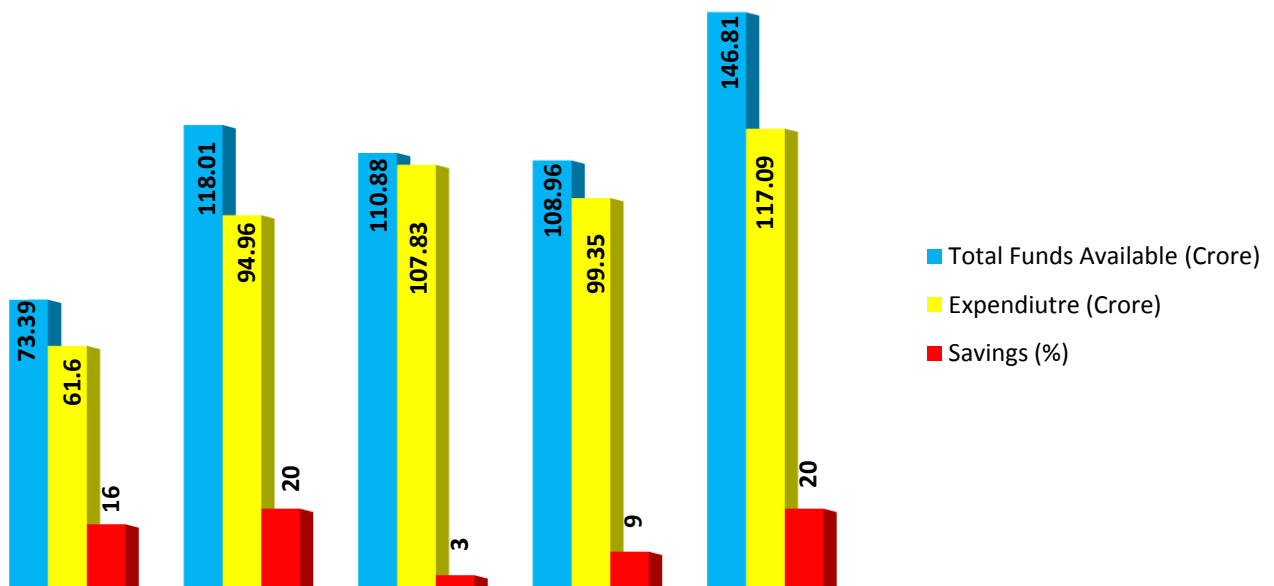
Also, the scheme has also not been able to increase enrolment, attendance and retain students in schools. "In selected primary schools, the average attendance decreased from 74% in 2009-10 to 66% in 2013-2014," the report stated.

Further, of the 18,000 children studying under the education guarantee scheme and alternative and innovative education centres supported by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), only 1,154 children were covered during the period 2013-2014.

Print Media etc. **But the CAG noticed that the Directorate did not make any plans for creating awareness about MDM.**

- The Directorate of Education extended the MDM Scheme to upper primary schools from September 2009, **which is 18 months of delay in following the circular issued by MHRD to do so.**

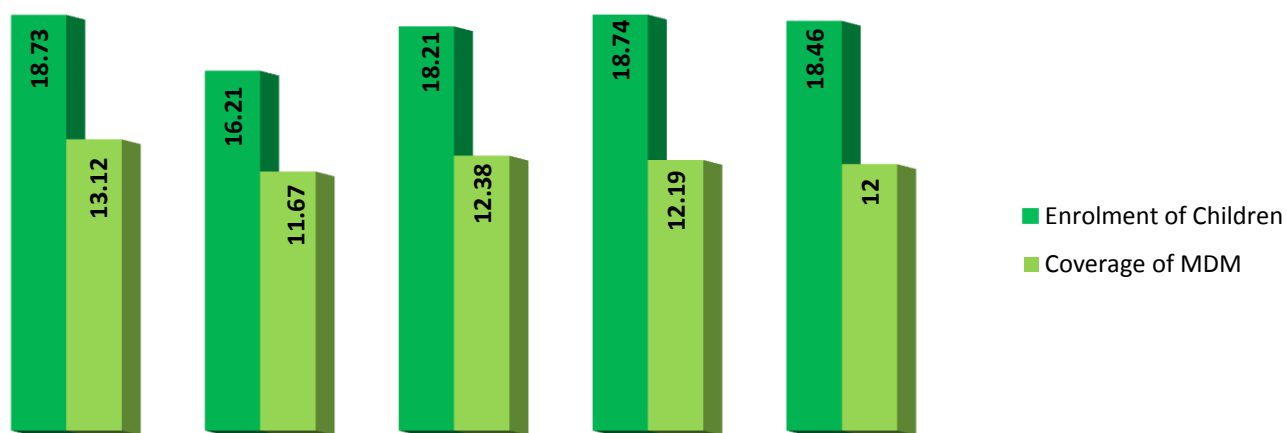
Allocation, Expenditure & Savings towards Funds for Mid-Day Meal



- During 2009-10 to 2013-14, significant savings were made by the GNCTD towards the fund allocation for Mid-Day Meal Programme. **CAG observed Delay in the grant of installments from MHRD was the main reason of such under spending.**
- As per MHRD circular (June 2010), 50 per cent grant of central assistance for Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (MME) should be utilized by schools on purchase of stationery and soaps etc. and 50 per cent by the implementing agencies on hiring of manpower, external monitoring and evaluation and publicity etc. **Audit observed that the implementing agencies utilised only ₹4.69 crore against ₹12.01 crore released by MRHD under MME.** The underutilisation was between 35 and 84 per cent of the funds during 2009-14.

- **The enrolment, attendance and retention of children in schools could not be enhanced.** In selected primary schools, the **average attendance decreased from 74 per cent in 2009-10 to 66 per cent in 2013-14.**
- **Mid day meals were not served on the prescribed number of days in both Primary and Upper Primary Schools.** Out of 2102 samples of cooked meals, a total of 1876 samples (89 per cent) failed tests for nutritive value during 2010-14.
- **Service providers did not obtain mandatory license** from the Food Safety Department and were running their kitchens without 'NOCs' from civic agencies and Fire Department.

Enrolment of Children & Coverage of MDM (In Lakhs)



- **The Audit noticed that the Directorate neither fixed any target for increasing the enrolment of children in schools nor initiated concrete steps to create awareness for increasing the enrolment.**
- Twenty one out of 40 primary schools organized **Pravesh Mela (Admission Camp) and Prabhat Pheri (Morning Procession of teachers with students)** etc. in the month of July, for increasing the enrolment.
- In case of selected primary schools, 5749 children dropped out, while 1235 children dropped out from selected upper primary schools, during 2009-14. **Yearly drop out of**

children ranged from 1306 to 1007 in selected primary schools and 97 to 362 in upper primary schools.

- Out of the total 60 selected schools, Heads of 29 primary and one upper primary schools **attributed the reasons for drop out, to poverty, liability of caring siblings, change of residence, etc.**
- The decreasing trend in attendance in primary schools indicated that the **Mid-Day Meal scheme could not achieve the desired impact on attendance.**
- Under the MDM guidelines, the district administration must ensure at least one month's buffer stock of food grains to avoid any disruption in serving the Mid-Day Meal. However, **the audit found out that no distributor maintained the prescribed buffer stock as they received food grains only after 30/50 days of serving the meal.**
- In April 2012, Programme Approval Board (PAB) quoted the study conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDC), which highlighted that the food grains lifted for MDM were of Grade 'A' and different from what reached the kitchen for cooking. **The Audit found that the Directorate took no action in this regard.**
- During 2009-10 to 2013-14, on various occasions, **the Audit found that either sub standard meal was supplied to the schools, food was returned by the schools or the food was not served at all.** Such incidents lead into failing to achieve the prescribed target of delivery of MDM set by PAB.
- Audit scrutiny showed that 2102 samples of cooked food from 37 service providers were tested by Shri Ram Institute for Industrial Research during 2010-14, **out of which 1876 samples (89 per cent) lacked the nutrition.** In case of the selected districts of the Directorate for 2013-14, the failure rate was 100 per cent.
- The Directorate levied a total penalty of ₹ 77.25 lakh on these 37 defaulting service providers. **Out of these, it extended the supply orders of 31 service providers on 31 March 2014. This included 12 service providers who were penalised every year for the past four years, thereby indicating continuous failure.**
- The Audit noticed that on various occasions, **the service providers violated the general instructions issued by the Directorate,** which needed to be followed for implementation of MDM.

- During the Audit period, it was observed that the ingredients used for cooking MDM were ***not in compliance with the nutritional level prescribed for MDM.***
- ***Audit observed that the State SMC met only four times during 2009-14, as against a minimum of ten meetings (once in six month).***
- As per the Directorate circular (13 September 2010), all Heads of Schools should maintain a register for redressal of complaints/grievances/suggestions. ***Audit scrutiny, however, showed that 13 out of 40 selected primary and 10 out of 20 selected upper primary schools, did not maintain such registers.***

Conclusion

In this backdrop HAQ: Centre for Child Rights has collated the findings of the recent CAG Report that contains the performance audit of the Departments of GNCTD for Mid Day Meal Scheme during the period of 2009-10 to 2013-14, to raise few critical questions.

As per the Budget Speech of the Dy. Chief Minister of Delhi, “devolution of taxes” will have no effect in Delhi and the Central pool of money is shrinking as we have seen the heavy cuts in children related schemes in the Union Budget 2015-16. In this scenario how does the government propose to take the services to its real beneficiaries?